

HAIKU

Characteristics of Haiku:

- Short: Haiku are very short poems! They are usually written in three (or fewer) lines. Haiku can be written in the traditional pattern of 5-7-5 syllables but they do not have to be. Most haiku in English have fewer than 17 syllables.
- One moment in time: Haiku generally describe one brief moment in time. For example, “one tombstone with a crow” tells us only about the moment of noticing the crow; we do not need to know what happened before or after.
- Images: The poems contain sensory images (not only visual, but involving other senses as well). For example, “echoes of laughter” and “metallic taste.”
- Seasonal references: You can often tell what season it is by the references in the poem. For example, “the coarse wool of my blanket” tells us it is probably winter.
- Juxtaposition: This might be difficult for students to notice, but the strength of successful haiku often comes from placing one image next to another. Without explicit metaphor, haiku often elicit powerful reactions in the reader by use of juxtaposition. For example, “harvest moon” resonates with the image of coins in a homeless man’s cup. Placing the images of the moon and the coins in the same poem suggests a relationship between the two and sparks a response in the reader.
- Everyday language: Haiku generally contain common everyday words. Nothing fancy or complicated!
- Surprise: There is often a break or shift in the poem which creates a moment of surprise or sudden awareness. This is often called the “aha” moment.

Wakened by birdsong;
drifting from one world of dreams
into another

—Robert Major (United States)

The names of the dead
sinking deeper and deeper
into the red leaves

—Eric Amann (Canada)

snowflakes falling
on the child’s upturned face
the stillness of stars

— john hawkhead (United Kingdom)

the Lee at spring tide —
the reflection of a bridge
flows under the bridge
— Anatoly Kudryavitsky (Ireland)

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 . . .
all the sparrows fly away
and I lose my count
— Anon (Malaysia)

Tanka

"Impossible" is
A term the fearful use to
Convince themselves that
The yearning in their heart is
Not something worth fighting for
(KLR)

Typewriter Tanka

When pretending your
Macbook is a typewriter
Be sure to select
A suitable font and make
A bell sound as each line ends.

We Blew In With The Wind

Kiss me underneath
The shadows of each season
In blankets of night
With only stars for lanterns
And treetops as canopies
(Mael Robins)

Tanka

The people walking
Stare ahead without blinking
They walk with purpose
Like they know where they are going
In truth they walk in circles

Jade Manchur



Tanka

A cool wind blow
With a blanket of silence
Straining to listen
For those first few drops of rain
The storm begins in earnest

Poetic devices
Hyperbole, Metaphor, imagery,

~~TANKA~~

*Now hold eyes awake
Drumming on the steering wheel
To the beat of breath
As the lights pass overhead
The CD skipping like stones*

Figurative Language:
Simile: (Line 5)