

Tanka

Early October
a sugar maple ablaze
at the end of the pond
its fire reflected
in the still water.

The chestnut vendor
must shout to be heard above
the October winds
his words rise, sail away
like the thin smoke from his stove.

Along the beach
footprints fill with the sea
fill with the sea
until they disappear
leaving only sand, only sea.

Lightning splits the sky
and for a moment we see
an empty playhouse
and just as suddenly
the back yard is black again.

Name _____ Date _____

Feeling the Mood

As you read these tanka, underline the words and phrases that are connected to one of our senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. After you have found the sensory words in the poem, describe the mood of the poem, or the feeling it creates, in the space provided.

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Drafting Your Tanka

A tanka doesn't need to have a seasonal setting. However, it's probably a good idea to include one in your first few poems, since this will help you actually *see* and *feel* the scene as you take notes. Here's a good way to get started:

- 1 Choose a scene you would like to write about.
- 2 Visit that scene in your imagination. Take some notes in the space below. Be alert to your senses as you jot down your ideas. Can you make any comparisons as you describe the scene? (For example: *the wind howls like a freight train, the sun is a gold coin, the snowflakes coasted to the ground.*)
- 3 After taking notes to capture the image and mood you want in your poem, circle the words you think will make that image come alive. Use these words when you begin drafting your tanka.

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Tanka

Name _____ Date _____

Revising Your Tanka

Look carefully at your draft. You'll probably find places that need some tinkering. That's good because a draft *should* require some revising—otherwise it would be the final version, not a draft. To improve your tanka, consider the four points below. Check this list yourself and revise accordingly. Then, have a friend or writing partner read your tanka and write comments with these points in mind.

1 Does your poem come close to the syllable count of a tanka? Count the syllables and see if you come close. Remember not to be a slave to the guidelines, but use them to give your poem some structure.

Peer comments: _____

2 Has your poem created the mood or feeling you were aiming for?
2 Underline the parts you think do the job in your poem.

Peer comments: _____

3 Has your poem created a strong image? Can you see the picture or hear it?
3 Circle the sensory words in your tanka.

Peer comments: _____

4 Have you used any figurative language or comparisons in your poem?
4 Draw a box around any such words or phrases.

Peer comments: _____

This checklist should help you capture some of the important elements of a good tanka.