

# Haiku for the Literacy Hour

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## **National Curriculum Links**

### **KS2 English**

#### **En2: Reading**

2a) Children will look for meaning beyond the literal when reading haiku poems.

4f) Children will consider the poetic forms of haiku and their effects.

#### **En3: Writing**

1a) Children will choose form and content to suit a particular purpose (in this case to write an effective and authentic style haiku poem).

1e) Children will use features of layout, presentation and organisation effectively to write a 3 lined haiku.

4a&b) Children will sound out phonemes and analyse words into syllables.

4j) Children will use appropriate terminology including vowel, adjective, verb etc.

These materials are intended for use within the literacy hour, designed to cover two lessons. By the end of the second session, pupils should have completed their first haiku poem and have a thorough understanding of what a haiku is. During the two sessions, grammatical points such as the difference between parts of speech and what a syllable is, are touched upon. It is anticipated that this will be reinforcing issues already covered, rather than introducing them. Learning Intentions (**LI**) are given for each stage.

# LESSON 1

## What is a haiku?

(Whole class reading / collaborative writing)

**LI: to understand what a haiku is.**

A haiku is a short poem, invented by the Japanese poet, Basho. Only three lines long, there is no room for waste - every word counts and must be chosen carefully. George Marsh, a distinguished poet and teacher of haiku, describes it as "a tiny poem filled with a love of nature". Here are two examples:

sudden shower  
in the empty park  
a swing still swinging  
*Margaret Chula*

fallen flower I see  
returning to its branch  
ah! a butterfly  
*Moritake*

What do you think of them? What do you notice about them? (eg. punctuation, lack of complete sentences...)

## **What's in a haiku?**

**LI: to be able to identify the importance of choice of words in a haiku**

A haiku is a description of a brief moment. The reader should be able to imagine the scene very clearly, so the description has to be effective. Words aren't wasted. Look at the first one: what is going on? Why is the swing still swinging? Why is the park empty?

It could have said "Suddenly it started raining and all the children in the park went home. One of them jumped off a swing and left it swinging after he had left." Which do you think has more impact? Why?

Now look at the second poem. What is happening here? Why does he say "ah! a butterfly"? What did he mean? Using full sentences, let's make up a longer version of this poem, with the same meaning. Now read the new version and the original: which is more vivid?

Each haiku is said to contain a "season" word - something which gives a clue about what time of year is being described. Can you spot these in the poems you've just looked at? At what time of year do you think they were written? Why?

## **Building a haiku**

(Word level work)

**LI: to understand the structure of a haiku.**

### **Syllables**

According to the rules, a haiku poem is supposed to have 17 syllables in it, 5 in the first line, 7 in the second and 5 in the last line. What is a syllable? Let's write some words on the board- start with one syllable words, then some two-syllable words. How about longer words? Can anyone think of a word with five or more syllables?

Look back at the poems - count the syllables. Do they stick to the rules? No - the rules are flexible, but it's a good idea to keep them in mind when you begin writing.

### **The present tense**

Haiku are about the present moment, so verbs are usually in the present tense. What does this mean? Which words in the poems are verbs in the present tense?

### **Adjectives, nouns and verbs**

What is an adjective? Can you spot the adjectives from the poems?

### **On your own**

(Directed group activities)

Give the worksheet to each group to be filled in. The worksheet can be found on page 7.

### **Homework**

Between now and tomorrow's lesson, make time to sit and concentrate on something you see outside. It could be a flower in your garden, a bird you see on the way home, rain falling on the roof of a building...something connected with nature. Look at it closely. Imagine you have to describe it to a blind person beside you. Describe what is happening using all your five senses. What can you see? Can you hear anything? Is there a smell? Can you taste anything? Are you touching anything?

Write down a list of some words you might use. Remember to include some adjectives, some nouns and some verbs - in the present tense. Write at least 10 words.

## LESSON 2

More examples of haiku

(Whole class reading / collaborative writing)

Give the children more examples of haiku to read. There are many excellent haiku resources. See the list on page 6. All include haiku that can be used in class.

Pick a selection to discuss in class. What is happening in each poem? Which is the season word? Which ones do you like best? Why?

### Some final touches

(word level work)

**LI: (i) to be able to identify different types of punctuation in haiku and understand their function.**

**(ii) to understand the difference between objective and subjective description**

a) haiku poems often have a break point in them. What does this mean? Think of all the ways you know of making a break. (Full stop, comma, dash, colon, exclamation mark, question mark) How many different ones can you see in the poems we are looking at?

b) when you are thinking of adjectives, try to avoid using words which imply judgement - like pretty, or beautiful. Different people have different ideas about what they think is beautiful, so in using the word you are making a judgement about what you see. Instead, try just to describe what you see (or hear, taste, smell etc). What other words can you think of which imply judgement and should be avoided? (e.g. sad, happy, kind, mean, angry, lovely etc.) Many haiku poems are able to convey a feeling of mood without ever spelling it out.

## **Writing the poem**

### **LI: to be able to write a haiku**

Prepare to begin writing your own poem - on your own or with a partner if you prefer. Go over all the points from the homework: this is to be the basis for your poem. Write down what you think you want to say, using as many words as you like, but try to fit it in to three lines, and try to include a break point. Remember also:

- to include a season word
- to use the present tense
- avoid saying the same thing twice - like cold and chilly
- avoid words which are subjective - like pretty, beautiful, happy, angry ....words that show your response to what you are describing. The person reading your poem might not have the same reaction.

Now look at what you have. Try to reduce your poem to the correct number of syllables (5-7-5), but if you are one or two over and you really can't think of a way to change it, don't worry. (Check with your teacher first).

## **Haiku Resources:**

### **In the moonlight a worm ....**

[www.haiku.insouthsea.co.uk](http://www.haiku.insouthsea.co.uk) A Free website with teaching ideas and source poems.

### **Haiku teaching kit** (KS3 but can be adapted)

Available from the British Haiku Society, price 4 pounds.

[www.BritishHaikuSociety.org](http://www.BritishHaikuSociety.org) or BHS, Sinodun, Shalford, Braintree, Essex. CM7 5HN.

### **Haiku Handbook**, William J Higginson. Kodansha 1989

### **Haiku International Association**

[http://haiku-hia.com/index\\_en.html](http://haiku-hia.com/index_en.html) Selected haiku from the 17<sup>th</sup> century are available on the website. Some of them have reviews.