

## How to compose English HAIKU

A haiku poem consists of three lines, with the first and last line having 5 moras, and the middle line having 7. A mora is a sound unit, much like a syllable, but is not identical to it. Since the moras do not translate well into English, syllables are used as moras.

Haiku started out as a popular activity during the 9th to 12th centuries in Japan called “tanka,” or “renga.” It was a progressive poem, where one person would write the first three lines with a 5-7-5 structure, and the next person would add to it a section with a 7-7 structure. The chain would continue in this fashion. So if you wanted some old examples of haiku poems, you could read the first verse of a “tanka” from the 9th century.

The first verse was called a “hokku” and set the mood for the rest of the verses. Sometimes there were hundreds of verses and authors of the “hokku” were often admired for their skill. In the 19th century, the “hokku” took on a life of its own and began to be written and read as an individual poem. The word “haiku” is derived from “hokku.”

The three masters of “hokku” from the 17th century were Basho, Issa, and Buson. Their work is still the model of haiku writing today. They were poets who wandered the countryside, experiencing life and observing nature, and spent years perfecting their craft.

### Rules for Writing Haiku(Japanese) to compose English HAIKU.

There are no specific rules for writing haiku; however, the structure of haiku is always the same, including the following features:

- Only three lines, totaling 17 syllables throughout
- The first line must be only 5 syllables
- The second line must be comprised of 7 syllables
- The third line must be 5 syllables like the first
- Punctuation and capitalization rules are up to the poet, and need not follow rigid rules used in structuring sentences
- Haiku does not have to rhyme, in fact many times it does not rhyme at all
- Some haiku can include the repetition of words or sounds

### Defining Haiku Poetry

Haiku is a descriptive form of poetry.

Originating in Japan, haiku poetry typically discusses subjects from the natural world, including seasons, months, animals, insects, and even the smallest elements of nature,

down to a blade of grass or a drop of dew.

While haiku does not have to only cover natural subject matter, it is most often used as a celebration of nature.

Reading through examples of haiku can greatly help you understand, appreciate, and eventually write haiku yourself. Reading haiku to other people can also help them develop a sense of how to interpret poetry, and begin the process of writing their own simple poems. When reading such haiku poetry out loud to people, consider having them guess what element of nature is being described in the poem.

### Process of Writing Haiku

Even though there are specific rules for writing haiku, the process can still be fun and rewarding.

If you are trying to write haiku for the first time, consider some of the following steps:

1. Begin by reading examples of haiku to help you get inspired about the subjects and construction of haiku. Haiku is simply a beautiful form of poetry, so take time to appreciate it before you begin writing it. Ample examples are available in masters' samples and through your local library.
2. Create a list of possible subjects that you might write about, considering various aspects of nature that inspire you. Consider animals, insects, seasons, and more. Of course so-called season words are indispensable, not necessary in English HAIKU strictly. Even the smallest natural details can make for great haiku.
3. After you choose a subject, you may want to look at a few pictures of it, or go outside and admire it. Like all of the great poets before you, some of the greatest inspiration comes from simply admiring nature and the world around them.
4. Make a list of words that relate to the subject you have chosen. Be as descriptive as possible and don't worry – none of the terms will go to waste! Whatever you don't use in one haiku can be used in another poem.
5. Begin by writing with the 5-7-5 rule in mind. If you have trouble determining how many syllables are in a word because you are not sure you are pronouncing it correctly, remember that you can always look the word up here on some specific Haiku Dictionary for a count of the syllables.

Remember to be creative not only with your use of words, but also with your punctuation and word order. Haiku is not designed to read like a sentence, so do not feel bound by normal capitalization and structure rules.

Haiku Poems From the Masters

A review of haiku poems is an excellent way to become familiar with this form of poetry. Remember that in translation, the moras won't be the same as syllables. In Japanese, there are 5 moras in the first and third line, and 7 in the second, following the 5-7-5 structure of haiku.

Here are three examples of the haiku of Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson and Kobayasi Issa the great poets of haiku in Edo era:

Matsuo Basho

An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
Splash! Silence again.

Autumn moonlight—  
A worm digs silently  
Into the chestnut.

Lightning flash—  
What I thought were faces  
Are plumes of pampas grass.

Yosa Buson

A summer river being crossed  
How pleasing  
With sandals in my hands!

Light of the moon  
Moves west, flowers' shadows  
Creep eastward.

In the moonlight,  
The color and scent of the wisteria  
Seems far away.

Kobayaski Issa

O snail

Climb Mount Fuji,  
But slowly, slowly!

Trusting the Buddha, good and bad,  
I bid farewell  
To the departing year.

Everything I touch  
With tenderness, alas,  
Pricks like a bramble.

Meiji era  
Natsume Soseki

Over the wintry  
Forest, winds howl in rage  
With no leaves to blow.

The crow has flown away:  
Swaying in the evening sun,  
A leafless tree.

Masaoka Shiki

In the coolness  
Of the empty sixth-month sky...  
The cuckoo's cry.

Richard Wright  
Whitecaps on the bay:  
A broken signboard banging  
In the April wind.

Nick Virgilio  
Lily:  
Out of the water

Out of itself

Don Eulert

Ground squirrel

Balancing its tomato

On the garden fence

Richard Wright (1908-1960), one of the early forceful and eloquent spokesmen for black Americans, author of "Native Son," and "Black Boy", was also, it turns out, a major poet. During the last eighteen months of his life, he discovered and became enamored of haiku, **the strict seventeen-syllable Japanese form**. Wright became so excited about the discovery that he began writing his own haiku, in which he attempted to capture, through his sensibility as an African American, the same Zen discipline and beauty in depicting man's relationship, not to his fellow man as he had in his fiction, but to nature and the natural world.

In all, he wrote over 4,000 haiku, from which he chose, before he died, the 817 he preferred. Rather than a deviation from his self-appointed role as spokesman for black Americans of his time, Richard Wright's haiku, disciplined and steeped in beauty, are a culmination: not only do they give added scope to his work but they bring to it a universality that transcends both race and color without ever denying them.

Wright wrote his haiku obsessively--in bed, in cafes, in restaurants, in both Paris and the French countryside. His daughter Julia believes, quite rightly, that her father's haiku were "self-developed antidotes against illness, and that breaking down words into syllables matched the shortness of his breath." They also offered the novelist and essayist a new form of expression and a new vision: with the threat of death constantly before him, he found inspiration, beauty, and insights in and through the haiku form. The discovery and writing of haiku also helped him come to terms with nature and the earth, which in his early years he had viewed as hostile and equated with suffering and physical hunger. Fighting illness and frequently bedridden, deeply upset by the recent loss of his mother, Ella, Wright continued, as his daughter notes, "to spin these poems of light out of the gathering darkness."

I am nobody:

A red sinking autumn sun

Took my name away.

Make up you mind, Snail!  
You are half inside your house,  
And halfway out!

You moths must leave now;  
I am turning out the light  
And going to sleep.

All right, You Sparrows;  
The sun has set and you can now  
Stop your chattering!

On winter mornings  
The candle shows faint markings  
Of the teeth of rats.

With a twitching nose  
A dog reads a telegram  
On a wet tree trunk.

The webs of spiders  
Sticking to my sweaty face  
In the dusty woods.

In the falling snow  
A laughing boy holds out his palms  
Until they are white.