

HAIKU TEACHING KIT - The British Haiku Society

Task Three – More Advanced Writing

This session can be seen as a teacher ‘modelling’ process, in which the children learn some of the craft of haiku writing from a more experienced practitioner: you. It requires a greater level of confidence from the teacher and a reasonable knowledge of what writing a haiku involves.

If you would like some background reading on this, a good place to start is The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Share and Teach Haiku¹ by William J Higginson and Jane Reichold. It contains a chapter titled ‘A Lesson Plan That Works’. It gives plenty of background on haiku and the lesson plan is very effective. It was written with American children in mind.

This modelling is in effect like the Haiku Writing Machine worksheet, except that you are speaking your experience-into-poem aloud, writing as you go along.

- 1 Start by describing an impressive event that you saw on the way to school in the morning. Say that you wrote some describing words down to capture the moment. (Examples might include an encounter with wildlife, being caught in the rain, seeing the sun rise, hearing the dawn chorus, etc.)
- 2 Write your describing words as a ‘word bank’ to draw on.
- 3 Arrange the words into coherent sentences.
- 4 Remove unnecessary words.
- 5 Simplify, change, adapt, and polish.

The amount of talking you do to describe what you are thinking during this process depends on your audience. With year three or year four children you might describe every step, whereas a technique with the older children might be to allow them to steer the development of the poem a lot more.

The overall impression that should be in the forefront of the children’s thoughts as they begin should be the immediacy of the poem [*It’s like a snapshot in words*] and the simplicity of what is said [*Don’t try to describe more than one thing*].

When the time comes for the children to go through the same process, suggest a range of themes for inspiration, but do not insist. Work on the basis that good haiku cannot be ‘forced’, and that there is no correct formula for success. If you encounter “I don’t know what to write!” see the section on Helping Creativity & Resources.

¹ Publisher: McGraw-Hill Companies (1 April 1985) ISBN-10: 0070287864

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Task Four – The Haiku Walk

This task can take a broadly similar format to Task Two, the difference being that instead of showing children images for inspiration; take them out of the classroom into the real world.

Things to prepare and consider when doing this:

- 1 You may need permission to take the children off site.
- 2 You are at the mercy of the British weather.
- 3 Children will need clip-boards to lean on whilst writing.
- 4 You will need to find a suitable place to gather the children to give instructions.

For children who live in a very urban environment there are huge benefits to getting out of the city for an afternoon and gaining hands-on experience on the natural world. In the past classes have linked this with science or geography outings.

Task Five – Haiku Seasons

As mentioned in Task Three, some children will need considerable encouragement before they can start writing (see Helping Creativity & Resources section). This session follows the same format as Task Three, but is slightly more structured. Ask children to write a haiku sequence following the passage of the seasons. The worksheet 'A Haiku Sequence' included in the pack offers the structure for this.

There is an opportunity here to show the children some Japanese haiku that contain season words (*kigo*) and to explain that in traditional haiku, the season word plays an important part. For example, 'Moon' usually means it's a full autumn moon, and 'blossom' or 'cherry' means spring, so there is no need to say 'autumn moon' or 'spring blossom'

Going deeper into this should allow time for an understanding of season-specific animals and plants from Japan. Wikipedia is a good quick reference for simple *kigo*:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kigo#Common_kigo_in_Japanese_haiku

An interesting side activity for the children is to create four word-banks of words specific to seasons and using them for a display. You could even go further and set a task for some children to create a *sajiki* (season guide or book).

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Task Six - Going deeper

Some older KS2 children, in Years 5 and 6, will have the skills necessary to gain a deeper appreciation of haiku. This may involve time to explore the history of the form, and the chance to appreciate some classic haiku.

A useful cross-curricular link that can be made is the link to the Japanese language. There are a number of books in print in the UK that include a version of some famous haiku in English, and on the facing page have the transliterated Japanese. In some cases, the Japanese script is also included. It is worth doing some research, as some are quite inexpensive. The Dover Thrift Anthology² (edited by Faubion Bowers) is a good example.

Children could attempt to pronounce the haiku from the transliterated Japanese, and of course there is significant scope for calligraphy when copying the original.

Aside from the language and artistic opportunities of haiku, the real mastery involves the children appreciating the *kiru* (cutting) and the juxtaposition of the two images or ideas. This appreciation comes to some children, often after having been exposed to a larger range of haiku. For some thoughts on this, it is useful to consult the page on the Writers Café online, which sums it up reasonably accurately and gives teachers some background.

<http://www.writerscafe.org/courses/Haiku-for-Amateurs/1313/Kiru/1322/>

² ISBN-10: 0486292746, ISBN-13: 978-0486292748