

Haiku

all night long
light shines in the eyes
of the carousel ponies

—Penny Harter

All summer long
the sixteen-story crane
bows and bows

—J. Patrick Lewis

November evening—
the wind from a passing truck
ripples a roadside puddle.

—Cor van den Heuvel

from the tar papered
tenement roof, pigeons
hot-foot into flight

—Anita Wintz

Haiku

Stickball players shout
as moonlight floods their field
from curb to curb

The sudden storm's dead...
petals from the dogwood tree
on the still pond

The young artist takes
pains to paint a masterpiece:
a smiling pumpkin

The moaning snowplow
shatters the frigid stillness
of a crystal night

Name _____ Date _____

Looking at Haiku

Before you begin to write your own haiku, look carefully at the examples of haiku on pages 38 and 39.

1 Read through the haiku a few times.

2 Now, read them again, aloud and more slowly this time. Count the syllables in each line. Mark each syllable with a small line, like this:

/ / / / /
The moaning snowplow

3 At the end of each line, write down the number of syllables in that line. Are there 17 syllables in each poem? Are there five syllables in each first line? Seven syllables in each middle line? Five syllables in each last line?

4 After you have made your syllable count, read them again. This time look for words that tell you which season each haiku describes. Underline the words that hint at a season, then write them on this chart:

Words	Season
# 1 _____	_____
# 2 _____	_____
# 3 _____	_____
# 4 _____	_____
# 5 _____	_____
# 6 _____	_____
# 7 _____	_____
# 8 _____	_____

Name _____ Date _____

Getting Ideas for Your Haiku

Since a good haiku is written about a limited scene, it might help you to “frame” what you are looking at. Carefully cut out the frame provided on page 44.

Take your frame with you to a spot that seems rich with images—the classroom window, the gym, or the block you live on. Hold up the frame in front of you at arm’s length. Look only at what is inside the frame. If you notice something that might make a good haiku, write down a clear description on your note sheet, “Details To Capture” on page 44. For example, if you see birds fighting at the bird feeder, jot down some notes about that scene, including the sounds you hear (*scratching feet, beat of wings, screech of a blue jay*), the colors, and so forth. Don’t concern yourself with anything that is outside your frame.

Details to Capture (Five Senses)

Sight: _____

Sound: _____

Touch: _____

Smell: _____

Taste: _____



Name _____ Date _____

Drafting Your Haiku

1 Look over your observations on the “Details To Capture” sheet (worksheet #2, page 44) and use these notes to describe—in a single sentence—a scene you saw. Remember that your haiku should be written in the present tense and be about the present moment. For example: *Flutter of wings as birds fight for the seeds at the bird feeder hanging in the oak tree.*

2 Once you have written your sentence, check to see if you’ve included some sensory images (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch). Of course, you will not use all your senses in every poem, but it is the sense words that make the scene you are evoking come alive. You may wish to underline any sensory words in your sentence.

3 Check that you have included a hint to tell the reader which season is evoked in your haiku. Draw a circle around that seasonal word. If you don’t have one, revise your sentence to include one.

4 Are there words in your draft that do not help create a clear image? Cross out these words. Remember, you are looking for the best, most vivid words when you write a poem.

5 Now that you have edited and pared down your sentence, write out the new version. My example from above might wind up being something like:

Flutter of wings birds fight for the seeds at the full bird feeder swinging in the oak.

Notice that I changed *hanging* to *swinging* in the last line. I thought it showed more action than *hanging*. Notice too that I kept the syllable count the same!

6 Next, write out your own sentence as a haiku, in three lines, like this:

Flutter of wings
birds fight for seeds at the full bird feeder
swinging in the oak

7 Count the syllables. You will notice there are 4, 9, 5 syllables in the three lines. Practice tinkering with my syllables, especially in the middle line. Maybe we don't need *for seeds* because that's so obvious. If we cut out those words, we wind up with a 4, 7, 5 haiku, which is okay. Our revision now reads:

Flutter of wings
birds fight at the bird feeder
swinging in the oak

8 Do you think these revisions improve the haiku? Why or Why not?

9 Now that you have gone through the process of writing one haiku, use the space below to draft another one. Choose a different season, and perhaps create a different mood. For example, notice how poet Penny Harber creates a disquieting mood in her haiku. Instead of depicting a happy summer day of kids laughing on a carousel ride, she chooses night, and makes us feel pity for the inanimate ponies:

all night long
light shines in the eyes
of the carousel ponies.
