

HAIKU REMIX ACTIVITY

What is haiku?

Haiku is a Japanese poetry form that uses just a few words to capture a moment and create a picture in the reader's mind. It is like a tiny window into a scene much larger than itself.

Traditionally, haiku is written in three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line.

Characteristics of Haiku

- A focus on nature.
- A "season word" such as "snow" which tells the reader what time of year it is.
- A division somewhere in the poem, which focuses first on one thing, than on another. The relationship between these two parts is sometimes surprising. Instead of saying how a scene makes him or her feel, the poet shows the details that caused that emotion. If the sight of an empty winter sky made the poet feel lonely, describing that sky can give the same feeling to the reader.

Examples of Haiku

An old silent pond...

A frog jumps into the pond,

splash! Silence again.

by Basho (1644-1694)

Over the wintry

forest, winds howl in rage

with no leaves to blow.

by Soseki (1275-1351)

Try It!

1. Write two lines about something beautiful in nature. You can use the pictures below to give you ideas. Don't worry about counting syllables yet.
2. Write a third line that is a complete surprise, that is about something completely different from the first two lines.
3. Look at the three lines together. Does the combination of these two seemingly unrelated parts suggest any surprising relationships? Does it give you any interesting ideas?
4. Now rewrite the poem, using the 5-syllable, 7-syllable, 5-syllable format and experimenting with the new ideas or perspectives that have occurred to you.