

What is Haiku?

Haiku is a form of poetry, first made popular in Japan, which has become appreciated around the world. Haiku poets are challenged to convey a vivid message in only 17 syllables.

One of the greatest Haiku poets was the Samurai, Basho (1644-94). Basho's father was also a Samurai from the Iga province. To become a Samurai, Basho served a local lord who was fond of writing. Basho learned the style of writing Haiku, and wrote under the name, Sobo. During the years, Basho traveled throughout Japan writing and further developing the Haiku style. He died in Osaka, Japan in 1694, and continued to write haiku up until his death. A sample of Basho's haiku style:

Spring morning marvel
lovely nameless little hill
on a sea of mist

In Japan these poems are valued for their simplicity, openness, depth and lightness.

Structural Rules:

- Use exactly 17 syllables
- Syllables are arranged in three lines of 5-7-5
- Avoid similes and metaphors
- Refers to a season of the year

What is a Haiku about?

Haiku poems can describe anything, but are seldom complicated or hard to understand. Almost all Haiku has a dominant impression, or main idea, that appeals strongly to one of the five senses.

The Seasonal Theme

Each Haiku must contain a kigo, a season word, which indicates what season of the year the Haiku is set. For example, blossoms would indicate spring, snow would give the idea of winter, mosquitos would imply summertime. The seasonal words isn't always that obvious, you might need to consider the theme of the poem to find it. For example:

Clouds appear and bring -
to men a chance to rest from
looking at the moon

The seasonal word in this Haiku is clouds, indicating the rainy season.