

HAIKU POETRY CONTEST

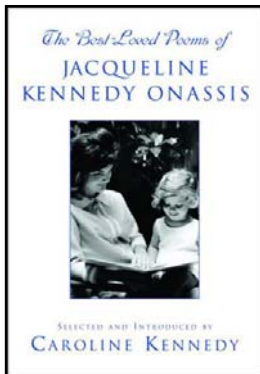
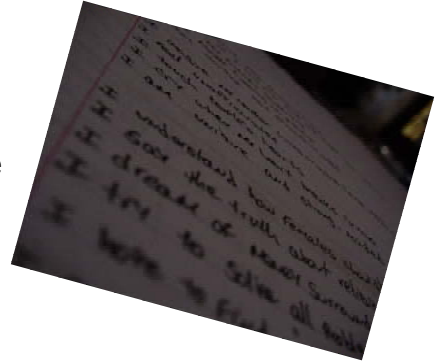
Gather your paper and pens!

Mensa is having a Haiku Poetry Contest open to all Young Mensans under 18!

The deadline to enter is March 15, 2012, so beware the Ides of March and get writing!

Guidelines:

- Entrants must be members of American Mensa.
- Each person may submit only one poem.
- The poems must follow the traditional Haiku format (three lines, the first line 5 syllables, the second 7, the third 5).
- The poems may be on any topic, and the content must be appropriate for an under-18 audience.



The grand prize is a copy of *The Best-Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, autographed by Caroline Kennedy.

All entrants will receive a certificate of participation.

To enter:

Mail your entry with your name and member number to:
Haiku Contest
1229 Corporate Drive West
Arlington, TX 76006

Or you may email it to: GiftedYouth@americanmensa.org

Judging:

The poems will be judged by the Mensa Teacher Advisory Panel and two members of the Gifted Youth Committee.

If you have questions, please contact Lisa Van Gemert at LisaV@americanmensa.org.

Introduction to Haiku

The Haiku form of poetry comes from Japan, although it is written slightly differently in English. Haiku poems are short, so the topics are usually one simple thing (an animal, something found in nature, or a season).

There are three common elements in traditional haiku poetry.

1. There are 17 syllables in the poem – five in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third line. These lines rarely rhyme. In English haiku poetry, the number of syllables is not as rigid, with some poems have ten or fourteen syllables instead of seventeen.
2. A “season” word, called a *kigo*, is often used in traditional haiku. It doesn’t mean the name of a season is used. Most often it is a symbol of a season (pumpkin, harvest moon, snow, green, etc.).
3. A “cutting” word, called a *kire* or *kireji*, is often used to separate the beginning of the poem (typically the first two lines) from the end (usually the last line) in traditional forms of haiku. Instead of word, a poet may also use a punctuation mark, such as a dash (—), a colon (:), or a semi-colon (;).

Other information about Haiku:

- Haiku is a fun way to write a “who am I?” poem. Describe something in the poem, and have the reader guess what it is. Here are three examples. Can you figure them out?

pot of gold awaits
colors bending down to earth
gift after the rain

falling softly down
white against the stillness chill –
winter’s gift of peace

ship of the desert
tan against the burning sand
hooves and hump and lashes long

- Matsuo Bashō was a famous Japanese poet who died in 1694. His poems still survive and are studied and enjoyed today. Here are two examples:

an ancient pond
a frog jumps in
the splash of water



now then, let's go out
to enjoy the snow...until
I slip and fall

- If you would like to take a self-study course on writing haiku, there is one available for free here: http://www.haiku.insouthsea.co.uk/teachbasho_self1.htm
- Want to know more? Here are some places to check out:

<http://www.americanhaikuarchives.org/>

The library on the campus of California State University at Sacramento houses the world's largest public collection of haiku outside of Japan. You can search the site to find haiku poems from certain time periods or about certain topics. This is a grown-up site, but if you're really interested in haiku, it's the best there is.

<http://www.hsa-haiku.org/>

The Haiku Society of America makes their journal *Frogpond* available online here.

http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/Forms/Haiku_and_Related_Forms/

You can find lots of links here to sites about Haiku and other short poetry forms.

<http://www.teenink.com/poetry/haiku/>

Teen Ink magazine's website has a haiku section. The poems don't have the lines separated, so it's a little tricky to get the meter right, but if you're interested in writing more haiku, you can get it published on the net here.

There are loads of haiku books. Some cool ones include:

For younger readers:

- *Won Ton* by Lee Wardlaw
- *Pirate Haiku* by Michael Spradlin
- *Don't Step on the Sky* by Miriam Chaikin and Hiroe Nakata
- *GUYKU: A Year of Haiku for Boys* by Bob Raczka
- There is also a whole series of Horror Haiku books (think werewolves and zombies) by Ryan Mecum

For older readers:

- *The Haiku Handbook -25th Anniversary Edition: How to Write, Teach, and Appreciate Haiku* by William J. Higginson
- *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, & Issa* edited and translated by Robert Hass