

School Visit Guide

HAIKU IN THE GARDEN

Haiku is a short poem that describes an image, maybe from the poet's imagination or a real memory, connected to a specific season or moment in nature.

Many haiku poets combine two different objects into the single image they're describing. For example, a famous haiku, written by Matsuo Basho in Japanese and translated into English is:

**an ancient pond—
a frog jumps in
sound of water**

The poem combines the image of a pond and the image of a frog. The Japanese word for frog used in this poem refers to a frog species that comes out in the spring.

An important aspect of haiku is to capture a moment in nature. The best way to find that moment is to look at the world with an open mind. Notice the small phenomenon around you and the little surprising moments. The story behind the frog poem above is a good example of a haiku coming from a poet's real experience. One day, Basho was sitting with his friends in a quiet tea garden when he heard the sound of a frog leaping into the water of a nearby pond. Basho was happily surprised and wrote the haiku above with the help of his friends.

Many of us have been taught that a haiku has to have 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and 5 syllables in the third line. This is actually not true. Japanese haiku are usually 5/7/5 or 7/7 sounds, but English haiku don't follow that structure. That's because English and Japanese have two different spoken rhythms.

THE STANDARD FORM FOR AN ENGLISH HAIKU:

- About 11-15 syllables
- 10 or fewer words
- 1-3 lines
- Doesn't rhyme
- Pairs two images together

Below are some more examples of haiku written by Kobayashi Issa, originally in Japanese and translated to English, published in "The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, & Issa edited by Robert Hass"

**What a strange thing!
to be alive
beneath cherry blossoms**

**The old dog-
listening for the songs
of earthworms?**

**That wren-
looking here, looking there.
You lose something?**

**What good luck!
bitten by
this year's mosquitoes too.**

**A huge frog and I,
staring at each other,
neither of us moves.**

**Red morning sky,
snail;
are you glad of it**

ACTIVITIES

- Using the handout "Find Your Haiku Moment in the Garden", take time to notice, observe, and connect with natural phenomena in the Garden. Talk with your students about their observations and anything they find surprising, interesting, or beautiful. Those can all be haiku moments. What makes them special?
- Reflect on a moment in the Garden and write a short haiku. You may also choose to accompany your haiku with a picture or drawing (these are called haiga).
- In April, visit the Haiku Walk in Storza Woods to read winning haiku submissions. What season do they think the haiku refers to? What are the images? How does the haiku make them feel? Do they have a favorite? Why?



ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

APRIL 19
ATLANTA
HAIKU
FESTIVAL

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



FIND YOUR HAIKU MOMENT IN THE GARDEN

Haiku poets observe nature, looking for the “haiku moment” that inspires them. Haiku poems capture a single image, like a snapshot taken by a camera. **Can you find your haiku moment in the Garden? Use these hunt clues to help!**

1. Look for movement in the Garden.

What do you see?

2. Close your eyes and listen. **What do you hear?**

3. **Draw** a unique leaf.



4. Gently touch a leaf. **What do you feel?**

5. Watch a bug visiting a flower.

What would it be like to be that bug?

6. Look closely at the flower.

List 5 words to describe it.

7. Sit still for a minute or two and observe.

What do you notice?

8. List **three delightful things** you notice in the Garden.

9. Reflect on how you feel right now.

What emotions come to mind?

