

Haiku

俳句

OR

*An introduction to haiku, the traditional
seventeen syllable form of Japanese
poetry, with a particular focus on the
alternative form, senryu, and illustrated
by examples from popular culture*

Traditional haiku

- 17 “syllables” or morae
- Arranged 5/7/5
- Contain a *kigo* or seasonal word
- Contain a *kireji* or cutting word
- Usually contains a juxtaposition of images
- Was originally the opening of a longer poem

ひらがな
てりやき
しんぶん

Haiku

- A haiku paints a vivid picture in just a few words.
- Their minimal nature requires artistic discipline, and forces writers to pare down to only the essentials—making each word, or even syllable, count.
- “I didn’t have the time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long letter.”

Matsuo Basho

古池や 蛙飛び込む 水の音

Furuike ya/ Kawazu tobikomou/ Mizu no oto

Matsuo Basho

An old silent pond

A frog jumps into the pond—

Splash! Silence again.

Alternative translation

The old pond

A frog leaps in.

Sound of the water.

Another alternative

An old silent pond.

A frog leaps in

Splash!

Natsume Soseki

Over the wintry

Forest, winds howl in rage

With no leaves to blow.

Katsushika Hokusai

I write, erase, rewrite

Erase again, and then

A poppy blooms.

Kobayashi Issa

A world of dew,

And within every dewdrop

A world of struggle.

Senryu (by Les Murray)

Just two hours after

Eternal life pills came out

someone took thirty.

Senryu

- Senryū 川柳 literally means 'river willow'
- Senryū is named after poet Karai Senryū (柄井川柳, 1718–1790)
- Senryū have the same structure as haiku, but generally do not include a kireji (cutting word) or a kigo (season word)
- They are often cynical or darkly humorous
- While haiku are about nature, senryu are about human nature

Senryu

泥棒を 捕えてみれば 我が子なり
dorobō o/ toraete mireba/ wagako nari

When I catch

The robber,

It's my own son

Senryu

お若いと 言われて若く ないと知る

Owakai to/ iwarete wakaku/ nai to shiru

I am told I look young

That is how I know

I am not young anymore

Senryu

ゴメンネの 代わりにか皿を 洗ってる
Gomen ne no/ kawari ka sara wo/ aratteru

Maybe it's his way

To say sorry

He's washing the dishes

Senryu

スポーツジム 車で行って チャリをこぐ
Supootsujimu/ kuruma de itte/ chari wo kogu

I go by car

To the gym

To ride a bicycle

2020 Silver Senryu winning entry

テレワーク やってみたいが 俺無職

Terewaaku/ yattemitai ga/ ore mushoku

I would like to switch

To remote work

But I don't have a job

The Haiku Year

- Seven friends – Tom Gilroy, Anna Grace, Jim McKay, Douglas A. Martin, Grant Lee Phillips, Rick Roth, and Michael Stipe – made a pact to write a haiku every day for a year as a way to keep in touch with each other.
- The book documents a year's worth of moments filled with joy, sorrow and unexpected beauty.
- It is storytelling pared down to the simplest words to describe an instance.
- The book encourages readers to enjoy little details and to let spare moments pierce through the numbness of everyday routine.

The Haiku Year

“Within a week the haiku year challenge was inspiring and changing what we noticed in our everyday lives. Suddenly each day seemed bejeweled, often at the oddest moments. The way the screen was ripped in a filthy gas station restroom suddenly mirrored some aspect of your life, and was beautiful. Or hilarious. Rick (who took up the challenge the second he heard about it) described it best, ‘It changed my life.’”



The Haiku Year

Black cat

White snow

Tip toe

The Haiku Year

The blizzard slows

Snow stops rushing

Begins to waltz

Isle of Dogs

The 2018 Wes Anderson stop-motion film is set in Japan.

“The beautifully stop-motion animated Isle of Dogs finds Wes Anderson at his detail-oriented best while telling one of the director's most winsomely charming stories.”

Critics have debated whether the film is guilty of racial stereotyping and cultural appropriation, and whether the film was “...an act of appropriation or homage. But the question is rhetorical—the two aren't mutually exclusive, and the former is not automatically off the table just because the creator's intent was the latter”



Isle of Dogs

I turn my back

on man-kind

Frost on window pane

Isle of Dogs

I wrote a haiku to try and express my feelings about the suffering dogs of Trash Island. It is also about nature, love, friendship, eternity and a black owl. I call it Atari's lantern:

Whatever happened
to man's best friend?
Falling spring blossom

Ian Fleming – You only live twice

You only live twice.

Once when you are born.

And once when you look death in the face.

Verb conjugation

- How the verb changes to match the subject
- I write, you write, (s)he writes, we write, they write
- I am, you are, (s)he is, we are, they are
- Je suis, tu es, il est, nous sommes, vous êtes, ils sont
- In Japanese, verb conjugations are simple (but other things are difficult!)

Conjugating verbs

I ku, and you ku.

He, she and it ku. They ku.

We all ku. Thank ku!

John Cooper Clarke

To con-vey one's mood

In sev-en-teen syll-a-bles

Is ve-ry dif-fic

Credits

- Haiku

- http://www.eliteskills.com/analysis_poetry/The_old_pond_by_Matsuo_Basho_analysis.php
- <https://www.masterpiece-of-japanese-culture.com/literatures-and-poems/famous-haiku-poems-matsuo-basho>
- <https://www.readpoetry.com/10-vivid-haikus-to-leave-you-breathless/>

- Senryu

- <https://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au/poets/murray-les/poems/senryu-0560022>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senryu%C5%AB>
- <https://kokoro-jp.com/culture/2571/>

- The Haiku Year, published by Soft Skull Press in 1998

- Ian Fleming

- <https://literature.stackexchange.com/questions/2032/is-the-haiku-in-you-only-live-twice-by-bash%C5%8D/2033>

- John Cooper Clarke

- <http://johncooperclarke.com/poems/haiku>

Owari

(The end)