

Haiku

Haiku is a type of Japanese poetry. Haiku are short poems that usually describe nature and a fleeting moment in time; they often contain a reference to a season of the year (called kigo).

Haiku often have a total of 17 syllables and usually have three lines*:

1. The first line has five syllables,
2. The second line has seven syllables,
3. The third line has five syllables.

The first two lines of a Haiku are brief observations about the subject of the poem. Then, in the final line, the perspective or voice of the poem shifts, and a comment about the essence of the topic is offered, a point is made, and the heart is touched.

Some Haiku:

Haiku, a poem, Five, seven, five syllables. Life frozen in words.	Line one sets the stage, Line two tells more about it. Line three is the heart.	In ancient Japan, Matsuo Basho wrote Haiku. Timeless verse still lives.
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Haiku was developed in Japan over 400 years ago. It was popularized by the poet Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) in the 1600s. Haiku is now popular worldwide.

Old Pond by Matsuo Basho	
Furuike ya kawazu tobikomu mizu no oto.	Old pond A frog leaps in The sound of water.

* In Japan, a Haiku poem does not have to have exactly 17 syllables and it does not have to have exactly three lines with the 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

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How to write your haiku.

1. Brainstorm words that are about nature. For example: rain, clouds, soft breezes.
2. Choose the words that you like from this list.
3. Count the syllables (parts) of the words.
4. Put them together using the pattern.
5. Draw a picture to go with your haiku.

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A haiku poem has three lines. Each line contains a set number of syllables.

- Line 1 – 5 syllables
- Line 2 – 7 syllables
- Line 3 – 5 syllables

Spider webs of frost

Sparkling crystals in the sun

White against clear glass

Write a haiku poem about winter.

Draw a picture to illustrate your poem.


