

Tea Time: Haiku and Basho

post written by Wende

Haiku

Haiku is a form of poetry that began in Japan around the 17th century. Classic Haiku poem always has seventeen syllables in 3 or 4 lines. The first and last lines have five syllables each, and the middle line(s) has seven syllables. Haiku poems usually don't rhyme, and are almost always about nature and seasons of the year. Haiku is written in the present tense, and does not have to follow punctuation and capitalization rules. Because the poet writing haiku is trying to paint an image in the mind of the reader, each word chosen needs to be strong and meaningful.

Basho

Matsuo Kinsaku, considered the father of haiku, was born in Japan around 1644. He was one of six children in a family of samurai. As a child, he was a servant to Tōdō Yoshitada, who shared with him a love for haikai no renga, a kind of chain haiku that preceded the stand alone verses mentioned above. A poem was begun by Todo with a verse in the 5-7-5 format, called a hokku. Then Matsuo would follow that verse with a 7-7 format. This would go back and forth to create the collaborative poem. When Todo died in 1666, Matsuo's feudal service ended and he began to spend much of his life wandering about Japan. Thus he is known as a traveler as well as a poet, the author of some of the most beautiful travel diaries ever written in Japanese.

In 1680, Matsuo settled down in a small cottage. A friend planted a banana plant in his garden, so his cottage then became known as the Hermitage of the Banana Plant (Basho-an), and Matsuo began to use the name Basho. This hermitage burnt down, but another was built near the same spot, and it was here that he would disciple many in the art of Haiku.

In the summer of 1684 Basho made a journey back to his birthplace, which resulted in the travel diary *The Weatherbeaten Trip (Nozarashi Kiko)*. That same year he published the haiku collection entitled *Winter Days (Fuyu no Hi)*. Between 1684 and 1694, Basho separately published what was known as the *Seven Anthologies of the Basho School*, which featured approximately 2,500 verses, including some written by his disciples.

Basho went on his last journey in the summer of 1694. He became ill and died on November 28, 1694, surrounded by his disciples. The last poem he wrote during this illness is considered his poem of farewell:

tabi ni yande / yume wa kareno wo / kake meguru

falling sick on a journey

my dream goes wandering

over a field of dried grass

If available, read the beautifully illustrated picture book *Grass Sandals* by Dawnine Spivak about the travels of Basho.

Extend Your Learning

Record what you learn about Basho on the notebooking page.

Try writing your own Haiku.

Tea Time Treat

For your tea time treat, it would be nice to have on hand a selection of Japanese teas, including Green Tea, the norm for a Japanese Tea Ceremony, served with [Mochi Cakes](#), or our personal favorite, banana muffins!

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Basho

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Place of Death: _____

What is he famous for?

Try your hand at writing a haiku. Remember the rules: a haiku has 17 syllables (5 in the first line, 7 in the second line, and 5 in the second line). Also remember that it is usually about something in nature and has a hidden clue about the season of the year. Have fun!



My Haiku





by _____



Haiku



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7 _____

5 _____

5 _____

7 _____

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5 _____

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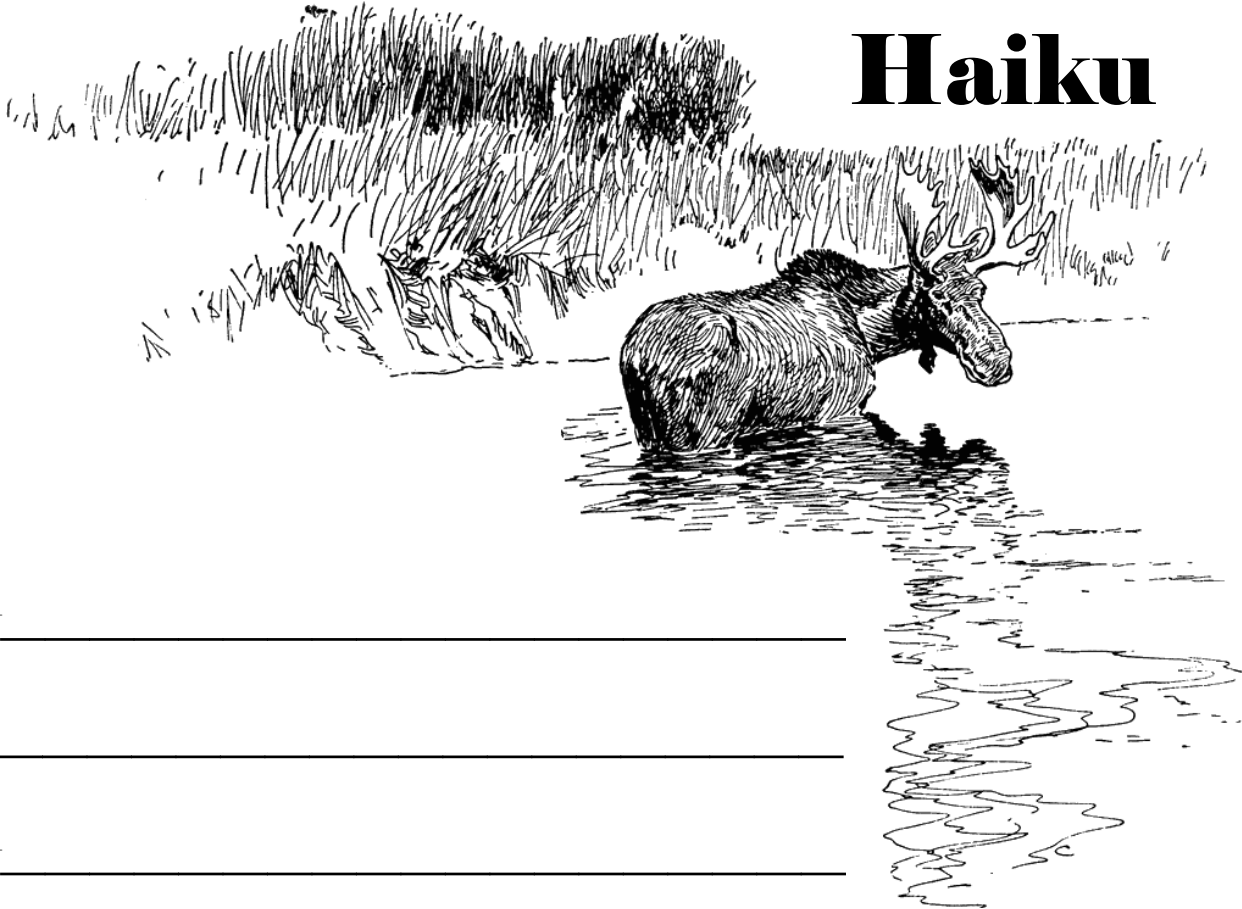
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Haiku



Haiku



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Haiku

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Haiku

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Haiku
By Basho

suddenly it pours -

shivering little monkey

needs a grass raincoat

a tiny pink crab

tickling me climbs up my leg

from glistening sea

Haiku
By Basho

suddenly it pours -

shivering little monkey

needs a grass raincoat

a tiny pink crab

tickling me climbs up my leg

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