
ARTSEDGE Lessons for Elementary School

You Too Can Haiku

How to write a haiku

Overview

Summary

This lesson will introduce students to the Japanese poetic form haiku. Students will briefly examine the geography of Japan and Japanese culture through examples of Asian art and music. After learning about and listening to some examples of haiku, they will write their own haiku. Lastly, students will illustrate and "publish" their finished poems in the style of a Japanese scroll using rice paper, ink, and watercolor.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Count the number of syllables in each line of a haiku
- Listen to examples of haiku
- Describe the Japanese poetic form of haiku
- Write an original haiku
- Illustrate an original haiku
- Listen to Japanese music
- Discuss Asian art
- Discuss Japan's geographic features and location

Teaching Approach

Arts Inclusion

Teaching Methods

- Modeling
- Demonstration
- Group or Individual Instruction
- Guided Practice
- Independent Practice

Assessment Type

Performance Assessment

Key Staff

This lesson can be taught by a classroom teacher or teachers with a basic understanding of literature in informal settings. It may be helpful to collaborate with an art teacher for the scroll-making portion of the lesson.

Key Skills

Making Art: Composing and Planning, Producing, Executing and Performing, Analyzing Assessing and Revising

Developing Arts

Literacies: Understanding Genres, Applying Vocabulary, Analyzing and Evaluating - Critique

Global Connections:

Connecting to History and Culture, Connecting with Other Arts

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Preparation

Lesson Setup

Teacher Background

What You'll Need

It may be helpful to read several haiku to familiarize yourself with how natural images are successfully condensed. It will also be careful to write several haiku so that you are able to provide many [examples](#) to students.

Prior Student Knowledge

Haiku is most effectively taught after students have an understanding of syllables

Basic concept of poetry elements (*even if they are unable to name them*) including:

- Language
- Syllabication
- Beauty
- Setting
- Narrator
- Metaphor
- (including personification and simile)

Grouping

- Individualized Instruction
- Small Group Instruction

Staging

Have a few example haiku written out on chart paper to be displayed during the lesson.

Make a scroll (instructions found in «Apply» section of lesson) to show students.

Accessibility Notes

Arrange seating so that deaf/hard of hearing students are close to where instruction will be delivered.

Blind/Low Vision students will benefit from handouts with large print or braille.

English Language Learners may benefit from supplemental vocabulary sheets that define literary terms and difficult words.

Supervised breaks may help struggling/striving readers.

Naturalist learners will enjoy the motif of the haiku they study and may be able to assist other students' understanding.

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Instruction

ENGAGE

1. Ask students if they remember a time when they had a very important idea to express but just couldn't find the words. If possible, cite an example of your own. Give students an opportunity to share.

2. Ask students if they remember having to say something really important but could only use very few words. Explain to students that the Japanese form haiku expresses significant ideas using very few words. Tell them that a traditional haiku has just three brief lines! Discuss this possibility. Ask students:

- Do you believe a poet can express a whole idea using only 3 lines?
- Do you think you could express a complete thought in only 17 syllables? What about seven syllables? Or even five?

Materials

Resources

[Printable Assessment Rubric](#)

Required Technology

- 1 Computer per Classroom
- Internet Access
- Projector
- Whiteboard/Screen
- Mobile Media Player
- Speakers

Required Plugins

 [Flash](#)

 [PDF](#)

Resources in Reach

Here are the resources you'll need for each activity, in order of instruction.

Assess

[Assessment Rubric](#)

3. Have students practice condensing their ideas by relaying the following experiences in less than 17 syllables. Post the thoughts or read them aloud. Give students a few minutes to complete each.

You are very angry at a younger sibling for spilling milk all over your homework. It is due today and you have no time to write it over before the bus comes.

You would like to thank a role model for helping you become a better person.

You are overcome with joy as you learn that your parents have just purchased season passes to the local amusement park.

4. Now have students share their condensed ideas with the class. Discuss the challenges of squeezing their thoughts into such a small space. (*Possible answer: I felt like I couldn't say all I needed to say to make my point.*) Discuss how they met the challenge. (*Possible answer: By leaving out any unnecessary information.*) Discuss what they discovered about their ability to express grand ideas in small spaces. (*Possible answer: I can say what I need to say in only a few words.*)

BUILD KNOWLEDGE

1. Introduce or review the following vocabulary.

Island: land mass that is surrounded by water

Archipelago: a group of many islands in a large body of water

Hemisphere: half of the terrestrial globe

Latitude: the angular distance between an imaginary line around a heavenly body parallel to its equator and the equator itself

Longitude: the angular distance between a point on any meridian and the prime meridian at Greenwich

2. Distribute maps to the students. If possible, use a large class map as a visual aid at the front of the room. Explain to students that Japan is made up of four large islands and thousands of smaller islands. Note that this is an example of an archipelago.

3. Ask students the following questions using the [map of Japan](#) as a visual reference.

What bodies of water surround Japan? (*Correct answer: The North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan.*)

In what hemisphere is it located? (*Correct answer: Northern hemisphere.*)

What is its latitude and longitude? (*Correct answer: Latitude 36°00' N and Longitude 138°00' E*)

Help students to make the connection that Japan is located in the Eastern hemisphere. Explain that this area of the world is sometimes simply referred to as the "East."

4. Now ask students to share some examples of landscape painting that they may have seen. Some students may remember paintings they have seen at museums, in books, or in their own homes. Show students some examples of landscape paintings created by western artists if they are unfamiliar with the term. [Landscape Painting: Artists Who Love the Land from the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies](#) introduces students to four artists (George Catlin, Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, and Winslow Homer) who attempted to capture the size and splendor of the American landscape. Basic principles of landscape painting are introduced, as well as the history and geography of the western United States. Discuss the commonalities among the artists and paintings.

5. Next, show the students some examples of Japanese landscape paintings. The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery site offers an extensive collection of [Japanese Art](#). Search the [collection](#) using the keyword "landscape" to find many excellent examples of Japanese landscape painting. Ask students to consider how this style of painting compares to landscapes they might have seen in the United States. Have students name some of the characteristics of Japanese landscape painting. They should be as specific as possible when they are describing pieces of art, noting, for example, whether the Japanese paintings set a particular mood (give them a particular feeling).

6. Now, listen to examples of classical music. Students should share how they would describe the genre of music (i.e., instrumentation, mood, etc.) Have the students listen to some traditional Japanese instrumental music. (See the Sources section for examples.) Ask them to discuss the types of sounds they hear. Ask them to compare the sounds to musical instruments of which they are familiar. Tell students that they can use the music for inspiration as they prepare to write their own haiku.

7. Before proceeding, review the following concepts, if necessary:

Lesson vocabulary

Comparisons made by students between Eastern and Western art and music

The definition and concept of a syllable

APPLY

1. Explain to students that a unique form of poetry called haiku was created in Japan. Many of the types of landscapes seen in the Japanese paintings viewed earlier are referred to in traditional haiku. In the [haiku by Basho](#), the poet mentions cherry blossoms, the kiri tree, and particular bridges.

2. Explain that haiku began in Japan around 1200 A.D. Go further to explain that haiku has a special poetic rhythm: it consists of seventeen syllables written in three lines. The first line contains five syllables, the second line contains seven syllables, and the third line contains five syllables. Tell students that haiku is usually written about something in nature. Animals are frequent subjects of haiku. A well-written haiku should also include a *kigo*. A *kigo* is a word that hints at a particular season of the year without actually naming the season. For example, a reference to squirrels might indicate that a haiku is set in autumn.

3. Share an example of haiku with the class. Post the chart paper with the example haiku. First, read it aloud to students. Then have them clap out and count the syllables of each line. Here is an sample haiku written by the poet Issa, suitable for classroom use:

*The least of breezes
Blows and the dry sky is filled
With the voice of pines*

4. As a class, answer and discuss the following questions:

Does this haiku have the correct number of syllables in each line?

Does it follow the 5-7-5 pattern?

Does this haiku make you think of a particular season?

Does it have a *kigo*?

Is an animal mentioned in this haiku?

What elements of nature are mentioned?

What does this haiku make you think about?

Is the tone of the haiku happy or sad?

What do you think the poet was thinking about when he wrote this? (*Remember, there are no right or wrong answers to this one, just ideas!*)

5. Read two or three more examples of haiku to the class (See the Sources section for examples of haiku). Display the haiku on chart paper so that all of the students can read along as you read aloud. Have students clap and count the syllables in each. Continue with the same discussion questions outlined above.

6. Explain to students that they will now write an original haiku. Review the format for writing a correct haiku. Have a brief brainstorming session to generate a list of possible "nature" topics. Write these topics on chart paper.

7. Allow students sufficient time to write an original haiku. You may wish to play some of the recordings of traditional Japanese music to inspire students as they write.

8. When they have completed their poems, have students work in pairs, reading their haiku to one another, and counting and clapping out the syllables to make sure they have constructed them properly. Students can further discuss their poems using the questions listed above. Allow students to share their haiku with the class.

REFLECT

1. Tell students that they will transfer their poems onto a scroll. Display for students a completed scroll.

2. Before beginning their scrolls, have students plan their watercolor design and lettering by completing a practice sketch. (*Note: You may wish to ask the art teacher at your school to assist with this part of the lesson.*)

3. Have students practice using the watercolors. It is important for students to understand that watercolors are thinner than tempera paint. There are two methods for applying the color to the paper. They can wet the paper with plain water first, and then add the color. Or, they can apply the water and color at the same time. The students might want to experiment with this process for a few minutes before applying the watercolor to their final scroll.

4. Have students apply the watercolor to their scroll before adding the lettering. Using the watercolors, students should paint a scene in the style of the Japanese paintings they have viewed and discussed. (*Note: Paintings should use muted colors, broad brush strokes, etc.*)

5. Have students neatly copy the haiku onto the rice paper. Students may wish to copy their poems by using a pencil and/or placing a lined piece of paper underneath the rice paper so their writing will stay straight. Students should trace over the pencil lines with a permanent black marker. (*Note: Be sure to use permanent markers; a water-soluble marker could smear.*)

6. When the pictures have dried, the students should glue thin dowels to the top and bottom of the paper so that they can be rolled up like a scroll. Dowels should extend beyond the edges of the paper on each side. Thin cord can be tied to either side of the dowel at the top to create a hanger for the poem.

7. Display the completed scrolls in the classroom.

ASSESS

Assess your student's work using the [Assessment Rubric](#) located within the Resource Carousel.

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next: [Standards](#) >

Standards

ARTSEDGE Lessons connect to the National Standards for Arts Education, the Common Core Standards, and a range of other subject area standards.

Common Core/State Standards

Select state and grade(s) below, then click "Find" to display Common Core and state standards.

National Standards For Arts Education

Visual Arts

Grade K-4 Visual Arts Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Grade K-4 Visual Arts Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Grade K-4 Visual Arts Standard 5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

Visual Arts

Grade K-4 Visual Arts Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

National Standards in Other Subjects

Geography

Geography Standard 2: Knows the location of places, geographic features, and patterns of the environment

Language Arts

Language Arts Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Throughout the nation, standards of learning are being revised, published and adopted. During this time of transition, ARTSEDGE will continually add connections to the Common Core, Next Generation Science standards and other standards to our existing lessons, in addition to the previous versions of the National Standards across the subject areas.

The Arts Standards used in ARTSEDGE Lessons are the 1994 voluntary national arts standards. The Arts learning standards were revised in 2014; please visit the **National Core Arts Standards** (<http://nationalartsstandards.org>) for more. The Kennedy Center is working on developing new lessons to connect to these standards, while maintaining the existing lesson library aligned to the Common Core, other state standards, and the

1994 National Standards
for Arts Education.

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CREDITS
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