



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2001 Volume III: Reading and Writing Poetry

Haiku: An Introduction to Writing and Discussing Poetic Form

Curriculum Unit 01.03.09
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Target Student Populations

I primarily teach 10th graders, in an urban, arts-magnet public high school. These students have chosen writing as their major course of study so they are taking creative writing and writing fundamentals in addition to their academic subjects including literary arts. Their command of Standard English is moderate. They have a preference for speaking (and writing) in slang, Spanglish, and Ebonics. Their spelling is often phonetic and incorrect. As with most teenagers from time immemorial they are absorbed with their love lives, fashion, music, school and parents (mostly as pertains to restrictions imposed by same). They are most certainly moved by the events and emotions of their lives and the lives of those around them and much of their writing is inspired by the hormonal swings and emotions that sweep through them. In this regard they are like all writers. While the depth of their life experience limits them they are expansive in their innocence and willingness to try new things. I have also taught Haiku as a workshop unit to 6th, 7th and 8th graders at a private parochial grammar school as a visiting writer to their regular literary arts curriculum. These students carry a bilingual (English/Hebrew) curriculum. The command of Standard English is good to excellent. Their spelling is often phonetic and incorrect. They do not have the range of life experience that the high school students possess and have a great deal of trouble distinguishing between observation, opinion, and statement. Their attention span tends to be shorter than the high school group.

Time Commitment

I'm planning to teach this curriculum Unit one hour a day, five days a week, for a minimum of 8 weeks. That comes to a total of 40 hours, which is just a standard American workweek. It may take longer, but I don't it will run shorter. This unit will be used as the introduction to reading and writing poetry for 10th graders. It is my intention to capitalize on my students' ability to retain, utilize and make this vocabulary and these ideas an integral part of the way they approach reading and writing any poetry.

40 Classroom Hours and How We'll Spend Them

I hold these truths to be self-evident; every student learns at a different speed. In addition since one of my stated goals is to teach my students how to develop their own creativity it's particularly important for them to have enough time to think, dream, observe, make mistakes, get frustrated, find a way of organizing themselves, be successful and witness their peers living the same process. And I want them to do all of that in the classroom with me so that I can help guide their process. Homework will primarily take the form of practicing their observation skills in a variety of directed and non-directed ways. For example I will ask the students to observe and write down the colors and shades of 24 items in the next 24 hours. Observation of this level of detail will enrich both their reading and writing.

The Same River Twice

It's been my experience that creative success is based on three factors. The three factors rely on the creative persons ability to: learn how to navigate between task and process, repeat that navigation over and over, and make each repetition progressive rather than static until they reach as fine a product as they are capable of creating. I am defining a task as something I will require my students to complete, or produce for me on demand. An assignment.

I am defining the process as the methods and steps I will teach my students in order for them to complete the task.

As a creative person and teacher I think that it's crucial to be on the lookout for new processes, methods, and steps my students or I come up with on the spur of the moment. Spur of the moment insights can be illuminating for the entire class and can be incorporated into the general process. For example, the whole idea of this curriculum unit comes from a spur of the moment answer to a students' frustration with a task.

I want to encourage my students to understand that they are living in a Haiku moment, every moment. That by working between task and process in repetition they are not merely repeating what they already did. Since they and everything around them is constantly in motion in this world, they can't possibly be the same person they were the last time they worked between task and process. Even if that last repetition was a minute ago. If I can help them understand that they can't possibly step into the same river twice, because they change from moment to moment and so does the river, perhaps they will understand how to bring their freshness to the task, process and product.

Writing is Hard Work

One of my priorities in teaching this unit is to help my students understand that every person has the ability to be swept up by emotion and to create something artistic and moving in response to that emotion. That is one of the truly remarkable assets of humanity. I also want them to learn that there is a difference between a person who is moved to create something by a situation and a person who defines herself as an artist or writer. While it is true an artist can be moved to create something by a situation, she must also be prepared to move herself to create even when external forces don't make it easy. I will take the time often during this unit to remind my students that anyone can be moved to write a first draft. A writer, like a sculptor, must edit and refine their work many times, in order for that work to generate the power to move a reader.

As an illustration of this point I like to tell my students the following apocryphal story about the sculptor August Rodin. The story goes that Rodin was asked how he made such beautiful, life-like sculptures out of the enormous masses of stone he started with. He is reported to have answered that he looks at the stone, sees the finished piece inside it and then merely takes away everything that is not the finished piece.

The same technique can be used in writing. The Modern English Haiku form is especially conducive to this style of editing and sculpting since it requires a finished product with no excess words. The slenderness or *hosimi* of the Haiku form and the fact that it contains no extraneous wording (fat) is why we sometimes call it "fat free poetry".

Narrative: A Curriculum Idea is Born

At nearly the end of a year of teaching creative writing to 10th graders I came upon a great idea. It was at a moment of teacherly desperation/inspiration, which is often when the best ideas come to me. We were writing Villanelles: complex poems that are almost mathematical in their structure. A student asked me, as my students often do, "Ms. Katz. Why we gotta' do this?" The screen in my head cleared and I saw the words "because I'm the teacher and I want you to." But I waited until those words were replaced by perhaps more useful words to this effect. "The thing is (a very teacherly opening) we are writers or at least for the two hours a day we are in this room, we are writers. We have to communicate something. It's our job. It's a hard job. How do we learn to do it?"

I believe that all effective communication is delivered in a container. The container for the communication we are having right now is a conversation perhaps leading to a discussion. Containers have recognizable standards and rules they follow. It's easy to tell the difference between a conversation and a speech. At minimum the first requires communication between 2 people and the second requires delivery of a message from one to one, or more, others. They are different kinds of containers that have different rules for us to follow as we use them.

Words are the content and we choose them carefully because we are trying to make a point. The reason for the communication, the overriding idea that influences the choice of container and content is the concept.

So in this case the concept is that you asked a question and I am answering the question. Hopefully that will lead to more questions, answers, insights and thoughts that we can share. The container we are using to deliver our communication is conversation. The conversation may develop into a discussion that will include the rest of the people in the room. That would be yet another kind of container which is a little bigger (broader) than our two-way conversation.

The words and phrases we choose (content) for a conversation are words that make up common language and are easy to understand. They are explanatory, searching, and descriptive in nature. Slang is often part of the content of conversation in a way that it wouldn't be in a speech.

Here's an example: of yet another kind of container. Musicians communicate to us through their song (container) using music (content) and generally that song is part of a particular conceptual context (concept) like rap, jazz, or opera. The three ideas of container, content and concept combine in an art to create communication.

How does a musician learn to communicate through music you might ask? Go ahead. Ask. He or she practices scales (content) and then practices the concepts and containers that have been utilized by successful musicians before them.

How do we learn to do our job as student/writers? We do it the same way. We practice our version of scales. We practice using combinations of words. We use the dictionary and thesaurus to learn more words so that we have more content to work with. We practice the concepts and containers that have been utilized by successful writers before us.

And that's why we're trying to write Villanelles."

At which point another one of my students said, "Yo, Ms. Katz, this container is getting on my last nerve." Which made us all laugh.

And that is how I knew that I was on to something. My students had begun to use my invented vocabulary to communicate back to me. It was a radical improvement over where the conversation began. They were learning.

Meanwhile back at the beginning of my story...I realized during the conversation that the idea of container, content and concept might be a great way to introduce the idea of poetic form. The creative possibilities that these three ideas opened up in me were so attractive that I felt saddened that I had come to them at the end of the year.

I decided to create a poetry-writing curriculum that would combine these three ideas (container, content, and concept) with the simplest poetic form I know: Haiku. Since I often begin teaching poetic form with the Haiku, I became excited by the idea of simplifying the method of teaching that form even further.

What follows is the way in which I intend to approach teaching Haiku through the ideas of container, content, and concept.

Objectively Speaking: Part 1

In this curriculum unit it is my objective to utilize several variations of the Japanese poetic form Haiku as a means of accomplishing three goals. First I want to give my students a common vocabulary for discussing what does and does not work in Haiku. I will refer to this as the elements of a common vocabulary. There are many forms of Haiku, the standard Modern English form, the one line Haiku, and others. We will use the vocabulary introduced in this section as we read many forms of published Haiku, Haiku by prior writing students and Haiku produced by the class.

In addition to the ideas of container, content and concept I intend to introduce, define in detail, and use as a means of consistent discussion with my students, ten other critical ideas I will present here briefly and in more detail later in the paper.

Haiku is a form of poetry that, among other things, develops the students' observation skills. The classic forms of Haiku usually observe a moment in nature. As we will see later, modern English Haiku expands on the variety of moments that can be observed and written about. The key concept is observation.

One of my students' objectives in Haiku will be to describe the moment observed in simple, common language. Because Haiku is usually very short it is often written in a direct and descriptive manner.

There is no room in Haiku for extra words that do not serve a specific purpose. The Japanese word Hosimi means slenderness. The Haiku form is slender. Another of my students' objectives will be to write in a slender way.

My students' will also be working to paint a picture, with words, of the moment they observe: the here and now of their observation. I want them to use detail and their five senses to paint the picture so clearly for me that I am taken to the moment they observed, the Haiku moment.

They will most likely have their greatest success taking me to the Haiku moment if they rely on writing observations rather than statements, and write in the present tense.

In total this curriculum will focus on 13 concepts basic to writing a good Haiku: container, content, concept, observation, hosimi, painting a picture, detail, five senses, the Haiku moment, observation vs. statement and the present tense.

Later I will also discuss my intention to put into practice in my classroom the integrated use of task, process and repetition to create a progressive learning environment in which key concepts and skills build a sense of control over the material and a feeling of accomplishment in the student writer.

My objective is to model the use of these words and ideas whenever I talk to my students about Haiku. By showing my students how I use these ideas to judge, edit, sculpt, and criticize constructively the Haiku we will read and write together (I will write also) I hope to teach them to do the same.

I believe that once these words and ideas are part of the individual and collective consciousness of my class they will serve as the bedrock of constructive criticism for any poetic form we work with at a later date.

I also believe, for instance, that had my class possessed the elements of a common vocabulary at the beginning of working with poetic form, one of my students would not have said of another's work, "This poem is garbage." Perhaps instead he might have said, this poem does not paint a picture for me, it doesn't take me to the Haiku moment. It's clear to me which of these two statements would be most useful to a student writer.

Objectively Speaking: Part 2

My second goal is to give my students the opportunity to experience the way in which writing within a predetermined, recognizable set of limitations and disciplines affects their own creative process. I think practicing discipline within limitations for a specific goal can help sharpen our ability to deliver a clear message as writers. The Haiku form is quite restrictive. A modern English Haiku generally contains only 17 syllables. That is not a lot of room even to observe something small. The restraint implicit in this form changes the way in which my students will have to think and will limit the way in which they can write. That kind of restraint can be an enormous challenge and a frustration. As one of my students put it last year, "Ms. Katz, why are you always taking my words away?" To which I replied, "I'm not taking them away. I am saving them like ingredients to be used in a later recipe." She was not appeased.

I think the idea of a container that can only hold so much content can depersonalize the frustration of working with the form. If you have a thimble you can't pour a quart of milk into it. It's just that simple. It is not a failing on the part of me as a teacher or you as a student. It just can't be done and it is not our combined task at this moment to change that. It is our task at this moment to fill the Haiku thimble.

I believe there is an important lesson we can learn together about the beauty of restraint in spoken and written communication. Perhaps we can begin to understand together the way in which limits can help us make our communication clearer. It is not my intention to remove the personal or emotional from the communication, it is my goal to change the nature of how the communication is delivered and received.

I would like my writing students to understand writing, like every other art form has its own version of scales and comes with a rich tradition of forms that once learned, become the tools of the writer's trade.

I want my students to have a large number of forms at their disposal so that when they are moved to write something they can find a form that suits their message. This practice is not easy and may not always be fun. But it is a worthy pursuit and can deliver a long-term benefit.

Objectively Speaking: Part 3

My final goal is to give my students the tactile experience of writing in a well-known, recognizable, historically important poetic form. We will begin with the Modern English Haiku. Working with this respected poetic form places my students squarely in a writing tradition that is steeped with history, beauty, meaning, and creativity. I like to explain to my students that the idea of working within an existing poetic context places them as working apprentice writers and me as a master-artist-teacher. These are time honored roles that I want them to become comfortable and familiar with as understanding your place in a historical context can be comforting and will serve them in their lifelong pursuits whether those pursuits turn out to be artistic in nature or not.

I want my students to reach a point of familiarity, if not mastery with each form they practice, in this case the Haiku. I want my students to be able to recognize the form when they see it, wherever they see it. And I want them to begin to notice that writing poetry is a way of communicating messages that is alive and in use today in venues far beyond the classroom not the least of which is the medium of advertising: a medium with which they are more than passingly familiar.

Objectively Speaking: A Side Note

The discipline of writing every day, at the same time each day, is also part of the practice inherent in the development of creative control and is an important part of this unit. It is my objective as a teacher at all times to keep my students on task. The way in which I do that in regards to this unit is to make sure my students know that there are many parts to writing not all of which are writing the final Haiku. It is not always easy to write when your mind, heart, body, psyche are not in it. We must train ourselves to write, or do "writerly" work at the time we have set aside. My creative writing class is scheduled for 2 hours a day, from 7:30 am to 9:30 am. Sometimes neither my students or I are feeling productive, creative, or even articulate at

that hour.

It is my goal to give my students the skills they need to "jumpstart" their creative process when it doesn't show up on it's own.

Taking the time to observe, to "shop for" more descriptive words in the dictionary or thesaurus, to list the possible properties of an object like the many colors it might be made up of are "writerly" tasks that do not call upon us to create something from thin air. They are another form of scales. There are many parts of the writing process that can help us paint a picture that will take us to the Haiku moment. I will be utilizing these techniques in my class plans and will be discussing them in more detail later in the paper.

Why Start with The Modern English Form of Haiku?

I choose to start with the Modern English Form of Haiku because I believe that form to be accessible and manageable for my students. The Modern English Haiku container (form) is extremely limited. The container is made up of the rules governing the shape the words are poured into.

The container of the Modern English Haiku is three lines, which equal a total of 17 syllables. Each line has a specific number of syllables: the first line is five syllables, the second is seven and the third is five.

This container looks like anyone could fill it. It seems completely approachable. I mean how hard can it be? It's 17 syllables total. Even students who hate poetry, and have a problem with authority, can still write in the Haiku form as long as they can count to 17. This is exemplified by one of my sixth grade students:

I don't like Haiku
I can't think of anything
To write on this sheet.
Ari, 6th Grade

Ari got the container right. His Haiku is three lines, in a five-seven-five format for a total of 17 syllables. But there are other requirements of the form besides the container. There is also the concept.

The Concepts Inside the Haiku Container

I think the inherent brevity and simplicity of the Haiku form make it naturally appealing to students until they realize how much work goes into writing something brief and simple. Hopefully by the time they realize the challenges inherent in reaching the goals of this form, they will be hooked by the concept and unable to stop thinking in a Haiku style. Beginning below I will discuss the way in which I want my students to begin to understand and utilize the common vocabulary I will be introducing them to.

Observation

I want my students to learn all good writing relies to some extent on their ability to observe something. What they observe can be external like the color of the limbs on a tree outside the classroom window or internal like the tickle in their throats when the dry heat of winter fills the classroom. Haiku is a form of poetry that exists in order to describe that which is observed.

Naked brown and cream
Limbs outside winter windows
Radiator pings
Judith Katz

Common Language

Another practice that will be important for my students is choosing their words carefully. Since the Haiku is generally an observation of a common, everyday experience involving what can be seen nearby the student will be encouraged to use common language. The language of Haiku is not metaphorical it is straightforward. The container of Haiku is so limited in size that complicated grammatical construction must be abandoned in favor of the simple and direct.

Hosimi

One of the Haiku concepts that is particularly challenging to young (and even sometimes mature writers) is that of hosimi, or slenderness of word use. Hosimi is a quality that can make the lines of the Haiku seem fragmentary and incomplete. These qualities contribute to simplicity and naïf sound that the Haiku lines have. I must remember that hosimi may be viewed as a direct literary insult to my students who can exhibit a pit-bullish protective quality regarding their writing. In the past they have wanted to protect and retain every word they write. They do not want to edit, change, remove, or rearrange the order of the words they've written. But in order to adhere to the concept of hosimi they almost always must edit, change, remove or rearrange the original order of the words they've written. This will inevitably lead to a strengthening of their editing skills and create positive influences on the word choices they make later when they begin writing in more complex forms like sonnet, Pantoum, and free verse. It is my hope that the experience of reading, writing, and editing Haiku will encourage my students to create combinations they might otherwise resist.

Painting a Picture, The Five Senses

My students will practice using description through their five senses to paint a picture for the reader. Technically the pictures they paint for the reader will not all be visual. By using their five senses they will be able to write Haiku that observe the way a place, or event, smells, tastes, feels, sounds and or looks. By encouraging them to include all of their senses I hope to expand their ability to observe beyond what they may have experienced or written in the past.

Detail

I anticipate detail becoming a tricky area for my students. Since I will have already told them that I expect them to use common language I expect they will fight with me about using words that are highly descriptive. I can easily imagine them telling me that "dog" is good enough, common enough and that a detail about what kind of dog is being observed is not needed. I am prepared to overcome their objections. I am prepared to describe the "Evolution of Detail" as told to me by William Wenthe, Professor of English, The University of Texas. Professor Wenthe, in a session of constructive criticism of my poetry once commented that the power of poetry is in the detail. He asked me which of the following was the most descriptively powerful; animal, mammal, dog, collie, a one eyed boxer named Jubal. Clearly the last, most detailed description paints the clearest picture.

The Haiku Moment and Present Tense

One of the reasons I like to teach Haiku at all is because of the Haiku Moment. At the risk of being viewed by my students as a "new-age" thinker there is a great deal of discussion in my classroom that revolves around being in the present moment. This comes up in a variety of personal, educational and artistic ways. I believe that to be a good writer you have to learn to allow your mind to drift into the real or imagined past, present and future. In the case of Haiku, I will be training my students to work with the present. I want them to them to focus on observing and writing about the present and writing about it in the present tense so they can paint a picture a clear picture of it.

Observation Rather Than Statement

Through my prior teaching experience I have seen this is an area in which students have a lot of trouble. To a student the word "goodbye" may seem like an observation, but it's not. It's a statement. An observation would paint me a picture of the student's detailed observation of the Haiku moment that comes just before, just after, or as the word is being said. For example in my Haiku that follows:

Gate swings closed. Her hand
Waves above dark wooden slats
small against sunset
Judith Katz

This Haiku paints a picture of what someone might see after goodbye is said. It's an observation, not a

statement.

Editing

It will be a rare and shining moment when my students or I write a first draft of a Haiku (or anything else) that won't require discussion and change. Like Rodin's sculpting the nature of creating high quality, authentic, writing requires us to look at the work until we have taken away everything that's not the final product. The 13 definitions are the tools we will learn to use together so that we can refine, sculpt, edit and create Haiku that paint a picture and bring us to the Haiku moment.

The Classroom Moment

What follows is the way in which I intend to guide my students through the progressive navigation between task and process to product. How much time I will spend on each of these steps depends on how many students I'm working with and how quickly they internalize what I'm teaching.

I. Task: Familiarize students with the Haiku form

Process: Read many Haiku, silently and out loud

Answer the question: What do you like about this Haiku?

Product: Long-term product goal is to write Haiku

My intention:

I intend to begin the unit by bringing into the classroom as many books of Haiku as I can get. I prefer to have enough books that each student can have access to one at all times for at least the first week of class. The task is for each student to open the book, anywhere in the book and read as many Haiku as the student has to, until they find one that resonates somewhere in them. I don't expect that this task will be the least bit difficult for them to accomplish and the benefit of the process is that they will become steeped in the sound of Haiku very quickly.

I want each student to read a Haiku they like, every time they find one. After a student reads I will ask them "What do you like about this Haiku" and I'll keep a running list on the board of the Haiku qualities they like, When possible I'll begin to rename what they said using the elements of the common vocabulary.

Depending on the size and behavioral tenor of the class this task can be handled in a strict manner by simply starting with one student and moving in a geographic pattern around the room. This task can also be accomplished in an open and free form discussion format with students raising their hand, or calling out when they find a poem that suits.

I'll read some of my favorites first in order to get the ball rolling.

If it's not possible, due to budget or class size, for me to have enough books in the room for the students to have their own, I'll copy pages or type up handouts. It is important to this process that the students have a lot of Haiku to choose from so that they have a sense of involvement with the words and form. I want them to have a sense that they are shopping for a Haiku with limitless funds.

What I really think will happen in the classroom:

I have a tendency to let my students run a bit wild especially at the beginning of a unit. I expect to hold their attention with my introduction of the materials and my favorite Haiku. I expect to let them loose after that and encourage them to call out Haiku as they find them, even though that can get loud. I'll act as a moderator in case two people want to read simultaneously. I hope that two or more people may be attracted to the same Haiku and will want to read it. If that happens, I'll put those on the board as "mascot Haiku". I'll let them trade books and papers. I'll let them look on together in one book. I'm also open to my students reading Haiku they detest so I can ask them what they detest about it. The key is to encourage them to have a response and become involved with the form. I'll be happy to spend an entire class period doing this.

For Example

A favorite one line Haiku of mine is:

Butterfly stomach you just met.
Theo Coleman, 10th Grade

When my student Theo wrote this Haiku and I put it on the board the students said they liked it. What do you like about this Haiku, I asked them. They told me they liked that it felt real and they knew what the feeling he described felt like because they'd had that feeling. I said Theo did a good job painting a picture. His words made us feel the way that moment feels in real life. He brought us to the Haiku moment and he only used five words to do it. Pretty cool, don't-cha-think?

It's their "ah-ha" response that I'll be looking for and we'll continue reading and talking until we get it.

- II. Task: Introduce elements of the common vocabulary
- Process: Discuss elements of the common vocabulary handout with Haiku
- Product: Long-term product goal is to write Haiku

My intention

I intend to use the definitions of the 13 ideas described earlier in this paper as a working dictionary. I will hand the definitions out and talk about each one using examples gathered from the books and handouts of the prior day.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

My students will suffer through my attempt to teach them the definitions in a fairly routine manner. I will give them handouts of the definitions. I will ask them to take turns reading the definitions out loud. We will pause after each definition to discuss it and I will encourage them to ask questions about the definitions, and give examples from prior readings if they can.

For example

Hosimi: I can't think of any circumstance in which the word "very" as in "very dark" could be considered

hosimi. In Haiku when we're using the idea of hosimi, slenderness, the thing observed is either dark or not. If you want to stress how dark it is, you don't say very. You use a detail like a recognizable color (black, indigo) or an observation of position (under porch, in shadow), or a time of day (dusk, night). Any one of these detailed descriptions paints a clearer picture than "very dark." In this way I will weave elements of the common vocabulary into discussion immediately. Using as much of it as possible at all times. The repetition of elements of the common vocabulary is essential. The prior example uses the elements of the common vocabulary 8 times to make a point.

III. Task: Begin applying elements of the common vocabulary to Haiku

Process: Model usage of elements of the common vocabulary to discuss Haiku

Product: Long-term product goal is to write Haiku

My intention

I'll choose several of my favorite Haiku as examples. I'll write them on the board using elements of the common vocabulary to discuss the ways in which the container, content and concepts work. In the classroom I'll often use published Haiku of very high quality. But I'll also use interesting examples of my own and prior students work. In this paper I am using my own and prior students work.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

Since I intend to use a mixture of Haiku as examples I think I will be able to engage my students in discussion.

For Example

I might write the following poem on the board and ask the students to tell me what they think is right and wrong with it. They have to use elements of the common vocabulary to describe what works and doesn't. I'll encourage my students to call out what they're thinking. If the class is unruly, I will require raised hands.

Busy black winged bee
Lands quietly in flower
Gathers sweet pollen
Rachel Holtzberg, 5th Grade

The kinds of comments and conversations I expect are:

Student: "I like it"

Me: "What do you like about it?"

Student: "I can see it."

Me: "Does it paint a picture for you?"

Student: "Yeah"

Another possible conversation:

Student: It's not hosimi

Me: What's not hosimi about it.

Student: To much extra stuff, extra words

Me: Like what?

Student: She doesn't need 'busy'.

Me: I agree, anything else.

Student: She could lose 'quietly' it doesn't really help much.

Me: Really? Much?

Student: I mean it doesn't help.

Me: Good on the fly editing there!

IV. Task: Discuss Haiku forms as containers, give a brief historical perspective of Haiku, introduce the Modern English Haiku Form

Process: Give examples of forms and begin writing from observation

Product: Long-term product goal begin writing Haiku

My intention

I will begin by discussing the idea of containers using many of the examples and discussion points in the early part of this paper. I will give a brief history of the Haiku form including how it resulted from the longer Renga form and the way in which it has been changed through it's translation into an English language form. Historical perspectives on the development of Haiku are easily accessible in several of the books listed at the end of this unit. I will introduce the accepted form of the Modern English Haiku including the container, content and concept. I'll give some examples, I'll write some examples on the spot, I'll discuss why they're not great, or why they are.

We will take 20 minutes to write our first Haiku. A word about subject matter: since Haiku rely on observation I will encourage my students to observe something visible to them at the moment they are writing like the weather out the window, the colors in the room, etc.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

By the time we get to this lesson it will be day four of working with Haiku and we won't have written one. I imagine that my students will be chomping at the bit to write. My guess is they'll think it's no big deal. It looks easy. It's short. When they tell me they're done I'll ask them to get their elements of the common vocabulary worksheet out and check their Haiku against it to see if they think they've met each of those standards. They will complain, they will tell me they have before they look, they will beg for clemency. I'll make them check anyway.

When they think they really are done, I will ask them to write their Haiku on the board and sign it. While they are waiting for others to finish they may start on a second Haiku.

When everyone has written a Haiku on the board I will ask each student to take a turn reading their own. After they read I will encourage the rest of the class to discuss what elements of the common vocabulary the student/writer met and didn't. I will ask the student writer to take notes so they can edit the Haiku during the next class.

I will add my opinions based on the elements of the common vocabulary when everyone in class is done, in the event that they missed something. Otherwise I'll complement them on the writing and constructive criticism and move on. This process is meant to be encouraging, move briskly and keep everyone engaged.

For Example I have written a terrible Haiku of which I am very proud because it is a great example.

I love my dog Fluffy
He is really, really, loud
And also funny and a fast runner
Judith Katz

I predict that my students will have no trouble giving constructive criticism to me because there is plenty to work with and criticizing the teacher is always fun. A line-by-line critique of this first draft appears in lesson plan 1, attached.

V. Task: Continue editing of first draft, begin next Haiku

Process: Work on writing and editing for entire class. Answer questions as they arise.

Encourage students to share work in progress with me and each other.

Product: 3-5 Modern English Haiku

My intention

It is my intention to create an environment in which my students will be steeped in the ideas of Haiku writing. To create that environment I intend to encourage them to spend time in quiet, contemplative states. Background music of all kinds, as long as it doesn't have words, can be helpful. I will encourage my students to bring in music to share. I will encourage them to spend time staring out the window, looking around the room, and recalling moments in their recent past that might be Haiku material. I will encourage them to speak to me and each other quietly about what they're thinking and writing. Anyone is free to write a Haiku on the board when they feel finished or stuck. Our contract as a classroom of writers is that we will stop writing to discuss a colleague's work when they ask us to.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

I believe initially it will take some students time to slow down to a Haiku speed. Haiku is not fast writing, although it's short. It takes time to observe the details of the moment. It takes time, when you're a teenager especially, to understand and be comfortable with the idea that someone is interested in your observation and wants you to dig deep and find something genuine. I expect everyone will settle into the rhythm of Haiku in time. I expect students who get their first will lose patience with students who don't want to do the work and they will help me lead everyone to create the environment we want. But hey, I'm an optimist.

For example

Having used my Haiku as an example in the prior class (see lesson plan 1 for details) I will model editing techniques using elements of the common vocabulary to produce improvements in their Haiku. Here is an example of the impact minimal editing can produce.

First Draft Improved Haiku

Rain pouring down hard	Rain pouring down hard
Boom. Big snake in sky, thunder	Silver snake sky. Boom, thunder
Goose bumps, shivering	Goose bumps, shivering
Leora Petashnik, 7th grade	

Leora rearranged the second line to give a more logical progression. In addition she added the detail of color (silver) and removed the word "in" to get a more *hosimi* line. She did not make enormous changes and yet the Haiku paints a clearer picture, and the use of *hosimi* gives the movement of the poem a feeling of suddenness and speed that helps bring us to the Haiku moment. I would also model the behavior of observation by reminding my students to use their five senses as part of observing. Leora used not only what she observed by looking, but what she observed about the way her body felt as she was looking.

By writing quietly with my students, staring out the window, making observational notes and checking in with them to see if they need help, I can model the kind of behavior I expect them to exhibit.

My task at this point in the process is to begin to balance the different speeds of development each student exhibits. Some students will work quickly, observing, writing, editing, and repeating the task/process easily. Some will get hung up in a specific part of the process. I have to keep each student engaged and moving forward.

VI. Task:	Take a Haiku walk.	
Process:	Leave the classroom and observe nature and the surrounding areas. See what	there is to see.
Product:	Honing observation skills	
*Lesson Plan Included		

My intention

My goal is to reintroduce my students to the world around them. I want them to meet the world as Haiku writers. I want them to take the time to use as many of their senses as possible to build an inventory of observational experiences they can write about later. I want my students to take comprehensive, clear notes about everything they sense while they are on the walk. I want the walk itself to take about 20-30 minutes.

Reminder: Get signed permission slips from each students parent or guardian, plus permission from the school administration, in advance, to take my students out of the building for a walk.

My plan is to use a double period for the Haiku walk. Since I have most of my students for a double period it's not a problem, but I will have to get signed teacher's permission slips for the students who are only with me

for one period.

I would like to introduce the goal of the Haiku walk, walk for 20 minutes, stop and get a snack (at Dunkin Donuts or a local coffee shop-so everyone needs to bring a little snack cash). During the break I'd like to discuss how the observation process is going and give guidance on how maximize the walk back to school. Then walk back.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

I think my students will spend a minimum amount of time acting out because they are free of the classroom environment. Depending on the size of the class, I may need additional chaperone help from a parent or another teacher. Since my students will have been practicing observation in an enclosed space, I think they will quickly realize there is a lot of information to take in and will want to take it in. In addition my expectation is they will write Haiku based on these observations, and they will be graded on them. Which can be a motivating factor.

For example

Even in an urban setting nature manages to exist. Our urban setting is not at all barren. There are houses with trees, lawns, ivy, gardens, and various forms of wildlife including people. There's a sky, weather, sounds, structures, walkways, light and shadow. There are vehicles, dumpsters, and garbage of all kinds. There are infinite opportunities for observation. I will encourage my students to write as much detail as possible. When they look at something I'll encourage them to describe it using all of their senses.

Later when I ask them to use their Haiku-walk journals to write they may say to me...Well how does it help. My Haiku journal says: dirty, icy, slushy, snow. I can ask them what that reminds them of. I can ask them to remember what, exactly they were looking at when they wrote that note. I can ask them to describe what they saw more fully, as a Haiku moment. That is how the following Haiku was born.

Dirt on snow
Pulverized ice and salt
Plow trucks leave.
Mimi Smith, 10th grade

Might she have written that Haiku without her journal? Sure. Was it easier because she had the support of written observation to get her started? I think so.

VII. Task: Introduce the concepts of task, process, repetition, and editing

Process: Work through a few cycles of task/process/repetition/editing

Product: Continue working to complete 3-5 Modern English Haiku

My intention

My intention is to keep each student working toward completion of the assignment (product) of 3-5 Modern English Haiku.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

I think by this time in the process my students will be committed and working toward their goals. This is the time in which I will have to work very closely with each of them to help them refine their understanding of how to use elements of the common vocabulary. Most of the teaching to this point is general. From this point on the teaching becomes individualized and more coach-like. Each student will have different needs, strengths and weaknesses and this is when they'll really blossom. It's crucial to me that they see their problems as creative opportunities. And it's my job to make sure they do.

For example

During this period of time is when I expect to hear my students wailing words to this effect...Ms. Katz:

- a. I'm done
- b. Why do you keep taking my words away?
- c. What do you mean a Haiku doesn't rhyme?
- d. "Goodbye" is not a greeting it's an observation
- e. "Pretty" is not an opinion it's an observation
- f. I can't make this 5-7-5
- g. Why are we doing this?

When all avenues of one-on-one negotiation with a student fail, I intend to put the disputed Haiku on the board and let the class use elements of the common vocabulary to make my point. I have complete faith that by this time in the repetition process the class, as a whole, will be able to tell if a Haiku paints a picture, is *hosimi*, or is using statement versus observation. Sometimes a dose of reality from your peer group can be beneficial.

I will remember to be open to the idea that I might be wrong and that a piece might work beautifully, even though it does not meet all the standard elements of the common vocabulary.

This is a good time in the process for that easing of standards to begin.

I close my eyes as
The wind blows and lifts me
Off my broken heart

I put this Haiku on the board as soon as Miss James finished it. It is not a typical or standard Haiku. It is a variation of the Modern English Haiku. It is not 5-7-5, it is not strictly observational. It does paint a picture and it takes me to her Haiku moment and one of my own.

VIII. Task:	Introduce Haiku variations including the one line Haiku	
Process:	Loosen the container while continuing to work through a few cycles of	task/process/repetition/editing
Product:	Have students begin to organize their own workload toward the final goal of 3-5	Modern English Haiku, 3 one line Haiku and 2 Haiku in their choice of variation.

My intention

My intention at this point is to begin to loosen the reigns. I want to give my students a feeling of freedom within what is actually a pretty restrained format. Loosening the container to allow their expression to flow as a one line observational Haiku, or a Modern English Haiku variation (in which the syllable count can be slightly off 17), or to allow them five hosimi lines will seem like running wild to them at this point. I will let them pick and choose what standards from elements of the common vocabulary they will use to express themselves. In this way I believe the standards from elements of the common vocabulary will become tools for them to use at will to enhance their understanding and verbal and written communication abilities. Which is one of my major goals.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

Actually I think it will take them a few minutes to realize I mean it. And then I think they'll start writing quite a bit and pretty quickly. I think they'll come up first drafts they may even find remarkable. Again, I will encourage them to put completed work on the board, if they want. I will encourage the class to discuss the work. I expect to be having fun as we work through this section of task/process/repetition.

I expect my students to breathe a giant exhale. Even though these Haiku variations have rules and standards, I think there is a feeling of relief to opening up the process.

For example

I think the one line Haiku is very appealing at this point because it is in effect, one observation, simply delivered.

Night full moon Morning its fading shadow
Rosiland Hennah, 10th grade

Black leather coat lying across table

Jason Fraser, 10th grade

Cat Ferrari Splat

Harris Neuberg, 6th grade

Is there any question where the Haiku moment is in each of these.

IX. Task:	Wrapping up	
Process:	Continuing to work through the cycles of task/process/repetition/editing until all	students have completed products
Product:	Each student should complete 3 Modern English Haiku, 3 one line Haiku and 2	Haiku in the form of their choice
*Lesson Plan Attached		

My intention

I intend for each student to have a body of completed work to be handed in to me for grading in the unit. I also intend for each student to pick one Haiku that they've written to read to the class on the last day of the unit. Each member of the class will listen to the student/poet and take notes on how well he adhered to the standard elements of the common vocabulary.

The student/poet can ask to hear that feedback or not as they wish. All notes will be confidential and will be given to me. I will be using a similar format to grade the work.

Since time will be limited, I will most likely divide the number of students into the number of minutes available for the class period. Each student may have 2 minutes to read. A strict presentation format will be adhered to for this "staged reading". See Lesson Plan 3 for details.

What I really think will happen in the classroom

I really think the students will be attentive to each other's readings and work. Because each student will have gone through the process, they will be interested in what their classmates have done and because they have to hand in a grading sheet as part of their grade, they'll have to be somewhat attentive. In my experience when students know something, they want to show it off and this will be an opportunity to show off a bit.

For example

- I'll walk to the front of the room with my Haiku and say:
- Hello, my name is Ms. Katz and I'll be reading a Modern English Haiku
- I'll take a breath in and out and read my Haiku: In Memory of Fluffy

Walking my white dog
In the midnight falling snow
We are earth glitters

- I'll take a breath in and out and read again

Walking my white dog
In the midnight falling snow
We are earth glitters

- I'll take a breath in and out and say
- Thank you.
- I'll return to my seat where I'll ask to hear feedback, or wait until I get my annotated grade from my teacher.

Lesson Plan One: Correlates to Task Section V--A really Bad Haiku

Objective: To reinforce the elements of the common vocabulary as writing tools, checklist, and means of discussion. To give students critique power. Why it works:

In the past my students have gloried in my bad writing far more than they enjoy my good writing. This technique is invaluable as it gives my students the power to use what they know without any risk of hurting the feelings of a fellow student. It also gives me the opportunity to model how constructive criticism can be taken well and used as a means for editing and improving one's work.

Strategies: Writing really bad Haiku as good pedagogy

1. Put a really bad Haiku on the board: I'll use this one

I love my dog Fluffy
He is really, really loud
And also funny and a fast runner.
Judith Katz

2. Ask the class to read and critique the Haiku using the elements of common vocabulary
3. Make notes on the board
4. Circle poetic problems in another color
5. Let the students call out freely (unless the class can't handle that much freedom)
6. Gather as much criticism as you can
7. See line-by-line checklist below to make sure every possible element of the common vocabulary has been discussed.
8. Edit with the class: (Edit your own Haiku prior to class)
9. Task: Take 5 minutes to have each student use the elements of common vocabulary to fix the problems and see if they class improve the Haiku
10. When they're done have them put their "new" "improved" Haiku on the board
11. Discuss the improvements and the process they used to edit. Be prepared to reword their process answers to show how using the elements of common vocabulary helped.

Haiku problems line by line: Line 1: I love my dog Fluff

- A statement not an observation
- 6 syllables
- I don't know anything about the dog or the person that paints a picture for me or takes me to a Haiku place or moment.

Line 2: He is really, really loud

- This is an observation, which is good. I know the dog is loud.
- Not Hosimi (slender). "Really" is used twice which is a waste of two syllables.
- "Really" is not needed once...either he's loud or he's not. Need to know how loud, or loud in what way. Descriptive detail would be better.
- Not Hosimi (slender). You probably won't need the words "he is" either.

Line 3: And also funny and a fast runner.

- Not Hosimi (slender) replace "and" with a comma. Saves you 2 syllables you can use for details.
- "Funny" and "fast runner" are good observations but examples that use detail would paint a better picture.

An Improved Second Draft

Dog resting on couch
Jumps awake. Barks, scratches door.
Mail delivery

Why it's better, but needs but could still improve

- Can see a dog doing things: resting, jumping, barking, scratching
- Can see a place: couch, door
- Can see why the dog does what it does in line: Mail carrier comes
- All big improvements

Why I don't love it, even though I wrote it.

- Wish I had a better picture of the way the dog looks: Collie, White dog.
- Wish I had a better picture of the way a dog goes crazy when someone comes to the door.
- I'm okay with the last line...it sums up why the dog did what it did

Lesson Plan Two: Correlates to Task VI-A Haiku Walk

Objective: To hone observation, detail and writing skills. To create a journal of observations that can be used as a jumpstart when writing Haiku in later classes. Why it works:

Removing students from their standard setting and forcing them to breathe fresh air, use their bodies and minds always causes a positive shift. Throwing in the idea of a treat can only load the dice in favor of a positive experience. It's fun to break the standard cycle and students love to feel that they are getting away with something different and better than their peers.

Important Reminder: • To take students out of the building or off campus remember to get permission from parents, administrators and other teachers if your class will run longer and interfere with theirs.

- Reserve additional help from parents or other teachers if the class is large.

Strategies: Walking and working with the class helps gives them a role model and someone to bounce ideas and questions off.

1. Make sure each student has a palm sized (small) notebook and something to write with
2. If you're going to stop for a snack, make sure that students have money or you have gotten funding from another source
3. Predetermine your route both ways for maximum exposure to stimulus
4. Bring a cell phone
5. Remind students of any rules of the road you choose to enforce

6. Remind students that the Haiku walk is a silent event
7. The purpose is to observe and make detailed notes on observations
8. Take 20 minutes to go to a resting spot (preferably one with food, drinks and a bathroom)
9. Take 20 minutes to rest, eat and discuss the kinds of notations being made. Help focus the class on detail for the return trip, as well as using all of their senses to observe
10. Take 20 minutes to walk back
11. Remind class that the journal will provide content for the Haiku they will be writing shortly. The more detail and observation they have, the more support they will give themselves for writing later

Lesson Plan Three: Correlates to Task IX-Wrapping Up

Objective: To create a sense of accomplishment and pride in each student for the writing they have completed and their ability to critique other's writing constructively. Why it works:

Learning to stand up in front of your peers and take responsibility for the creative work you have completed is both scary and fulfilling. Being able to discuss a peers work intelligently, gently, constructively and with words that you both understand clearly is a life skill and an art skill. It just plain feels good to sew up all the loose ends and feel complete.

Strategies Part 1: Reading Like a Writer

Each student should be prepared to:

- Walk to the front of the room with their Haiku and say:
- Hello, my name is _____ and I'll be reading a form of Haiku
- They should take a breath in and out
- And read their Haiku
- They should take another breath in and out
- And read it again
- They should take another breath in and out

- And say: Thank you
- They should return to their seat where they can ask to hear feedback, or wait until they get their annotated grade from their teacher

I am requiring two readings of the same Haiku because they are short and it's easy to miss something the first time through.

In addition, I think a limited time frame that must be shared by all equally can be a great motivator for students to focus. It's important to have the student say their name before they read their poem so that the reader and listener have a moment to get their focus in order without losing the first line of the Haiku.

Strategies Part II & II: Listening Like a Writer, Grading Like a Teacher.

Students will have the opportunity to grade each other while they're listening. They can use the form below. They may give a reader up to the full 25% for each element of the common vocabulary listed. They may choose to give someone 15% on painting a picture if they feel that the picture was not as clear as it could have been.

They can use the time that the reader is walking back to their seat to fill out the form.

I will use the same format to grade the student's assignments at the end of the unit. I will grade each Haiku separately and then average to reach a final grade for the unit.

The Grading Form

(figure available in print form)

An Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

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