

Thoughts on Writing Haiku and Haibun

Haiku

The most recent Haiku Society of America Member's Anthology has two examples that explain Haiku by example. The first by June Rowe, Arlington, MA. In ten words (5-2-5 syllables), she paints a complete picture telling the story of a homeless child.

in the shelter's lost
and found
her brown stuffed bear

A happy child and grandparent is painted in six words (3-3-3 syllables) by Bill De, Tacoma, WA.

popsicle red
a grandson's
spreading grin

Picture an image in your mind, then describe it in three lines with as few words as possible and you have an American Haiku. When writing Haiku and trying for the 5-7-5 syllables form, it's easier if you write using an online syllable counter so that you are not distracted by counting. <https://fathompublishing.com/textstats> and there are many others online, just search for "syllable counter."

Many Haiku include a twist or turn in the final line. A description of the twist (written by AI) follows the Haibun description.

Haibun

A Haibun is essentially a short prose poem describing a scene or event in a few sentences followed by a Haiku that sums up the experience or vision. Ridding a roller coaster, dropping the Thanksgiving turkey, a morning sunrise, watching a moon launch, almost any experience in your life is a possible prose poem. Sometimes a prose poem will seem complete without a following Haiku (it's fine to stop there with a prose poem) or the Haiku may not come to you immediately. Haiku's require careful pruning to eliminate unnecessary words and it's impossible to rush them.

You find many examples of Haiku and Haibun at the Haiku Society of America.

<https://www.hsa-haiku.org>

Ruth Carter provided this link to The Online Haiku Workshop Video Recording, "very good resource."

<https://theweesparrowpoetrypress.substack.com/p/online-haiku-workshop-video-recording>

I'll share an example I wrote recently.

Surprised by Fear

End of summer vacation, time to take my horse to the winter grazing grounds. As youth enjoying a last summer ride, I linger along Redwood Creek. We walk slowly under the tall trees listening to the babbling waters. It is evening as I turn Daisy toward the trail up the mountain. Dark when we reach the fence at the top marking where I would leave her. Carrying her bridle, I walk quickly down in darkness over the known trail, trotting over the smooth spots. My step falls on something soft, something that moves. A snake sounds its rattle. Jumping, I run faster, then stop, standing afraid, sensing danger everywhere.

youthful exuberance
tempered by caution
unexpectedly

Understanding the Twist in Haiku

(written by AI)

Definition of the Twist

In haiku, the twist, known as "kiri," is a vital component that enhances the poem's meaning. This structural element typically appears in the last line, providing a shift in perspective or insight that deepens the reader's understanding of the preceding imagery.

Importance of the Twist

- **Self-Commentary:** The twist allows the haiku to reflect on itself, creating a layered meaning.
- **Emotional Impact:** It often evokes a sudden realization or emotional response, transforming the initial observation into something more profound.
- **Engagement:** The twist invites readers to reconsider their interpretations, making the poem more engaging and thought-provoking.

Examples of Haiku with a Twist

Poet	Haiku Example	Description of Twist
Matsuo Basho	"Even in Kyoto— hearing the cuckoo's cry— I long for Kyoto."	The last line shifts from a simple observation to a deeper longing.
Kobayashi Issa	"This dewdrop world— Is a dewdrop world, And yet, and yet..."	The repetition emphasizes a poignant realization about impermanence.

The twist in haiku is not merely an artistic choice; it is essential for conveying the poem's full emotional and intellectual depth. By incorporating a twist, poets can transform a simple moment into a rich, reflective experience for the reader.