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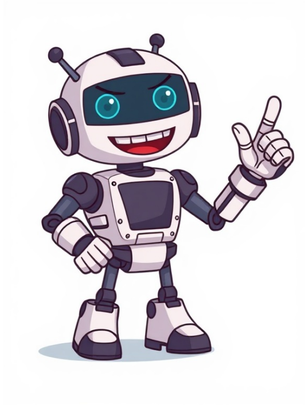

Haiku is an ancient form of Japanese poetry often containing (in English) a total of 17 syllables shared between three lines that are arranged in a pattern of 5-7-5. The fist line consists of 5 syllables, the second line 7, and the last line contains another 5 syllables. It is important to note that the original Japanese haiku was measured in sounds, or "breaths," not English syllables. The 5-7-5 approach was a rough approximation. Many traditional Japanese and English-language literay haiku are much shorter than the 5-7-5 format of the West. That said, poetry is art and 5-7-5 is still very popular today. Some Japanese poets still embrace that framework. Still, Haiku Poetry is Far More Complex For many young students, haiku begins and ends with 5-7-5. My then 9-year-old nephew came home from school one day anxious to share his first haiku: Very athletic. They go ooh ooh ooh aah aah. They like climbing trees. Haiku is a form of traditional Japanese poetry, renowned for its simple yet hard-hitting style. They often take inspiration from nature and capture brief moments in time via effective imagery. Here are 40 Haiku poems that ought to leave you in wonder.1. The Old Pond by Matsuo BashOne of the four great masters of Japanese haiku, Matsuo Bash is known for his simplistic yet thought-provoking haikus. The Old Pond, arguably his most famous piece, stays true to his style of couching observations of human nature within natural imagery. One interpretation is that by metaphorically using the pond to symbolize the mind, Bash brings to light the impact of external stimuli (embodied by the frog, a traditional subject of Japanese poetry) on the human mind.2. The light of a candle by Yosa BusonThe light of a candleIs transferred to another candle spring twilight.Another of haikus Great Masters, Yosa Buson is known for bringing in a certain sensuality to his poems (perhaps owing to his training as a painter). In this haiku, his image of a single lit candle against the twilight artfully depicts how one candle can light another without being diminished until you have a star-filled sky.3. Haiku Ambulance by Richard BrautiganA piece of green pepperfelloff the wooden salad bowl:so what?For an example of a haiku that doesnt adhere to traditional conventions, look no further than Richard Brautigans cheeky Haiku Ambulance. Eagle-eyed readers will notice that the syllable count doesnt fall into the 5-7-5 pattern, and the lines are off-balance, too. So what? Appropriately, this poem suggests that nothing means anything at all in a peppers exile from a salad bowl, in the rules of a poem, or even (dare we say) life.4. A World of Dew by Kobayashi IssaThis world of dewis a world of dew,and yet, and yet.The third master of Japanese haiku, Kobayashi Issa, grew up in poverty. From this humble background emerged beautiful poetry that expressed empathy for the less fortunate, capturing daily hardships faced by common people. This particularly emotionally stirring haiku was written a month after the passing of Issas daughter.5. A Poppy Blooms by Katsushika HokusaiI write, erase, rewriteErase again, and thenA poppy blooms.In this piece, Katsushika Hokusai draws similarities between life and his writing both processes of repetitive creation and destruction. Neither are linear or smooth, and both demand constant work and perseverance. However, the reward of his perseverance is something undeniably beautiful.6. In the moonlight by Yosa BusonIn pale moonlightthe wisterias scentcomes from far away.Buson invites the reader to share in his nostalgia with elements from nature such as pale moonlight and the wisterias scent triggering the our visual and olfactory senses the fact that the scent is coming from far away adds a transportive element to the poem, asking us to imagine the unseen beauty of this tree.7. The earth shakes by Steve SanfieldThe earth shakesjust enoughto remind us.Penned in English, poet Steve Sanfields only haiku is a quiet reminder of our mortality, inviting us to consider what may be important to us before its too late.8. In a Station of the Metro by Ezra PoundThe apparition of these facesin the crowd;Petals on a wet, black bough.All imagery with zero verbs, Ezra Pound delicately captures a still moment in time. The first image entirely comprises humans (faces in the crowd), while the second only shows nature (petals). By likening the two, the poet highlights the fleeting nature of life be it the people we encounter every day or the wilting petals.9. The Taste of Rain by Jack KerouacThe tasteof rain Why kneel?Yep, the iconoclastic author behind On the Road also wrote haikus! As one of the Beat Generations leading figures, he was part of a movement that produced some of the 20th centurys influential poems. This particular haiku has many interpretations with many assuming this to be Kerouacs take on religion and God.10. Haiku [for you] by Sonia Sanchezlove between us isspeech and breath. loving you isa long river running.Haiku [for you] acts as a warm, comforting hug. The poet draws similarities between the nature of their love and that of speech and breath natural and unforced. If someone whispered this to you, wouldnt you feel love, too?11. Lines on a Skull by Ravi Shankarlifes little, our headssad. Redeemed and wasting claythis chance. Be of use.While many haiku have focused on the brevity of life, this entry from Ravi Shankar (no relation to the sitar player) takes a slightly darker approach. Using clay as a metaphor, Shankar reminds us that we have this one chance to shape our life to either waste it away or be of use.12. O snail by Kobayashi IssaO snailClimb Mount Fuji,But slowly, slowly!Aside from his pessimistic worldview, Issa was also renowned for shining a spotlight on smaller, less-than-glamorous creatures like grasshoppers, bugs, and sparrows. In O snail, he gently reminds the determined snail that while there are important things to do in life (like climbing mountains), theres more to life than speed! The mountain isnt going to go anywhere, is it?13. I want to sleep by Masaoka ShikiI want to sleepSwat the fliesSoftly, please.The last of the Four Great Masters of haiku, Masaoka Shiki had a very direct writing style. Suffering tuberculosis for much of his life, his poetry was an outlet for his isolation. He would often focus on the trivial details of sick-room life, and in this haiku, his sadness and fatigue are almost palpable.14. JANUARY by Paul HolmesDelightful displaySnowdrops bow their pure white headsTo the sun's glory.This haiku is a part of Paul Holmes A Year in Haiku Poem, where he attempts to capture the essence of each month of the year. Holmes does so fittingly, using vivid imagery to depict the seamless changing of the seasons as the snowdrops bow their white heads to make way for the suns glory.15. [snowmelt] by Penny Hartersnowmelton the banks of the torrentsmall flowersBy placing the rivers powerful torrent next to a delicate flower, Harter captures how all of natures diverse elements coexist beautifully. While the torrent certainly paints a more aggressive image than most haiku, it's balanced by the idea of the snow melting and the delicacy of the flowers emerging from spring.16. [meteor shower] by Michael Dylan Welchmeteor showera gentle wavewets our sandalsAnother non-traditional haiku that eschews the 5-7-5, Welchs entry here is a snapshot of a rare moment shared between the speaker and someone else. The order of the three images creates a sense of the poet lowering their eyes from shooting stars in the sky, before settling on a strangely intimate image of sitting on the beach. With all the wonders of the universe, nothing compares to a moment shared with someone close to you.17. [The west wind whispered] by R.M. HansardThe west wind whispered,And touched the eyelids of spring:Her eyes, Primroses.By personifying the whispering west wind, R.M. Hansard gives life and agency to the natural world. Add in a second protagonist, the primrose-eyed spirit of spring, and there we have it: a sensual dance that ushers in the changing of the seasons.18. After Killing a Spider by Masaoka ShikiAfter killinga spider, how lonely I feelin the cold of night!Masaoka Shikis After Killing a Spider is a prime example of haikus ability to capture the minutiae of life. Filled with loneliness and regret, After Killing a Spider depicts exactly what it says on the tin. But then it goes further into the speakers emotions after the incident for after killing his only companion, the speaker is left alone in the cold of the night. Whats also interesting is that the first break comes after the word killing, emphasizing the brutality the speaker felt on performing the act, even if it was just a spider.19. [I kill an ant] by Kato ShusonI kill an antand realize my three childrenhave been watching.If you haven't had your fill of bug-killing action, heres a haiku from Kato Shuson. As with After killing a spider, the speaker doesnt feel remorse at having ended a life but perhaps regrets allowing their kids to see their savage tendencies. Though short in length, this haiku imparts a powerful message: be the person that you want your children to see.20. Over The Wintry by Natsume SseOver the wintryforest, winds howl in ragewith no leaves to blow.One can easily imagine the person represented by the metaphorical wind in this haiku: someone in their winter years, who has spent the year railing against the world, only to be left with no one left to listen. While spring often represents the idea of hope in poetry, winter surely is the season of regret.21. [cherry blossoms] by Kobayashi Issacherry blossomsfall! fall!enough to fill my bellyCherry blossoms are a big deal in Japan, so its no surprise that they often turn up in haiku. In this poem, the cherry blossom festival must be in full swing, and the speaker can barely control their excitement, wishing for more an excess of it that, surfeiting, the appetite might sicken and so die (as Shakespeare might say). Its enough to make you want to book the next available flight to Tokyo.22. [The lamp once out] by Natsume SosekiThe lamp once outCool stars enterThe window frame.This is a classic by Natsume Soseki, a widely respected novelist and haiku writer. You might read it literally, thinking that one can marvel at the night sky in all of its wonder as soon as the light of the lamp on the street goes out, or you can also interpret the lamp as an active mind only when we manage to quiet it can we access a deeper, wiser source of light, represented by the stars.23. [The snow of yesterday] by GozanThe snow of yesterdayThat fell like cherry blossomsIs water once againAs you might have noticed, the art of writing haiku demands an almost superhuman level of observation. Aida Bunnosuke, also known as Gozan, speaks about the impermanence of our surroundings by noticing how snowflakes turn into water in very little time. This theme of the ephemeral nature of life is again emphasized by the cherry blossoms, which only last for about a week after peak bloom.24. [First autumn morning] by Murakami KijoFirst autumn morningthe mirror I stare intoshows my father's face.Born in Tokyo in 1865, Murakami Kijo helped with the founding of Hototogisu, a literary magazine responsible for popularizing the modern haiku in Japan. In this particular piece, Kijo uses the simple act of looking into the mirror to convey ones struggle with mortality.25. [Just friends:] by Alexis RotellaJust friends:he watches my gauze dressblowing on the line.Contemporary poet Alexis Rotella knows how to tap into common human experiences like, for instance, a friendship that gets in the way of love. In an instant, we can feel the frustration for a potential that wont be satisfied.26. [What is it but a dream?] by Hakuen EkakuWhat is it but a dream?The blooming as wellLasts only seven cyclesThis pensive haiku by Hakuen Ekaku broodingly reflects on the theme of death. As haiku writers like to remind us, the blooming of the most beautiful of natures occurrences like spring cherry blossom are always temporary. Coincidentally, Hakuens life also spanned seven cycles, as he died at the age of sixty-six.27. [Even in Kyoto,] by Kobayashi IssaEven in Kyoto,Hearing the cuckoos cry,I long for KyotoIn this classic piece by Kobayashi Issa, a birds call brings him back to his early days as a student in Kyoto. The poem exudes a certain nostalgia and longing for that time in his life which is now lost something we can all relate to, in our own ways.28. [The crow has flown away:] by Natsume SosekiThe crow has flown away:Swaying in the evening sun,A leafless treeThe changing of the seasons is a theme common to Zen Buddhist philosophy, and its influence can be felt in many haiku. Through a series of simple yet provocative images, Natsume Soseki captures the seamless shift as the summer sun sets to make way for the leafless fall.29. [The neighing horses] by Richard WrightThe neighing horsesare causing echoing neighsin neighboring barnsAfrican American novelist and poet Richard Wright often used the haiku round, a technique where the reader can go back to the first line from the third, as if repeating the poem in endless loops. Try it with this one! Fun fact: according to his daughter, he would draft his poems on disposable napkins before transferring them to paper.30. [Lily:] by Nick VirgilioLily:out of the waterout of itselfOne of the most celebrated English-language haiku, this poem from Nick Virgilio demonstrates the effectiveness of the kireji, or the cutting word which helps the haiku cut through space and time. Here, the abrupt colon after Lily allows the reader to fill in the gaps in search of the deeper meaning implied.31. Childless woman by Hattori RansetsuThe childless woman,how tenderly she caresseshomeless dolls An Edo-period samurai who became a poet under the tutelage of Matsuo Bash, Ransetsu is not usually considered a heavy-hitter in the history of the haiku. He did, however, have his moments, including this piece a melancholy portrait that is very much the For sale: baby shoes, never worn of its era.32. [A raindrop from] by Jack KerouacA raindrop fromthe roofFell in my beerWhile most Japanese haiku poems speak of humankinds harmonious relationship with nature, Jack Kerouacs contributions to the oeuvre put man and nature on opposing sides. After sketching an image that could easily have come from a pastoral scene a raindrop fall from a roof Keruoac pulls back to reveal the modern context. Representative of Kerouacs caustic writing style, we find that nature disrupts rather than soothes the speaker.33. [I was in that fire] by Andrew MancinelliI was in that fire,The room was dark and somber.I sleep peacefully.The first line of Andrew Mancinellis haiku certainly packs a powerful punch. Was it a real fire that our speaker was in, or a metaphorical one in their life? Have they overcome a tragedy and learned that all things must pass or do they now sleep, perchance to dream, in a place beyond that mortal coil? In either case, its chilling stuff!34. [Plum flower temple:] by Natsume SosekiPlum flower temple:Voices riseFrom the foothillsNatsume Soseki was known for weaving fairy tales into his haikus, and this work is a perfect example. Through the myth-like depiction of the plum flower temple or the unknown voices rising from the foothills, he creates a sense of wonder for the enigmas hidden in the world around us.35. [The first soft snow:] by Matsuo BashThe first soft snow:leaves of the awed jonquilbow lowThis piece by Matsuo Bash is another ode to the power of nature. You almost sense a certain reverence in the awed jonquil leaves that bow low to the snow a reminder that all life, however beautiful, eventually gives way to nature.36. [A caterpillar,] by Matsuo BashA caterpillar,this deep in fall still not a butterfly.Matsuo Bashs brilliance is captured in this simple haiku, which fully immerses you into the perspective of a caterpillar In just three lines. The way in which Bash depicts the impatient caterpillar conveys a feeling of frustration and desire for growth. In doing so, we realize the angst of unrealized potential.37. [On the one-ton temple bell] by Taniguchi BusonOn the one-ton temple bellA moonmoth, folded into sleep,Sits still.Consider the sound that a one-ton temple bell might make if it were to ring. Thats what Taniguchi Buson urges us to imagine, juxtaposing this deep bell against the silent moonmoth, unaware that it might be violently distrubed at any possible moment.38. [losing its name] by John Sandbachlosing its namea riverenters the seaAs the river gives up its very identity to contribute to the sea, it reminds us of the importance of selflessness. After all, no man is an island and we are all parts of a bigger whole, arent we?39. [Grasses wilt:] by Yamaguchi SeishiGrasses wilt:the braking locomotivegrinds to a halt.A wilting grass and a braking locomotive: by juxtaposing the two, the poet has created a power dynamic between the images one natural and one man-made. As the grass by the side of the tracks have wilted into the path of the locomotive, the poem suggests that even the mightiest of technological innovations must yield to nature.40. [Everything I touch] by Kobayashi IssaEverything I touchwith tenderness, alas,pricks like a brambleNo, not the Britney Spears song! Instead, the author Everything I touch speaks about the tangible pain he feels every time he seeks a kindred contact. Through only three lines, he conveys the wounds of love and the unforgiving ache of connection.If these haikus have unlocked the deep thinker and poet in you, you can learn how to write a haiku yourself, or turn to our post on 40 Transformative Poems About Life. Want to Completely Understand Haiku? We created the ultimate course completely covering haiku, created by our in-house team. Learn More Haiku has its roots in traditional Japanese poetry. The form was developed in the 17th century by the poet Matsuo Bash, who is considered one of the greatest haiku poets of all time. At the time, haiku was known as hokku and was the opening stanza of a longer collaborative poem known as a renga. A Brief History of Haiku The first versions of haiku were written in the 13th century and were composed as the opening part of a renga or a poem that was read aloud. The opening haiku was only one small part of what was a very long poem. Haikus from poets are found engraved onto large stones throughout Japan, especially in scenic areas (to accompany the area it is in) Haiku evolved to become a standalone form of poetry in the 19th century, thanks to the efforts of poets such as Masaoka Shiki, who introduced the term haiku and established the 5-7-5 syllable pattern that is still used today. Haiku gained popularity in Japan and eventually spread to other parts of the world, including the United States, where it became popular in the mid-20th century as part of the Beat Generation literary movement. Haiku is practiced by poets all over the world and has become a respected and valued form of poetry that is appreciated for its simplicity, focus on a single moment or feeling, and ability to capture the beauty of nature and the human experience. Haiku is a form of poetry that consists of three lines with a syllable count of 5-7-5. The traditional subject of haiku is nature, but modern haiku can be written about any subject matter. Haiku is often characterized by its simplicity, its focus on a single moment or feeling, and its use of seasonal or natural imagery. Matsuo Bash greatly influenced the haiku form. The first step in writing a haiku is to choose a subject. As mentioned earlier, haiku traditionally focuses on nature, but you can choose any subject that inspires you. Some common subjects for haiku include animals, landscapes, seasons, and emotions. Its helpful to consider what comes to mind about a particular place, season, or emotion. For example, if you want to write about fall, what comes to mind? Maybe colorful leaves, cooler weather, holidays, family, etc. Haiku is all about capturing a moment in time. Choose a specific moment or image you want to convey in your haiku. This could be as simple as a bird taking flight or a leaf falling from a tree. The best haiku transport the reader, through only a few words, to a place or feeling. Basho is well-known for doing this. For example, in The old pond he writes: The old pond; A frog jumps in The sound of the water. The reader is meant to imagine this short, beautiful moment. The elevated focus on this scene inspires an appreciation for the natural world and all its simple moments. In terms of the haiku 5-7-5, the above haiku does not conform to this, as it was a translation from Japanese (so syllable count wont be like-for-like). To make your haiku come alive, use sensory details to describe the moment youre trying to capture. Use vivid language to describe what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. This is seen through the poets use of phrases like swaying gently / All day long, as seen in Spring Ocean by Yosa Buson, or Fishes weep / With tearful eyes, as seen in The passing spring by Matsuo Bash. The syllable count of a haiku is 5-7-5. This means that the first line should have five syllables, the second line should have seven syllables, and the third line should have five syllables. Its important to stick to this structure to create a true haiku. When you read famous Japanese haiku, the translation usually eliminates the syllabic pattern. (Additionally, many early haiku did not use the syllabic pattern.) So, when looking for good examples of how the syllable pattern actually works, take a look at English-language haiku. For example, The West Wind by R.M. Hansard: The west wind whispered, And touched the eyelids of spring: Her eyes, Primroses. While modern haiku can be about any subject matter, traditional haiku often include seasonal or natural imagery. This helps to create a sense of time and place in the poem. Look for ways to incorporate seasonal or nature imagery into your haiku. Haiku is a form of poetry that relies on simplicity and understatement. Avoid using rhyme or metaphors in your haiku, as this can detract from the poems focus on a single moment or feeling. To help you better understand how to write a haiku, here are some examples: Everything I touch with tenderness, alas, pricks like a bramble. In this haiku, the focus is on describing an effort to touch with tenderness.The attempts fail, and the touches keep prickling like bramble[s]. This is a good example of how nature-related images can be used as symbols for something far deeper. After killing a spider, how lonely I feel in the cold of night! This haiku captures a moment in time with the image of the spider and what happened after the speaker killed it. It was a simple choice that didnt seem important at first. But, after the moment passes, it becomes clear that the poem is interested in the spider as a symbol. In pale moonlight~ the wisterias scent comes from far away. This haiku captures the sound and scent of leaves and flowers at night, specifically the smell of wisteria as it wafts in. The use of the word pale paints a very clear picture of the night sky, even though the poem is so short. Writing a haiku may seem simple, but it can be a challenging task to create a truly effective and impactful one. However, by following the basic principles of haiku and keeping it simple, you can create a beautiful and meaningful poem that captures a moment in time. Remember to choose a subject, focus on a moment, use sensory details, stick to the syllable count, use seasonal or natural imagery, and avoid rhyme and metaphors. By incorporating these elements into your haiku, you can create a poem that is both simple and powerful. With practice and dedication, you can become a skilled haiku writer and explore the many possibilities of this beautiful and unique form of poetry. What are the three rules of haiku? The three traditional rules of haiku are:1. The poem must consist of three lines.2. The first and third lines must have five syllables, while the second line must have seven syllables.3. The poem usually focuses on nature or the seasons and usually contains a cutting word that emphasizes a contrast or a change. What is the most famous haiku? One of the most famous haiku poems was written by Matsuo Basho, a Japanese poet who lived in the 17th century. The poem is: An old pond / A frog jumps in / The sound of water. Do haiku need to rhyme? Haiku does not need to rhyme. In fact, traditional Japanese haiku rarely use rhyme, as the focus is on the syllable count and the juxtaposition of images or ideas. Does grammar matter in haiku? Yes, grammar does matter in haiku. While haiku is known for its brevity and simplicity, it still follows the rules of grammar and syntax in order to convey its meaning effectively. How do you know if a haiku is good? Judging the quality of a haiku is subjective, as it depends on individual taste and the specific elements that one values in a poem. The best haiku follow the syllable pattern, focus on nature-related imagery (often connected to the seasons), and evoke some kind of emotion. Home Poetry Explained How to Write a Haiku Haiku Poem For The Month Of May Mellow, mild, May day, calling children out to play. Summer's on her way! Read Complete Poem A haiku is a short, unrhymed poem. The structure of a haiku in English typically follows a three-line, 5-7-5 syllable pattern.They originated in Japan and are now written in many languages worldwide.Haiku traditionally focus on nature and the seasons, but modern versions explore a wide range of topics.Traditional haiku follow specific rules like seasonal references and cutting words, while modern haiku allow more flexibility.Writing a haiku involves brainstorming, drafting, and revising to create a vivid, focused moment.Haiku are short poems that pack powerful imagery into just a few lines. In this guide, youll learn what a haiku is, explore the structure of a haiku, and discover how to write a haiku step by step. Youll also find traditional and modern examples of haiku that highlight the forms creativity and evolution. The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do Table of contentsWhat is a haiku?What is the structure of a haiku?How are haiku different from other poems?How to write a haikuExamples of haikuHaiku FAQsWhat is a haiku?A haiku (pronounced high-koo) is a short, unrhymed poem that follows a specific three-line, seventeen-syllable format. Unlike many other types of poetry, haiku do not rhyme.People across the globe read and write haiku in many different languages. Because of the unique syllabic and grammatical structures of different languages, haiku has slightly different formats from language to language. The main format well focus on here is the English haiku format.History of haikuHaiku originated in Japan and evolved from a poetic form called renga, a collaborative, linked-verse poem. The opening stanza of a renga, called a hokku, eventually became its own form. In the late 1800s, poet Masaoka Shiki helped define this form as haiku, giving it the name we use today.What is the structure of a haiku?At its core, a haiku is defined by its brief, structured form. In English, a traditional haiku is composed of three unrhymed lines with a specific syllable count:Line 1: 5 syllablesLine 2: 7 syllablesLine 3: 5 syllablesThis 5-7-5 pattern is a key feature of the form. Remember that haiku do not rhyme, as rhyming disrupts the simplicity and natural flow that the form aims to capture.While modern versions often bend the rules, traditional haiku follow specific guidelines, especially in their original Japanese form.Japanese haiku structure and formIn Japanese, haiku are written as a single line and follow the same 5-7-5 pattern, though not in syllables, but in on (phonetic units unique to Japanese). On are similar to syllables, but not exactly the same. As a result, direct translations between Japanese and English often shift syllable counts slightly.For example, a Japanese word might have three on but only two syllables in English. This is why English haiku use a three-line format instead of one.Traditional haiku elements: kireji and kigoIn addition to structure, traditional Japanese haiku often include two essential components:Kireji: A cutting word that creates a pause, contrast, or sense of closure. Theres no direct equivalent in English, but punctuation like an em dash () or ellipsis () is often used to mimic its effect.Kigo: A word or image that anchors the poem in a particular season, such as snow, cherry blossoms, or cicadas. Kigo help ground the haiku in nature, a central theme of traditional haiku.These elements are optional in English-language haiku, but including them can give your poem a more traditional feel. Many modern haiku choose to forgo kireji and kigo in favor of different creative approaches.How are haiku different from other poems?Haiku stand apart from other poetic forms due to their brevity, structure, and focus on capturing a fleeting moment. While rooted in tradition, the form has evolved over time, giving poets room to experiment while still preserving the essence of haiku.Traditional haiku themes and styleHistorically, haiku focus on nature, especially seasonal changes. A typical haiku captures a single moment in time and often juxtaposes two images to create contrast or evoke emotion.Heres an example of a traditional haiku by Matsuo Bash:An old silent pondA frog jumps into the pond,splash! Silence again.This haiku illustrates the traditional style: brief, sensory, and rooted in the natural world.Modern haikuOver time, haiku have evolved. While traditional haiku follow strict rules, modern haiku often experiment with format, subject matter, and structure.Heres an example of a modern haiku by Alexis Rotella:Just friends:he watches my gauze dressblowing on the line.This poem doesnt follow the 5-7-5 syllable structure but still feels like a haikubrief, intimate, and focused on a single moment. Its a good example of how form can be descriptive (based on feel and convention) rather than prescriptive (based on strict rules).Do haiku have subtypes?Unlike other poetic forms like sonnets or villanelles, which have spawned distinct subtypes over time, haiku have remained relatively unified in form. Despite modern experimentation, no widely recognized haiku subtypes have yet emerged.However, there are a few related forms that share structural or thematic similarities:Senry: follows the same 5-7-5 structure as haiku but focuses on human nature, irony, or humor instead of nature or seasonsTanka: an older, longer Japanese form comprising five lines with a 5-7-5-7-7 syllable pattern.Haibun: a combination of prose and haiku. How to write a haikuThough short, haiku can be surprisingly challenging yet deeply rewarding to write. Like any poem, the process benefits from a few key steps:1. BrainstormThe first step is to brainstorm. Start by choosing a topic. Traditional haiku often focus on nature or the seasons, but you can also write about personal experiences, emotions, or modern life. Think about a moment you want to capture.Need a spark to get started? Try Grammarlys free AI brainstorming generator to instantly generate ideas, explore different angles, and break through creative blocks. 2. PrewriteJot down ideas, images, and words related to your topic. Play with phrasing that fits the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, or decide if you want to go with a more free-form approach. You dont need a complete outlinejust explore combinations that feel natural and avoid clichs.Also, consider the general rules of writing poetry, like avoiding clichs and writing from a place of honesty. These arent requirements for your haiku, but they can be helpful guidelines.3. WriteBegin crafting your haiku. Focus on rhythm, clarity, and flow. Say lines aloud to make sure they sound smooth and balanced. Even if youre not planning to perform it, listening helps reveal awkward phrasing or offbeat rhythms.After finishing your draft, step away from it. A little distance helps you return with fresh eyes.4. ReviseCome back later to revise your haiku. It may even help to read it aloud. Look for spots where a stronger word could replace a weaker one, or where a line could flow more smoothly. Once youre happy with the result, your haiku is done!If you want to share or publish your work, consider posting it online, submitting to a literary journal, or adding it to a poetry collection.Examples of haikuHaiku come in many formsfrom traditional nature-focused poems to modern, personal snapshots. Below are examples of both styles, written by poets from different eras and cultures.Examples of traditional haikuIn Kyoto,hearing the cuckoo,I long for Kyoto.Matsuo Bash (Japan, 17th century) After killinga spider, how lonely I feelin the cold of night!Masaoka Shiki (Japan, 19th century) A summer riverbeing crossedhow pleasing with sandals in hand!Yosa Buson (Japan, 18th century) Morning glorythe well bucket entangled,I ask for water.Kaga no Chiyo (Japan, 18th century)Examples of modern haikuNightfalltoo dark to read the page,Too cold.Jack Kerouac (USA, 20th century) Lily:out of the waterout of itself.Nick Virgilio (USA, 20th century) Just friends:he watches my gauze dressblowing on the line.Alexis Rotella (USA, 20th century) coconut oil sheenmother combs ocean intomy tangled hairKathy Jetnil-Kijiner (Marshall Islands, contemporary)Haiku FAQsWhat are haiku?Haiku are short, unrhymed poems that adhere to a specific three-line, seventeen-syllable format. Traditionally, haiku depict tiny moments in time and may include a kireji (a cutting word) that creates a pause or sense of closure and a kigo, or a seasonal reference.Is haiku singular or plural?The word haiku is both singular and plural. In English, its correct to say, I wrote a haiku and She shared three haiku. You dont need to add an -s to make it plural, though some people mistakenly say haikus. While haikus may occasionally appear in informal contexts, haiku is the standard and preferred form in both singular and plural usage.What are common haiku themes?Traditionally, haiku focus on nature and the seasons, often using a seasonal word (kigo) to anchor the moment. While nature remains a popular theme, modern haiku often explore a wider range of subjects, including personal experiences, emotions, and everyday life. What matters most is capturing a brief, vivid momentregardless of the topic.What are the rules for structuring a haiku?Traditionally, a haiku meets the following requirements:It has three lines.It has five syllables in the first and third lines.It has seven syllables in the second line.Its lines dont rhyme.It includes a kireji, or cutting word.It includes a kigo, or a seasonal reference.Are all haiku written in the 5-7-5 format?Traditional haiku follow the 5-7-5 syllable structure, but modern haiku often take creative liberties. As long as the poem is short and captures a focused moment, slight variations in structure are widely accepted. The haiku format refers to the structure, style, and conventions used in writing haiku poetry. This traditional Japanese form captures moments in nature and emotion through a concise structure. Heres an overview of the haiku format: 1. Syllable Structure Five-Seven-Five Pattern: A haiku consists of three lines, with the first line having 5 syllables, the second line 7 syllables, and the third line 5 syllables. This totals 17 syllables, requiring poets to convey their ideas succinctly. Focus on Brevity: The limited syllable count encourages poets to express complex thoughts and feelings using minimal words, emphasizing the power of simplicity. 2. Themes and Content Nature and Seasons: Haikus typically focus on nature, the changing seasons, and moments in time. This connection to the natural world is central to the haikus emotional depth. Kigo (Seasonal Word): Many haikus include a kigo, a word or phrase that indicates the season, enhancing the poems connection to the environment and evoking specific feelings associated with that time of year. 3. Imagery and Sensory Detail Vivid Imagery: Haikus rely heavily on sensory details, painting a clear picture in the readers mind. The use of precise and evocative language creates an immediate emotional response. Moment of Reflection: The imagery often captures a fleeting moment, encouraging readers to pause and reflect on their experiences. 4. Use of Cutting Words (Kireji) Creating Contrast: Traditional Japanese haikus use kireji, or cutting words, to create a pause or add emotional weight. In English haikus, this effect is often achieved with punctuation or line breaks, separating contrasting images or ideas. Inviting Interpretation: The pause encourages readers to contemplate the relationship between the two parts of the poem, inviting multiple interpretations. 5. Structure and Form No Rhyme Scheme: Unlike many traditional poetic forms, haikus typically do not follow a specific rhyme scheme. This allows for greater flexibility and focus on the imagery and emotion. Free from Stanzas: Haikus are written as single, unbroken stanzas, emphasizing their succinctness and clarity. 6. Emotional Depth Evoking Feelings: While haikus are brief, they often carry significant emotional weight, capturing feelings of nostalgia, joy, or melancholy. Universal Themes: The themes explored in haikus, such as transience, beauty, and the passage of time, resonate universally, allowing readers from different backgrounds to connect with the poem. 7. Modern Variations Free Verse Haikus: Contemporary poets often experiment with the haiku form, creating variations that may not strictly adhere to the 5-7-5 syllable count but still embody the essence of the haiku. Expanded Themes: Modern haikus may explore a broader range of themes, including personal experiences, societal observations, and urban landscapes, moving beyond traditional nature topics. 8. Cultural Significance Japanese Heritage: Haiku has deep roots in Japanese culture, with a rich history dating back to the 17th century. It reflects the aesthetics and philosophical perspectives of Japanese literature. Global Influence: Haikus have gained popularity worldwide, inspiring poets in various cultures to embrace the form and adapt it to their own languages and experiences. By Dr Oliver Tearle (Loughborough University)A haiku is the most famous of all Japanese verse forms. In English versions, a haiku tends to consist of three unrhymed lines of (respectively) five, seven, and five syllables, adding up to a total of just seventeen syllables. However, youll notice that many of the best and most emblematic examples of Japanese haiku which weve gathered together below dont fit this number of syllables precisely.A haiku often features a single image which represents the essence of a brief, fleeting moment in time. Sometimes there will be two images, but even here, the power of the haiku is derived from the spark generated by the two things being brought together within the same poem. In many cases, there will be something timeless and vast (a mountain, the moon, the sky) juxtaposed with something fleeting and brief (a dog barking; a leaf falling). But theres more to it than this. For strictly speaking, a haiku should take nature as its subject: if a short poem does not feature nature in some way, it is more accurately labelled an example of Senryu, a related form also comprising seventeen syllables but not featuring nature or the seasons. Hokku or haiku were traditionally a brief preface to a longer poem, known as a renga, and the purpose of the haiku was to introduce the seasons.Although the haiku as a verse form is centuries old, the word haiku isnt. Indeed, it was only surprisingly recently as recently as the end of the nineteenth century, in fact that people started referring to these miniature Japanese poems as haiku, when Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) began referring to them as haiku as opposed to the older term hokku. But what are the best examples of haiku poems, in Japanese, English, and American literature? Below, we select a few of the finest and best-known haiku.1. Matsuo Bash, A Caterpillar. A caterpillar,this deep in fall still not a butterfly.Matsuo Bash (1644-94) is the Shakespeare of the haiku form. In this haiku, we find the seasons (fall alludes to the autumnal months), and the natural world; although here the poem seems to refer beyond the world of nature, to human potential too. How many people mature without really achieving what they are capable of? 2. Yosa Buson, Even More So.Even more sobecause of being alonethe moon is a friend. This is a translation of one of the many haiku written by Yosa Buson (1716-84), an eighteenth-century master of the form who was also noted for his painting and his prose compositions.As youll see, the translation doesnt exactly fit the syllable requirement for the haiku in English; but thats because Busons original Japanese haiku didnt strictly fit the rules for the form either. He believed that poems should be more organic and natural than this, but the poem reproduced above summons the haiku and has a natural image (the moon) at its centre. 3. Kobayashi Issa, Mosquito.From deep insidethe pretty flower a mosquito Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828) was a Japanese poet and a lay Buddhist priest of the Jdo Shinsh. He penned hundreds of haiku, and this one is just an example of his style, which often turns on an element of surprise (such as finding the mosquito, a potential carrier of an ugly disease, within the pretty flower).4. R. M. Hansard, The West Wind. The west wind whispered,And touched the eyelids of spring:Her eyes, Primroses.It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that the haiku began to become popular among English-speaking poets. In Britain in 1899, The Academy announced a haikai contest, and the prize was awarded to R.M. Hansard for this poem.5. Bertram Dobell, You Laughed While I Wept. You laughed while I wept,Yet my tears and your laughterHad only one source.Bertram Dobell (1842-1914) was an English poet, publisher, bookseller, and editor, who published Rosemary and Pansies in 1901. In that volume, he included a few of his own haikai. At the time, the form was sufficiently unfamiliar to his English readers for Dobell to consider it necessary to include a footnote explaining what a haiku was.Dobells, then, is another very early example of a haiku written in English. Although strictly speaking it might be considered an example of Senryu instead of haiku (because its focus is solely human, rather than nature), its a notable development in the western adoption of the Japanese form.6. Masaoka Shiki, Winter.The desolation of winter;passing through a small hamlet,a dog barks.Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) was a reformer of the haiku: he felt that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the form had become stale and full of platitudes. It is very easy to write an indifferent haiku, and very difficult to write one which can say something significant within its three brief lines.In this haiku, we can see how Shiki approached the haiku unsentimentally, bringing in the simple image of the dog barking to summon the desolation and quiet that hangs over a small village during wintertime.7. Amy Lowell, from Twenty-Four Hokku on a Modern Theme.Sweet smell of wet flowersOver an evening garden.Your portrait, perhaps?Lowell (1874-1925) became the leader of the imagists after Ezra Pound, the founder of the movement, grew bored and went off to found Vorticism. And the imagists were much in love with the haiku. Indeed, one of Pounds most famous poems, In a Station of the Metro, suggests the brevity and language of the haiku without strictly being an example of one.Lowell, too, was drawn to Japanese forms, and Twenty-Four Hokku on a Modern Theme appeared first in Poetry magazine in June 1921. This is one of those twenty-four, with the suddenness of the final line which transforms the poem from a lyric about nature into a love poem showing the potential of the haiku for arresting our attention and showing us something in a new light.8. Yone Noguchi, Hokku.But the march to life Break song to sing the new song!Clouds leap, flowers bloom.Yonejir Noguchi (1875-1947) was an influential Japanese poet who composed a number of hokku or haiku. He moved from Japan to the US when he was a teenager, settling in San Francisco, although he later returned to Japan. He would later travel to England to lecture on Japanese poetry. But his greatest claim to fame is that he was the first Japanese-born poet to publish poetry in English.His work has been aligned with modernism, and certainly Ezra Pound, the founder of imagism, considered his poetry to be beautiful. The haiku quoted above demonstrates why; but there is also something ineffable, even ambiguous about his haiku, which explains the comparisons to modernism.9. Jack Kerouac, from American Haiku.frozenin the birdbathA leafThe Beat Generation novelist and poet Jack Kerouac, who is best-known for On the Road, was also attracted to the possibilities of the haiku form. He penned a sequence of American Haiku, one brief quotation from which we reproduce above. You can read a greater selection here.10. Jennifer Wong, Koi.Lets conclude this pick of the best examples of the haiku with an example from a contemporary poet. Jennifer Wong is a writer and poet from Hong Kong who studied at Oxford and the University of East Anglia (where she gained an MA in Creative Writing).In this brief poem, about koi carp, we get a beautiful interplay of movement and stillness, colours red and white, and the associations between animal (the fish itself) and flower (the lotuses; but also see those heart-shaped leaves). You can read this poem here. Subscribe to get the latest posts sent to your email.

What are haikus. What is a haiku about. What is haiku poetry examples. What are haiku poems usually written about. Haiku poem adalah. What is haiku poetry. Haiku is an example of what form of poetry. What is haiku poem example. What is a haiku poem. What is haiku poem and give examples.

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