

Haiku:
Poetry in the Garden

Grades: 3-5

Portland Japanese Garden
Lesson Plans for the Classroom



Introductory Information for Teachers

The Poetry Stone

Nature has been an inspiration to poets of all ages and cultures around the world, and nowhere more explicitly than in Japan. During the 17th century, Japanese poets like Matsuo Basho developed what may be the shortest form of poetry ever invented, a form known throughout the world today as *haiku*. Haiku are poems that invoke an image and recreate moments of connection to nature. In Japan, people of all ages write haiku as a way to relax and gain perspective. (See Further Information for more about the historical background of the development of haiku.)

In Japanese, haiku traditionally have seventeen syllables divided into three lines of a fixed five-seven-five pattern. Today, haiku has grown in popularity worldwide and is written in many languages. Because of the differences in the structure and sounds of languages, flexibility in the strict syllable pattern is widely accepted.

The Portland Japanese Garden has only one poetic inscription in stone—a haiku written in 17 syllables, especially for this Garden, by renowned 20th century Japanese haiku poet, Shuoshi Mizuhara (1892-1981) upon his visit to the Portland Japanese Garden in 1966.



It reads, in Japanese:

*Koko ni kite
Nihon no haru hi
Teru gotoshi*

In English translation, it means:

Here, miles from Japan,
I stand as if warmed by the
Spring sunshine of home.

Further Information

Haiku is also an excellent example of how the Japanese took language, culture, and art forms learned from the Chinese and adapted them to their own cultural values, transforming them into art forms all their own.

When the Japanese first came into direct contact with the Chinese, they had no written language of their own. By the 6th century, they had begun to borrow the

Chinese ideographic writing system and to adapt it to signify words in the spoken Japanese language, eventually adding syllables in a simplified phonetic form to these characters to accommodate the very different Japanese grammar and pronunciation.

With the written language from China came the transmission of Buddhist and Taoist teachings, Confucian ethics, Chinese legal and political systems, and a world of exquisite poetry and literature. The poetic couplets inscribed in the pavilions of Chinese scholar gardens were studied carefully and much loved by the Japanese.

The tradition of haiku is an adapted version of a form of poetry called *hokku* (“the opening verse”). The Japanese had their own preference, however, for simplicity and brevity—characteristics that became evident in the 17th through 19th centuries in the development of haiku.

Lesson Plan

Introduction to the Lesson

The following Lesson Plan and Activity introduce Language Arts through poetry writing in English, using the haiku form. The unique style of haiku is wonderful for children to both read and create on their own for a number of reasons. It is about personal life experiences; it is short yet can challenge children to find new words and ways of describing what they see and feel; all students can succeed at writing haiku.

Lesson Overview

This is an introductory lesson to the art of writing haiku. Haiku typically describe moments in nature as experienced by the poet. Students will write haiku after a nature walk at the Portland Japanese Garden.

* This lesson can be an excellent expansion to the *Garden Sense: Exploring the 5 Senses Lesson*.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Create a list of words related to nature and personal experiences and feelings,
- Observe a natural space with a focus on personal experience and feelings invoked,
- Articulate the stylistic and structural elements of haiku,
- Write 2 haiku about 2 different places or reflecting 2 different perspectives of the same place.

Oregon Department of Education

Common Curriculum Goals

Language Arts

- Use a variety of written forms—including poems—to express ideas appropriate to audience and purpose across subject area
- Increase word knowledge through systematic vocabulary development; use new words accurately across the subject areas
- Pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish across the subject areas
- Demonstrate knowledge of spelling

The Arts

- Evaluate one's own work, orally and in writing

Classroom Preparation

Begin classroom preparation sufficiently far enough in advance of the trip to the Portland Japanese Garden that the children are familiar with the form of haiku poetry, have read and heard examples of haiku and have participated in writing several group haiku.

In preparation for your trip to the Portland Japanese Garden (detailed information follows):

1. Share examples of haiku (see Resources on pg. 5).
2. Talk about the common features of haiku poetry.
3. Create a list of haiku guidelines for the class.
4. Create a list of words that might be used to describe nature or feelings invoked in a natural setting.
5. Write 2-3 group haiku.
6. Read *One Leaf Rides the Wind* by Celeste Davidson Mannis (see Resources).
7. Explain the purpose of the visit to the Portland Japanese Garden and the behavioral expectations.

1. Read and listen to **examples of haiku poetry**. (See Resources on pg. 5 for additional examples.)
2. Talk about the **common features of haiku** as discovered in the poems you have read and heard.
 - Basic requirements of haiku are:
 - It consists of three short lines.
 - The first and third lines are usually shorter than the middle line.
 - It can be read in one long breath.
 - It is direct and avoids unneeded words.
 - It usually reflects nature or one of the four seasons.
 - It recreates the author’s personal feelings or experience at that moment.
 - It describes a moment in the present.
 - It often has a surprise or “punch line” at the end.
 - There are no firm rules regarding capitalization or punctuation.
 - Traditional Japanese haiku has three lines with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern. The syllable pattern is flexible when writing haiku in a language other than Japanese. (Teachers can adjust the requirements of the poems to challenge students more or less when developing the class guidelines in Step 3)
3. Create a **list of haiku guidelines** for the class to follow when writing haiku. If this is your students’ first experience with haiku, the fewer the limitations the better. (From this list of guidelines you and the class can create your own rubric with which to evaluate your haiku.

There is a sample rubric at the end of this lesson.)

4. With the class develop a **list of words** they anticipate they might use to describe nature and to reflect their feelings and personal experience in a natural environment.
5. As a class **write 2-3 group haiku** about the space and time you are in right now—write about an insect, or the light coming in through the window, for example. Try to keep the theme of nature even though you are in the classroom. Use the rubric you developed to evaluate your haiku.
6. On the day before the visit to the Portland Japanese Garden, read aloud the book *One Leaf Rides the Wind* by Celeste Davidson Mannis. (See Resources) Although this is a picture book that is appropriate for younger children, the pictures and haiku describing features of a Japanese garden will be a valuable inspiration for the students’ own haiku. (This book is available at the public library and for purchase at the Portland Japanese Garden Gift Store, www.japanesegarden.com. See the *One Leaf Rides the Wind* attachment at the end of this lesson for the text.)
7. Explain the purpose of the visit to the Portland Japanese Garden. The students will have a guided walk in the Garden and then will write 2 haiku about their experience in the Garden.

The Visit to the Garden

When you visit the Portland Japanese Garden, the students will have a guided walk through this natural space and then write 2 haiku about their personal experience. Time and space will be provided for the children to write haiku in the Garden or to record their observations at several garden features, according to the arrangements that you have made with the Tour Coordinator.

The Tour

Your tour through the Garden will be led by a Portland Japanese Garden Guide who has been trained to engage the children in this lesson. Your Guide will review the behavioral expectations with the children before beginning the stroll through the garden.

Prompts to engage the children

While it is important not to deprive the children of the opportunity to make independent observations and express personal reactions, there are prompts that you and the Tour Guide might use to engage the children and focus their observations when necessary. Some ideas:

- Close your eyes and listen. What do you hear?
- What words could you use to describe the pond?
- What do the sun and shadows make you think of?
- Describe the effect on you of all the shades of green.
- Can you hear something that you can't see? Can you identify it?
- What does this place remind you of?
- Can you see any reflections? How does an object look in its reflection?
- Be on the lookout for something surprising or unexpected.
- How does the air feel? Do you feel wind, dampness in the air, rain?
- How do the footsteps on the gravel sound? Can you walk on the gravel without making any sound?
- Describe what you feel when looking at the colors and patterns of the *koi*.
- How does it feel to sit on the ground or the stone benches at the Sand and Stone Garden?

Consolidation

Back at school, share thoughts about the Portland Japanese Garden experience and read together the haiku that were written at the Garden. Or, using the words from the students' worksheets, have each student write 2 individual haiku while the experience is still fresh in their minds.

Use the rubric the class developed to see how well students were able to follow the guidelines. Use the guidelines to revise the haiku.

Decisions for the Teacher to Make Before the Visit

- Will the children write the haiku on site at the Garden or will they write when they return to school?
- If they will be writing in the Garden, be sure the students have pencils and hard writing surfaces (either notebook or clipboard).
- If they will be writing when they return to school, each student can use the Student Handout (attached at the end of this Lesson) to record observations, feelings, and questions about the garden features. Be sure each student has a worksheet, pencil, and hard writing surface.
- Will they write haiku about 2 different locations in the Garden or will they write about one location from two different perspectives?

(Please tell the Tour Coordinator at the Portland Japanese Garden of your decisions, so that the tour can be planned appropriately.)

Discussion questions:

- What was challenging about writing your haiku?
- Do you think you were able to make the reader share your feeling?
- Did the author of the haiku on the Poetry Stone at the Portland Japanese Garden make you share his feeling? What do you think he was feeling?
- Is it easier or harder to make a very short poem?
- How is writing haiku different from writing other forms of poetry?

Additional Resources

Donegan, Patricia. 2003. *Haiku: Asian Arts & Crafts for Creative Kids*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing. (www.japanesegarden.com)

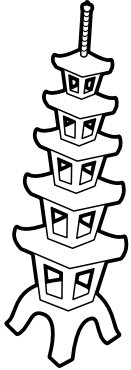
Mannis, Celeste Davidson. *One Leaf Rides the Wind*. 2002. Viking. (www.japanesegarden.com)

<http://www.worddance.com/> Word Dance was a quarterly non-profit creative writing and art publication that was 100% for and by kids (K-8th grade).

Example Haiku Rubric

	1	2	3
Form	Too long Cannot be read in one breath	A short poem A poem of three lines Can be read in one breath	A poem of three lines The second line is longer than the first or third lines
Spelling	Several spelling errors	Some spelling errors	Perfect spelling
Content	Does not talk about nature or anything related to natural world Is not about poet's personal experience	Talks about nature in some way Not about personal experience; not about experience on nature walk	Talks about natural world Written from personal experience on nature walk

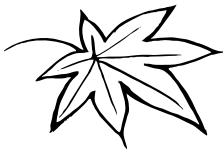
Directions: Find each of the five features in the Garden using the pictures on the left. Write down three (3) observations and one (1) question about each feature. Make your observations accurately, using precise words to describe each.



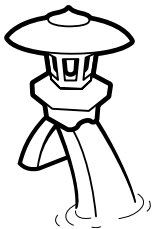
- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- ? _____



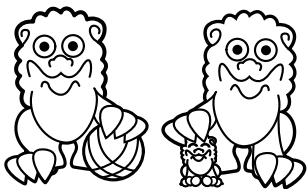
- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- ? _____



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- ? _____



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- ? _____



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- ? _____

Fact Sheet for Five Garden Features

from *One Leaf Rides the Wind* by Celeste Davidson Mannis

Five-Story Pagoda

- It was a gift from the city of Sapporo, Portland's Sister City.
- It is about 80-100 years old.
- It was originally located in the mayor's garden in Sapporo, Japan.
- It is made of granite.
- It has five stories symbolizing the five elements and five directions.

Koi

- Koi hibernate in winter
- The Garden's fish are trained to gather at feeding time.
- They eat ten times a day in summer.
- Koi are a symbol of perseverance as they swim upstream.
- They like to eat watermelon.
- They can live to be up to 75 years old.
- Legends say they live to be 250 years old.

Japanese Maple

- More than 100 varieties of maple exist.
- Some varieties turn red in the autumn.
- The large maple in the Flat Garden is about 100 years old.
- They are a symbol of fall in Japan.
- The vine maple in the Natural Garden is a native Oregon species.

Kotoji Stone Lantern

- One leg is in the water.
- It is a replica of a lantern in the famous Kenroku-en Garden in Japan.
- This lantern was chosen by the original Garden designer.
- We light all the lanterns at Moonviewing in September.
- Its shape resembles the bridge of the Japanese stringed instrument called a koto.

Lion Dogs

- They are the guardians of the Garden gate.
- Lion dogs originated in China.
- They are made of stone.
- The female lion has a cub under her paw.
- One has its mouth open; one has its mouth closed representing *in-yo* in Japanese (*yin-yang* in Chinese)—the positive and negative forces of the universe.

Haiku: Poetry in the Garden

Expansions of this Lesson Plan for Other Levels

Grades K-2

Students in this age group can become familiar with haiku through listening and through participating in writing a simple group haiku after a visit to the Portland Japanese Garden.

- Read aloud *One Leaf Rides the Wind* (see Resources on pg. 5) and many other examples of haiku.
- Students can clap the syllables of poems. The emphasis is not on form or counting the syllables, but simply to feel the rhythm of these short poems.
- When visiting the Garden, adult chaperones compile a list of the descriptive words that the children use to describe the place and their feelings. (Be sure to have writing implements and hard writing surfaces for the adults.)
- Write a cooperative group haiku using the compiled list of words.
- Basic guidelines might be:
 - haiku is short
 - it can be recited in one breath
 - it describes nature and your own feelings or experience

Grades 6-8

Read the text of *One Leaf Rides the Wind* and other examples of haiku before the visit to the Garden. Students in this age group can write haiku with more defined and focused guidelines, using revision to produce a tighter and more sophisticated product.

Additional guidelines might include:

- Make the second line longer than the first and third lines.
- Attempt to make the haiku less than 17 syllables.
- Attempt the exact 17 syllable, traditional 5-7-5 form.
- Do not tell the reader how you feel; try to recreate the same feeling in the reader.
- Do not use metaphors or similes.
- Write the haiku in the present tense; it should sound as if it is happening as the reader is reading it.
- Avoid unneeded words. (There is a good discussion of avoiding unneeded words at www.worddance.com in the section “The Haiku Form”.)

Much of the art of writing good haiku comes from revising. Have the students revise their haiku several times, eliminating unnecessary words, choosing the most evocative descriptive words, focusing on a surprise or “punch line” at the end.

Read the haiku aloud to the rest of the class and have the class describe the feeling it evoked. Have the author determine how closely that matched his or her intent.