



Take A Breath, Steal Some Time
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Elementary School Poet-in-Residence 2010

Grade Level: 3-5

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives: Students will understand the form and philosophy behind haiku, will become familiar with haiku as literature, and use observation skills paired with imagination in order to write an original poem.

Prior Skills and Knowledge: None required; familiarity with line breaks, syllables, and/or haiku form is helpful but not necessary.

Sequence of Activities:

Introduction: What is a Haiku? 20 Minutes.

Tell the first half of a story (from Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the New Millennium*).

Once there was a man named Chuang-tzu. He was the best artist in the land... The king, who wanted a perfect everything, asked him to draw a perfect crab. Chuang-tzu said, "I can do that, but I will need five years, a house by the ocean, and twelve servants. Five years later the drawing was still not begun. "I need another five years," said Chuang-tzu.

We'll come back to the story in a minute. First, who can tell me what a haiku is? (Introduction or Review)

- Haiku originated in Japan, but has spread all over the world.
- Does anyone know what the rules of a haiku are? Talk about syllables - who can tell me what a syllable is? building block of words, how many "beats" in a word, vowels paired with consonants

Mini-Activity: Clap out syllables in choice words. Then clap out the syllables in the haiku.

Haiku example, by Basho.

Yellow rose petals
Drop one by one in silence:
Roar of waterfall.

-So, to sum up, haiku are tiny little poems, usually meditations (thought-poems), very small, but quietly implying something big.

Back to the story...

The king granted Chuang-tzu 5 more years. Finally, on the very last day of the ten years, Chuang-tzu took up his brush and, in an instant, with a single stroke, he drew a crab, the most perfect crab ever seen.

What do you think about this story? (Reactions, positive and negative.)
What can we tell about the society in which Chuang-tzu and the king live?
If you were the king, how would you react?
(In our society, we value things that happen fast. This is a story about a culture that valued meditation, thoughtfulness, art, most highly.)

In some ways, this story is what a haiku is all about. It is about taking a long time to think about something, in order to better understand it, and through it, perhaps we can understand the world a little better, too. (The object represents the world.)

Individual haiku, 30 minutes: Pass out objects.

I am going to give you each an object. First, take some time to observe your object and think about it. Write down on your chart (see attached) what you hear, see, feel, smell and what you think it might taste like - don't actually taste it. Does it have a smell? Can you hear it thinking? Can it hear you? If it could talk, what would it say?

Take a few minutes to think about where your object came from. Write its story before it came to the classroom. How was it born? Where did it come from? Who were its friends? Does it have a name? Why is it here (on earth)?

Now, write a haiku about your object, 3 lines, no more than 17 syllables. If you don't get the syllables quite right, that's okay, but try for 5 -7 -5 lined syllables.

Closing, 10 minutes

Share.

Materials Required:

- The story of Chuang-tzu is taken from Italo Calvino's *Six Memos for the New Millennium*.
- Handout
- An object for each student from the natural world
- Example Haikus*

***Suggested:** The haikus I used were by Basho and Issa, translated by Robert Hass and Sam Hamill. Other haiku will do, but the ancient Japanese poets were masters!

Discovering Haiku

Name _____

When look at my object, I think of...

Using Your Senses

My object smells like _____.

My object sounds like _____.

My object looks like _____.

My object feels like _____.

My object tastes like _____.

My object is a _____.

Story

Where did your object come from?

How was your object born?

Who were its friends?

Does it have a name?

What is its purpose here on earth?

If it could speak, what would it say?

Write a haiku about your object using at least one sense. Remember, 3 lines and no longer than 17 syllables (try for the pattern 5 – 7 -5)!

Hint: You can title the poem the name of your object. Then you don't have to use that word in your poem.

Hint: Try writing your haiku as a sentence first. Then edit the sentence down to 17 syllables (take out words, change them to fit the syllable pattern) and then break it into three haiku lines.

Sentence:

Poem:

Title

Draw me!:

Student Examples from Mrs. Larson's 5th Grade Class at Corbett Elementary:

earthquakes happen fast
shaking rocks mad man starving
eating grass and dirt

- Deandre

I'm a little fruit
A growing pomegranate.
Now I'm on my death.

- David

A dog's claw scratching
a brownie or a pine cone
under a tree branch

- Rafael