



## Botanical Garden Programs: Japanese Garden

# HAIKU:

## Observation & Writing in the Japanese Garden



Grades 4–7

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### I. Introduction

In preparation for a school visit to the Huntington Botanical Gardens' Japanese Garden tour, we will learn about and write haiku. Observation of seasonal change and design elements of the Japanese Garden will help to inspire description through poetry writing, culminating with the creation of small books of haiku.

### II. Objective

- ◆ To introduce students to plants, animals, seasonal cues, and design elements in the Japanese garden through contemplative observation and the writing of short poems, called haiku.

### III. Standards Addressed

*English-Language Arts* (California Department of Education, December 1997)

Reading Standard 1.0

Word Analysis, Fluency, and Systematic Vocabulary Development

Reading Standard 2.0

Reading Comprehension

Reading Standard 3.0

Literary Response and Analysis

Writing Standard 3.0

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

*Visual Arts Standards* (California Department of Education, January 2001)

Standard 1.0

Artistic Perception: Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to the visual arts.

## IV. Background

### *Haiku*

Haiku is a short form of poetry that comes originally from the first three lines of a much longer, collaboratively written poem. In the Japanese language, haiku are organized by syllables called *onji* (pronounced ohn-gee), with the first and third lines having five syllables, and the second line with seven syllables. Haiku tend to contain reference to a particular time of year, and often invoke images from nature or the poet's surroundings. Often, people writing haiku in English are not as strict with the syllable count, and instead focus on creating a short, meaningful poem.

### *Seasons in the Japanese Garden*

In this workshop, we will write a short series of haiku based on observations in the garden. Haiku almost always contain phrases called *kigo* (pronounced key-go), that describe seasonal events, such as "cherry blossoms," "autumn evening," and "harvest moon." These phrases serve to indicate both a time and place through a short, descriptive phrase. There are many things to notice in the Japanese garden that provide information on the season. Floral blooms, fall color, and new growth are some of the signs of change connected to the different temperatures and lighting conditions of the spring, summer, fall and winter. From the arrival of different bird species to the falling of cherry blossom petals, seasonal change is always visible in the Japanese garden.

## V. Materials Needed (for each group of 3 students)

- ◆ Haiku worksheets
- ◆ watercolor paper
- ◆ clipboards
- ◆ pens & pencils
- ◆ watercolors, brushes & water containers
- ◆ examples of haiku
- ◆ small sticks or twigs (about 4" long)
- ◆ hole-punch
- ◆ string to tie books together

## VI. Lesson Activities

1. Lead your class in a discussion on poetry, and a short form of Japanese poetry called haiku: Have you ever heard of haiku? Can you describe what haiku is? Explain that haiku is a three-line Japanese poem that usually follows a pattern of five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third.

2. Share some examples of haiku with the class. Choose some that have overt references to seasons and ask the students to help identify which words or phrases indicate something about the time of year. Also discuss different elements in the poems that they might see at the Japanese garden.
3. Distribute materials needed to write haiku. Start by using copies of the attached worksheets that outline syllable count. You can also practice and review syllable counts using copies of the attached haiku examples.
4. If you have a garden or outdoor area at your school, have your students write haiku based on things they see or observe outside. You can also use photographs or ask your students to imagine a garden scene they'd like to write about.
5. You can decide if you'd like each student to make a book of haiku, or if you'd like to put together books for the whole class. If each student makes a book, they should probably write at least four haiku. Ask the students to re-write their haiku on watercolor paper sheets that will be used in the books. For each poem, have the students create a watercolor picture that connects to their haiku. They may also want to decorate a cover for their book.
6. Punch two holes on the left side of the sheets of watercolor paper. Use a small stick as decorative binding, and tie the sheets together.

## **VII. Discussion Questions**

1. Can you describe what haiku is?
2. How would you compare haiku with other kinds of poetry you've read?
3. Why do you think haiku are often based on nature?
4. How can different seasons be represented in haiku?
5. Can you think of plants that you would write about to represent different seasons?

## **VIII. Making Connections**

1. Can you describe changes in plants in your neighborhood that take place during the different seasons?
2. Can you think of some words or phrases that describe changes in the seasons?
3. What kinds of colors, fragrances and sounds might be associated with different times of the year?
4. How would you write a short poem to describe some of the changes you've noticed?

## IX. Extension Activities

1. Ask students to research Japanese poets and to choose favorite poems. Some famous haiku poets are Basho, Issa, and Buson.
2. Write poems together in small groups, with each student adding on a line to create a collective piece.
3. Make paintings or drawings based on imagery from haiku.
4. Try writing short, descriptive stories about an outdoor walk, or a personal experience. Ask the students to identify the most important words in the story—the words that communicate the most important details or information. Try writing haiku using these words. Can a haiku capture the essence of a whole story?

## X. Bibliography

Hass, Robert. *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Bashô, Buson, & Issa*. The ECCO Press: Hopewell, NJ. 1994.

Nishimoto, Keisuke. *Haiku Picturebook for Children*. Heian International, Inc.: Torrance, CA. 1999.

Wakan, Naomi. *Haiku: One Breath Poetry*. Heian International, Inc.: Torrance, CA. 1993.

## Vocabulary

- haiku* A short form of poetry that comes originally from the first three lines of a much longer, collaboratively written poem. In the Japanese language, haiku are organized by syllables (onji), with the first and third lines having five syllables, and the second line with seven syllables. Haiku tend to contain reference to a particular time of year, and often invoke images from nature or the poet's surroundings.
- kigo* phrases often used in haiku that describe seasonal events
- onji* syllables in the Japanese language

## HAIKU

**Bashó**

(1644–1694)

The crane's legs  
have gotten shorter  
in the spring rain.

As for the hibiscus  
on the roadside—  
my horse ate it.

It would melt  
in my hand—  
the autumn frost.

A caterpillar,  
this deep in fall—  
still not a butterfly.

From all these trees,  
in the salads, the soup, everywhere,  
cherry blossoms fall.

The dragonfly  
can't quite land  
on that blade of grass.

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**Yosa Buson**

(1716–1783)

White dew—  
one drop  
on each thorn.

Butterfly  
sleeping  
on the temple bell.

**Kobayashi Issa**

(1763–1827)

Mosquito at my ear –  
does it think  
I'm deaf?

Children imitating cormorants  
Are even more wonderful  
than cormorants.

Climb Mount Fiji,  
O snail,  
but slowly, slowly.

Cricket  
chirping  
in a scarecrow's belly.

Don't worry, spiders,  
I keep house  
casually.

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**5-7-5 format haiku**

Winter rainy day  
playing in the puddles  
water everywhere.  
—Karle Henry, 9yrs

The damp forest floor  
smelling of fresh pine needles  
and old rotting logs.  
—Chris Hillbruner, 11yrs

A heron rises  
in the middle of the swamp  
under the full moon.  
—Nahanni Stevenson, 11yrs

# My Garden Haiku



\_\_\_\_\_ (5 SYLLABLES)

\_\_\_\_\_ (7 SYLLABLES)

\_\_\_\_\_ (5 SYLLABLES)



# My Garden Haiku



\_\_\_\_\_ (5 SYLLABLES)

\_\_\_\_\_ (7 SYLLABLES)

\_\_\_\_\_ (5 SYLLABLES)