

LEARNING TO WRITE HAIKU: A TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Dedication: to all young poets, present and future, who have inspired this publication, and to all those who guide them.

Disclaimer: We have made every effort to obtain reprint permission from the authors of the exemplary poems, whose work was first published in one of the New Zealand Poetry Society's annual anthologies. However, some of them are no longer students, or have changed schools, and contact details are no longer current. If you believe the use of your haiku is an infringement of your copyright, or not consistent with fair dealing, please draw this to our attention at: competition@poetrysociety.org.nz

Introduction

This guide to writing haiku has been prepared with primary, intermediate and high school teachers in mind. Our aim is to support teachers by presenting information on how to compose haiku as it is currently written worldwide, so in turn they can skilfully support their students to discover the enjoyment of haiku. This document may also be useful for independent students of any age.

Poetry writing is an under-appreciated pursuit which can be a deeply pleasurable way of considering life – sharing poignant moments through haiku is rewarding for both writer and reader. We present here some ways of creating a “poetry culture” in the classroom to encourage this kind of communication. If using this guide results in more young people delighting in composing haiku, wonderful! If more of them are confident to submit and share their work, even better!

I was fortunate to be the judge for the 2015 Junior Haiku Competition of the New Zealand Poetry Society and was amazed at the quality of the majority of submissions. Clearly, young people are just as capable of writing truly excellent haiku as adults – I could see that there is really no such thing as ‘children’s haiku’. So, as a basis for this guide, I feel no need to look to well-known adult examples of haiku. Instead, I have chosen to comment on prize-winning entries from recent Junior Competitions, each of which exemplifies one or more specific qualities of haiku with terrific impact.

This guide is a living document. We ask anyone who uses it – or teachers who have already developed their own successful haiku-teaching programmes – to send their comments, so that in future years it becomes a collaborative document presenting a range of ideas that works well for teachers and students both. Thank you to all participants in this project.

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New Zealand Poetry Society
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Chapter One What is haiku? Definitions

For immediate reference in getting started, here are three lists concerning the characteristics of haiku (*hi-coo*) as it is now written in English. These points will be covered in more detail in my comments on each exemplary haiku.

What haiku is:

One basic definition of a haiku poem is: a personally-significant moment conveyed by one or two images and presented in a small number of words. The essence is the same whether written by young people or adults. This kind of poem is:

- honest
- vivid and immediate
- written in the present tense, in the here and now
- as specific as possible
- based on the senses
- about events in the everyday world, 'things as they are'
- as brief as possible
- made of just one or two images
- formed of two parts, one short and one longer, with a definite break between the parts
- written in plain language

What haiku is not:

Outdated ideas and misconceptions about haiku abound. Haiku has moved on into new territory, leaving behind most of the conventional ideas about it. Also, it is very unlike traditional Western poetry. These days we can assert that haiku is:

- not 17 syllables arranged in three lines of 5-7-5 syllables respectively
- not only about nature
- not necessarily about beauty or a "nice" positive, easy-reading subject
- not sentimental or explicitly emotional
- not exotically 'Oriental', despite its Japanese origin
- not a narrative
- not a fantasy
- not structured by metre (rhythm)
- not rhymed
- not made choppy by removing every "a", "an" and "the"
- not a place for simile, personification or obvious metaphor
- not a place for general concepts or intellectual musing
- not given a title

What is optional in haiku:

Haiku is written in many different ways all over the world in the 21st century, so there is a wide range of approaches, from the traditional to the avant-garde. We are no longer trying to imitate the style of early translations from the Japanese, but have made haiku “our own”, no matter where we live. The poet is now free to pick and choose among many possibilities to suit their subject and their inclinations. The options (to use or not) include:

- a word indicating the season, though it is common to use one
- a tone of sadness or loneliness
- use of repeated sounds that contribute to the meaning
- a sense of humour or wit
- the stated presence of “I” the poet
- a syllable count between 3 and 17 (though 17 is considered both old-fashioned and too long by most authorities; 14 is now seen as reasonably long)
- three lines (can be one or two, very occasionally four)
- a different arrangement of three lines, not necessarily making the first and third shorter, the middle one longer
- words of the haiku arranged freely and expressively on the page
- a surprise in the last line or last phrase
- no punctuation or capitalizing
- few, if any, descriptive adjectives or adverbs; overuse of these is a common fault
- a full sentence or sentences; most often a haiku is made from phrases only

Also not essential is the experience of the traditional ‘haiku moment’. Many people believe that a haiku happens only when, in a mystical flash of inspiration, the poem comes to you complete and perfect. This is a very limiting belief! Thoughtfully crafting and editing haiku is absolutely okay and very common. Trying out alternative versions, paring down a poem, or polishing it, can all be satisfying and worthwhile stages in making an authentic haiku.

Chapter Three, Techniques of Writing Haiku, will expand on the Definition lists. It introduces haiku in detail through my comments on 45 haiku from previous Junior Haiku Competitions. But before you go on to Chapter two on teaching methods, here is a sampler of five haiku that demonstrate many of the characteristics of skilful, authentic haiku outlined above.

1. spring
the calf
comes alive

Nicholas Sharr

Brevity (just 6 syllables); simplicity and plain language; present tense; development of drama word by word; an ‘openness’ that does not tell readers what to feel, instead allowing us to discover our own emotions.

5. winter morning
I stir a rainbow
In my pot

Lily Pringle

Imagination and originality; surprise; zooming in from the winter scene to the pot; connecting the elemental and domestic realms; contrast of ethereal and earthy; unsentimental rainbow imagery.

15. wild boar
the gun shudders
in my hand

Amelia Gordon

The power of the key word, “shudders”; vivid direct perception of a sense of touch; evoking emotion without telling us what to feel; mystery about what happened (was the gun fired or not?), so readers can decide for themselves.

23. 7 years of drought
a single raindrop
disturbs the dust

Amy Wells

A large-scale situation represented by a tiny, specific happening; the repeated sound (alliteration) of /d/ in each line, which when the haiku is spoken, feels in the mouth and sounds like the impact of the rain on the ground.

33. broken ice
reflecting
my image

Charlotte Trevella (11)

Unusual arrangement of the lines on the page, expressive of the subject; middle line connects nature and human nature; melancholy tone.

Chapter Two Ideas for teaching haiku writing

A very short poem needs to be very sharp to touch us. Its brevity and focus give it a keen point. The most amazing quality of haiku is its ability to open us to the biggest subjects with just a few words about something small. The touching of the reader – who may be of a different age and nationality to the writer – comes through employing the senses and emotions, rather than intellectual generalities.

A haiku handbook written by two eminent poets opens with the question, what are haiku for? Their answer is clear – for sharing a personally significant moment: “When we compose a haiku, we are saying, ‘It is hard to tell you what I am feeling. Perhaps if I share with you the event that made me aware of these feelings, you will have similar feelings of your own...’ The central act of haiku is letting an object or event touch us, and then sharing it with another. If we are the writer, we share it with the reader. If we read a haiku, we share that moment, or one like it, with the writer.”¹

The first criterion for haiku, then, before any concerns with technique, is sincerity. Teaching young people to write haiku will really work only if they are encouraged to present experiences that are genuine and personally meaningful, rather than superficially correct forms in fulfilment of an assignment. In this guide, my basic challenge has been to find ways to promote authenticity in writing. Once students are enthusiastic about their subject, then the technical considerations come more easily and naturally to support expressiveness.

Over the years, talented teachers working individually have invented and refined effective methods of teaching haiku to students of all ages, with great results. For teachers who want to try haiku in the classroom, what information from these experienced teachers is available to inspire and support you?

Initially I did a search online and in the library, to see what resources could be readily accessed. I assumed there would be good lesson plans galore. I discovered some excellent online resources for lesson plans, as well as a couple of books written for children on how to compose haiku, which you could use as a basis for your own lesson planning. (See *Resources* for more about all these.) However, surprisingly little else came to light. Often the advice seemed to be aimed at haiku poets visiting a school to present a ‘workshop’ for an hour or so. The three outstanding sources I could find of teaching materials on haiku writing are:

1. The British Haiku Society provides a wonderful, 20-page, downloadable **Teaching Pack**, material enough to cover a few sessions in the classroom, for ages 9 – 16. It gives a choice of two introductory 50-minute lesson plans plus ideas for extending these, so teachers can design their own programmes according to their teaching style and the time available to them.

¹ What haiku are for: Higginson, W.J. and Penny Harter, *The Haiku Handbook*, pp. 4-6.

2. The Haiku Foundation presents very structured and detailed **Haiku Lessons** for years/grades 1-6, along with exemplary poems (from its archives) on which the plans are based. These plans are first rate, having been created by an eminent haiku writer along with an educator with a Ph.D. In general for each age group, there are a few days' plans of 30 minutes each: introduction, writing haiku and revising. Several alternative ideas are given for each plan. For years/grades 7-12, a briefer, looser set of ideas and resources from their archive is provided.
3. Patricia Donegan's book, *Haiku: Asian Arts and Crafts for Creative Kids*, introduces haiku with 7 keys to writing poems and 5 projects. Although written for children, it provides a concise and authoritative basis for lesson planning (one to two pages, with exemplary poems, for each key point). The appealing exemplary poems range from traditional Japanese to Western to children's from around the world. Projects include haiga (artwork with haiku), with examples by children, and making a haiku-sized booklet for poems. The author is a well-known haiku poet and translator. Recommended for ages 7-12, but could be extended, I think, to 14 at least. Nine copies of this book are currently held by New Zealand libraries, including the National Library for free borrowing.

Not being able to simply recommend a wide range of lesson-planning options, I am instead imagining (from the viewpoint of a poet rather than an experienced school-teacher) how genuine, exciting haiku-writing could be taught.

I visualise a more in-depth approach by classroom teachers, taking more than the minimal three days of the lesson plans above. Haiku can be so much more than a little literacy exercise, or just a 'fun' way of putting a few words into a certain form for half an hour. Potentially haiku has a much greater and deeper value, as a way of keenly perceiving the world, of paying attention to what is personally meaningful, then finding a way to express and share that in essence. So what follows are mainly my own ideas for a way of creating a 'poetry culture' – over as generous a time period as possible – in the classroom.

Below I have outlined a process for entering the realm of haiku, with three steps:

1. the teacher introduces the topic of haiku, beginning with reading some aloud, and opens discussion about what it is
2. students do activities that will help them tune into their senses and collect images that are meaningful to them
3. students choose their theme and begin to write; if needed, they can do some exercises and activities to get their poem-composing started

Realistically, you may not have an extensive time-frame. In the next section is *A Week of Haiku: a five-lesson outline*, giving a five-day process for following these steps. The different activities on the outline are described more fully below. One way to cover the topic of haiku writing even more briefly, in three days, is by doing the lesson plans for Day One, Day Three and Day Five.

There is certainly plenty of scope in my ideas, and in the exemplary haiku themselves, to explore over a longer time. In any case, my ideas in this chapter are loosely organised, with various options, so you can use them creatively, according to your own classroom style and circumstances.

Haiku has instant appeal – even if you choose only a few among the following activities, it is highly likely that the haiku experience will be engaging, enjoyable and worthwhile for you and your students. Several teachers have commented that in their experience, good haiku writing certainly does not require a student to be a ‘poet-type’ person, and that most people can write good haiku in their first attempts.²

The only essential pieces of equipment are a haiku notebook and pen or pencil for each student. The notebook will have multiple uses throughout the haiku sessions.

² Ease of learning to write haiku: Reichhold, J., *Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, p. 100-101; Haiku Society of America website, Martin, J., ‘Some thoughts on teaching and learning haiku’, p. 1.

A Week of Haiku: a five-lesson outline

DAY ONE: Introducing haiku by reading aloud

- the teacher reads aloud examples listed in Section One of the Index
- the teacher elicits a class discussion on what haiku is and how it works
- Homework: students start searching for images, with The Five Senses or Season Words exercises (or a combination of the two)

DAY TWO: Gathering meaningful images

- A. the class takes a Haiku Walk, with each student noting images OR
- B. the teacher has prepared a set of haiku from the Index from which each student chooses a favourite to present to the class; these could include examples from Section One, Haiku to See on the Page, as well as those from Section Two, such as Senses Other Than Vision and Haiku Suggesting Various Emotions
- Homework: students collect their own meaningful images

DAY THREE: Writing haiku

- the teacher opens by handing out a Guidelines Sheet (see page 47)
- each student chooses a favourite subject from their images and begins writing
- anyone who is having trouble getting started can do an exercise (Zooming In and Out, or Similarity and Contrast) to help them assemble some imagery
- Homework: students continue writing at home

DAY FOUR: Writing and revising haiku

- the teacher does a brief warm-up reading of a few appropriate haiku from Section Two of the Index, such as Techniques or Sensory Vividness
- students continue writing and begin to revise, using the Guidelines Sheet
- Homework: students complete revisions and choose their best haiku to present to the class the next day

DAY FIVE: Presenting the work

- A. Students choose at random another student's haiku and reads it aloud to the class, following the suggestions in Group Reading
- The teacher encourages discussion of what was enjoyable about each haiku OR
- B. Each student makes a booklet of a few of their own best haiku, or mounts a favourite on a creative backing sheet; these can be displayed in the classroom OR
- C. The class works on assembling a classroom anthology with haiku from each student

Step one: getting started

The teacher introduces haiku

Introducing haiku first through listening: According to most poet/teachers, the best way to begin with haiku is for the teacher to read some examples.³ Listening is the first skill to build when entering the world of haiku, learning to pay attention to individual words and their powers. Hearing haiku aloud is a wonderful way to experience them, whether they are yours or the work of another, so I will say more later about carrying on reading haiku aloud.

When you read haiku to your class, I suggest doing this very slowly, perhaps repeating them, with the bare minimum of introductory remarks. You may need to introduce the concept of an *image* (a picture created by words, about any of the five senses). After reading the first few haiku, start a discussion by asking students to describe their qualities. Begin to focus on each image in the haiku – what is it?, where does it come from (the immediate experience of the senses, or memory, or imagination?), what did this one make you feel?, how did it do that? Then read more haiku... aim to let the insights come from the students, instead of your telling them what it's all about.

With this introductory reading and listening in mind, in Chapter Three I have chosen 45 haiku that are suitably inspiring and thought-provoking. It should be reassuring for your students to know that these have all been written by young people, not adult 'experts'. After the exemplary poems is an Index of all the haiku, grouped in themed lists. Section One of the Index is for introducing haiku. The first list is of those most suitable for introductory reading aloud because of their themes. This will aid you in choosing selections from the exemplary haiku according to subject. The haiku are so varied that you should be able to find exemplars that suit the age group of your students and even any particular interests they may have from other subjects they are studying (e.g. nature or weather).

By hearing some of these haiku, students should quickly get a sense of the specifics of how this kind of poetry works and be able to participate in fruitful discussion of how each one is similar and/or different. This is a good chance to present the importance of the sounds of the words and also the silent moments where there is a space in the written line. Poems that have special haiku qualities for the ear are also listed in Section One of the Index.

Another good starting point is the list of haiku with a New Zealand theme. These haiku will allow students to see familiar activities, scenes, plants and animals in the context of poetry.

³ Beginning by reading aloud: Higginson, W.J. and Penny Harter, *The Haiku Handbook*, p. 156 (William) and pp. 167-168 (Penny); Reichhold, J., *Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, p. 101; Haiku Foundation website, lesson plans; Haiku Society of America website, Martin, J., 'Some thoughts on teaching and learning haiku'; Davidson, K., NZ haiku teacher, interviewed by N. Borrell in *a fine line*, magazine of the NZPS, May 2007.

Other sources of haiku on these subjects can be found in the New Zealand haiku anthology, *the taste of nashi*, and in the Showcase feature on the NZPS/HaikuNewZ website: www.poetrysociety.org.nz/showcasehome

Introducing haiku in written form: Showing written poems early on, by means of whatever media is practical for you, is also essential. Seeing them will introduce the art involved in presenting the words of the haiku on the page in a way that adds to its meaning. I have noticed that young people are more daring about using expressive arrangements of words and lines than adult haiku-writers. (Many of the latter seem to be stuck on using three lines, short-long-short, each aligned at the left margin.) Section One of the Index also lists poems to see on the page, which look intriguing, so are among the best to present in print form.

Providing guidelines: To conclude your introduction to haiku and introduce the students to writing their own, hand out a written summary or outline of the form for them to refer to while writing. You could include some of their ideas arising from the discussion of haiku read aloud. The Guidelines Sheet at the end of this guide, or something similar, can also be useful when students are revising their poems.⁴

Choosing favourites: If time allows, more activities based on the work of other poets can be included, as group discussion, written work in class or homework, or even artwork. You can extend the pleasures of reading aloud by having each student choose his or her own favourite haiku and present it to the class. Some other sources of haiku, in print and online, for students to explore are found in Resources. I especially recommend those in the British Haiku Society Teaching Pack, which gives both traditional Japanese and contemporary English-language examples. As an alternative to reading aloud, students could present their favourite haiku in written form in a mini-essay. Abstract artwork expressing 'how this haiku makes me feel' could be an enjoyable part of this assignment

Noting down favourite haiku is a good first use of the haiku notebook. The best use of these is for analysis (not 'copying'!). When they have found a haiku whose technique or feeling they admire, they can look at just how the haiku works and apply these insights to their own themes. Students could also post their favourites in the classroom, as discussed below in The Haiku Place, a good way to share their enthusiasm.

⁴ Guideline points selected and expanded from several sources: Harter, P., *The Haiku Handbook*, her 3-point checklist on pp. 173-4; Macken, J.E., *Read, Write and Recite Haiku*, her 5-point checklist on p. 28; Reichhold, J., *Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, her 6 basic rules on p. 52.

Step two: students tune in

Supportive exercises and activities for finding meaningful images

First, here are a few ideas for encouraging students to begin opening up their sensory awareness. These exercises can spark off the poetry making and in a more general way light up the creative areas of the brain.

The Sensory Diary – students tune in to what is happening in their own worlds: Haiku are most often based on strong imagery directly perceived by the senses. Brain research has shown that generally, less than 10% of stimuli received by our senses make it into our consciousness. So, making haiku usually depends on becoming more aware. I suggest that students all use their haiku notebooks freely to record whatever grabs their attention; so often this is surprising, fresh and unique to each person.

The Five Senses: This could be a homework assignment, or impressions could be noted during the school day. Tell students to find five strong sensory experiences; list them and write briefly why it impressed them. If you have time, start with vision on day 1, hearing on day 2, and so on. Or on a single day, have them find a vivid experience from each of the five senses.

Season Words: To help students tune in to the details of their environment, have them find and list five seasonal things, *one for each sense* (something they directly perceive, not make up, e.g., not spring = birds nesting, unless they actually see a nest). A season word is essential in a traditional haiku. While not required in contemporary Western haiku, it does enrich a poem very effectively and efficiently. New Zealand has unique seasonal features, to which we respond emotionally, so it is good to appreciate and use them in our poetry. A list of all the gathered season words could become a useful class resource.

Multiple Happenings in a Moment: Once students become more mindful of what is actually going on with their sensory experience, they will probably notice that a lot can happen in a single moment. Again, students should find and record five experiences each day, ideally for several days. Each experience would consist of a strong sensory impression plus any number of other things that were noticed *at the same time*. For example, the sweetness of a food AND its colour or texture, or sounds in the room, or what someone else was doing, an emotion felt by the student, a memory or an association that comes to mind. A haiku is most often made of two images together, so this exercise gets students started in pairing experiences and noticing unexpected connections, as well as finding the emotion that is part of a perception. A haiku that touches more than one sense is often wonderfully appealing.

Then, as groundwork for choosing a subject, students can begin to focus on imagery that particularly interests them.

Collecting Images – students tune in to what is significant to them: To initiate writing, the suggestion is often made that the teacher should set a theme for students to write about, or give them a couple of lines to complete. In the interest of authenticity, my alternative

suggestion is for students to look at the possibilities offered by their own perceptions. Once they feel an emotional connection to a subject of their own, they should not have to confront “all the ideas in the world” refusing to emerge from their pencils, like the poet in Exemplary Haiku 21. They will naturally find inspiration in the subjects they care about. These images should be kept in their haiku notebooks. It could work well to make image-collection an assignment for weekends.

Vision: For many people, vision is the most intense and dominating sense. There are many possible sources for significant images, including:

- **Pictures from media**, cut out of magazines or newspapers, photocopied from books, downloaded from the computer
- **Own artwork** of any kind
- **Own photos** taken with camera or phone
- **Small objects** such as leaves, feathers, paper scraps, product labels, bits of rusty metal, fabric, souvenirs and keepsakes, craft materials. These have the extra dimension of texture, for the sense of touch.

The richness of the other four senses: For students who are not especially visual – and perhaps for all students, to expand their sensitivities – it is a unique experience to be a hunter-gatherer of sounds, smells, tastes and/or physical sensations. What an intriguing world this turns out to be, and how vividly our perceptions can connect us to it! Non-visual imagery often evokes deeper emotions. I encourage you to challenge students to open up to the richness of their own non-visual imagery.

Students can make different lists in their notebooks of what their ears, noses, tongues and skin are experiencing: sensations they like, ones they don’t like or are afraid of, ones they have mixed feelings about. These lists can be expanded with phrases saying why they are pleasant or unpleasant. A simpler way to approach this is for students to simply note down in their notebooks a phrase describing any kind of experience as it occurs.

You can support the process of the students choosing their subjects by further reading from the haiku lists in the Index. One such list covers haiku of senses other than vision.

STEP THREE: Students choose their subjects and begin to write haiku

Advice on writing, editing and the role of the teacher

Choosing a subject: Plan this step for the beginning of the haiku session for the day, because once students make their choices, they should keep the momentum going by immediately beginning to write their first haiku. Students should start by reviewing their notebooks to find their most appealing subjects. ‘Subject’ can be interpreted broadly; it might be a person or animal, a thing, an event, a season, a place or a feeling. Have them write down, in big letters, their favourite subject and one or two alternatives. For each of these, students should list below some of that subject’s most compelling imagery from earlier in the notebook.

Beginning to write: Making a choice of a meaningful subject usually creates a burst of expressive energy. By holding personal and authentic feelings, this energy also gives confidence. Make sure students have their guideline sheets with them, so they get the basics right.

Encouraging the writing process: My sense is that the more haiku are attempted in each session, the better, so the writers enter a kind of creative flow, rather than getting fixated unproductively on just one poem. Tell students to just do lots – go for it! – and not to worry about whether they are any good or whether they look tidy. Try several versions of each idea. This is like doing sketches for a painting. Not all are expected to be worthwhile in themselves, but the concentrated mental flow of the sketching can bring into being something surprising and wonderful.

Ideally, writing could happen daily over several days or even weeks. If students write each day, it comes to feel more natural and comfortable. Often, with the development of their abilities to put genuine feelings on paper, haiku writing quickly becomes exciting and enjoyable. For some people, it feels like a big step between finding a single intriguing image and making a first, complete haiku. For students who are hesitant, here are two exercises which can help in developing the imagery:

Playing with comparisons: The impact of haiku often depends on the movement between two very different images, or the intensification created by two similar images. Students can work with the most appealing entries in their sensory diaries that are relevant to their subject.

- **Zooming In and Out:** Quite often in a haiku, the first image is larger or more general, while the second is a detail. Perhaps for their subject, a student has both large-scale and smaller images. These can be paired up to form almost a ready-made haiku. If the student has only a large-scale image, then ask him or her to think of something about it that is small, or something that was nearby or related that is small (zooming in). Or the smaller image can well come completely from the imagination.

Alternatively in a similar fashion, the student can start with something small and then zoom out to something large. Encourage the student to use senses other than vision as often as possible. Each pair of images could share a single sense or present two different senses.

- **Similarity and Contrast:** This is an exercise that relies on the imagination to pair up images. It is based on the basic haiku characteristic of connecting nature and people. First try similarity. The student should choose his or her best collected image and write a list of several other familiar things it reminds them of. If the image is natural, does it remind him or her of something about a person? Or if it is about people, does it remind them of something in the environment? The haiku should come together simply by writing the two images in sequence.

Then try contrast: looking at the image, what is its opposite? Or what image can they think of which is so different that it gives a surprise at the end? Can these two go together into a haiku that feels meaningful to the student?

Revising and editing: Often, but not always, a haiku needs more work. To make a start, students should refer to the Guideline Sheet, to make sure they've got the basics right. Then they can apply their own insights into improving their work. Sometimes revision takes more than one session – a good idea about how to re-word or rearrange the haiku may come overnight.

Experience in both practising and teaching various creative endeavours has shown me that making something is a two-stage process that definitely goes best when the two parts are kept strictly separated. First comes the creative stage – the inspiration and enthusiasm, the flow of feelings. Later comes the evaluating, self-critiquing stage, when editing and polishing happen. The two stages are done in different parts of the brain. Mixing up creation with self-criticism is a sure recipe for the pain of writer's block! Perhaps you could even establish a supportive routine by scheduling the haiku-writing time and the editing time into two different parts of the day.

Revising aloud: It can be fruitful to follow the advice of haiku-master Basho, who noted that reading the poem aloud helps to clarify the fluency of the work. You can hear the 'sticking points' where the word sequence is awkward, or the sounds displeasing together, or the meaning not coming across. Also, hearing the work, in addition to just seeing it, adds another level of appreciation, especially if it contains the repeating sounds of alliteration. A haiku should be able to be spoken with a single breath; this is often a better guide to 'shortness' than counting syllables.

Revising in groups: Because haiku are for communicating, it can be helpful for students to revise by working on their poems in small groups (of, say, six). One way to do this is for each student to make a copy of their poem for each group member and first have the others write their comments on it. Then one person can read it aloud. Have the group members give their initial comments before the writer talks about the haiku. The writer should try making changes then and there (in their notebook) to come up with new versions.⁵ Beforehand, you may need to coach students in how to speak positively, e.g., "I think the following could be an improvement..." or "I like that image, but I don't quite get the connection you want me to make. Can you please explain." Group work can build confidence and trust.

All writing and revising should be done in the poetry notebook.

⁵ Revision groups: this method is based on Chapter 7 in Macken, J.E., *Read, Recite and Write Haiku*, pp. 28-9. Page 29 gives a good example of students working together on a specific haiku.

Role of the teacher: I visualise the teacher's role mainly as making sure the haiku keep to the guidelines, rather than being actively involved in making judgments on the content or comparing the work of one student with another's.

I believe it's essential for the teacher to create a feeling of trust – both between student and teacher and among students – so everyone can feel comfortable to write honestly and spontaneously, and then dare to share their work, without risking criticism. This may well mean enforcing a policy of no negative comments, ever.

I think it best for students to do the evaluation and editing process without depending closely on the teacher; the poet is the one who needs to feel satisfied with the work, because first of all it is for the poet, the fulfilling of a vision. It is important that – as much as possible! – the opinions of the teacher and peers do not compromise the writer's personal integrity, making them write in a certain way trying to gain external approval.

Neuroscientists studying the brain have recently proven what skilful teachers have always known: learning is a positive process of building success upon success. We all progress on the basis of some confidence in what we do well. Focusing on mistakes and weaknesses is generally counterproductive.

If you are looking over poems in the midst of being written, you can ask questions that support the student's own positive creative process, such as: of your several versions, which one do you prefer? What do you like about it? How could you develop that some more? Or (if you sense a problem with it so far) can you see some ways to change the words or their arrangement?

As soon as students have written some haiku they feel good about on their chosen subject and have developed some skill, it is time for them to expand their attention and tackle whatever appealing subjects arise. Two ways to broaden their horizons are given below.

Extending discussion about haiku: Section Two of the Index lists exemplars for further discussion, once students are under way with their writing and open to extending their creative reach. It is divided into six categories:

- 22 sets of haiku for close comparison, each with two or three haiku on the same subject, e.g. winter
- 17 sets, each illustrating a writing technique, e.g. word play
- sets illustrating various qualities of haiku, e.g. originality
- haiku suggesting a range of emotions
- haiku of vivid vision
- haiku of senses other than vision.

These sets are designed to demonstrate a variety of approaches. They could be the subject of further reading aloud sessions. Or, more briefly, you can draw attention to particular haiku from these sets if you have the chance to introduce specific techniques and qualities of haiku.

The Traditional Haiku Walk: From the earliest days of haiku writing in Japan, a common activity of poets, especially in a group, was to take a walk in nature. Wandering silently, more or less together, they gathered experiences and inspiration. This was called a *ginko* walk (*the /g/ pronounced as in "go"*). Traditionally the poets then went back to the host's dwelling, quickly wrote their haiku, and then enjoyed an extended session of reading them out and discussing them. So haiku writing was often a convivial activity.

It could be fun to carry on this tradition. I picture that a ginko walk for students could be taken either in a class group – if practical – or individually as homework. The environment could be natural, suburban or urban and densely peopled, as all have the potential to provide good subject matter. The walk might traverse contrasting places. Even the school grounds should provide some experiences of interest. During, say, 15 minutes, students walk *silently* (as much as they are capable), perceive with sharpened senses (all senses, probably excepting taste), contemplate, and note down what takes their interest. Immediately upon going back inside, they should aim to organise their impressions into several haiku.

In the classroom: The Haiku Place

The student's haiku notebook is his or her personal haiku place, and a dedicated area of the classroom can be the group's haiku place. You could start by making a display area with individual pages of exemplary haiku (Japanese or Western or Kiwi, adult or student) which have been read aloud. I suggest each poem be printed in large font (or hand-lettering) on a piece of A4 or A5 paper.

Students could add their own choices as they read through the resources, and the display can grow organically. Then, as they begin to do their own writing, these haiku can take their place on the wall. Students might be allowed to post their work ad lib (signed on the front or more discreetly on the back). They could also post inspiring images and artwork, so the haiku place becomes colourful and visually intriguing. It would be an exciting moment when the last exemplar haiku comes down to make room, and the haiku place is filled completely by student work! Perhaps the haiku place could still be active after the teaching unit is finished, if some students continue to produce work.

Presentation: Honouring the work

As the writing proceeds, it is good to share and acknowledge the haiku, creating a group buzz. And then finishing the haiku unit deserves a suitable celebration!

Group Reading: In addition to posting their poems in the classroom haiku place, students can share their finished work in a group reading. Perhaps the best way to do this is a procedure that comes from successful adult haiku workshops: each writer provides one poem on a twice-folded piece of paper and puts it in a capacious box or basket. The poems are stirred together, then each participant picks one out at random and takes a turn to read it out loud one or more times. Anonymity is such a good protection for the fragile creative ego! Also, we hear better when not filtering the words through our judgments of the writer's personality. Any comments must be limited to what the listener enjoyed about that particular poem – damaging criticism

must be totally banned. Make sure that each haiku receives a comment, adding your own if need be.

Ideally, each day's haiku-writing session would conclude with this kind of group reading. If time is limited, though, at the end of the haiku unit, you could hold a single group reading event with 'the best of the best' from each student, for everyone to enjoy and share the excitement of their accomplishments.

An individual haiku book: To keep their work for posterity, each student could assemble a 'chapbook' of their own poems, gathering a selection of those they feel best about, either day by day or as a concluding activity. Patricia Donegan's book, *Haiku*, features a very simple project on making a neat 8-page origami-style booklet for a student's poems. I find a great deal of pleasure in seeing student poetry that is hand-written; as in the Japanese tradition, the calligraphy itself is so naturally expressive. Optionally, this book could be enriched with illustrations or some of the meaningful images collected at the beginning of the unit.

A group book: Alternatively, students can assemble their own haiku into a single class book consisting of the favourites they each have written. If time allows, you could organise them to make both individual and class books. That way, students have something beautiful to take home and keep and share with family, and also an anthology remains in the classroom to become a resource for following years.

Artwork: With so much creative juice flowing, students may well enjoy creating artwork with their poems. This is called *haiga* (*hi-gah*, the /g/ as in "go"). Japanese masters have been making haiga for several centuries, adding a sketchy ink drawing to their poem calligraphy (or, alternatively, writing their poem in and around their sketch). Haiga is quite popular with Western haiku poets, who often use their own photos as a basis – as could any of your students who collected photos in their image search exercise. See Resources for some websites displaying haiga. Also, the British Haiku Society Teaching Pack contains both traditional and modern examples.

If sketching seems a little ambitious, then another approach is to mount the haiku on an expressive backing sheet. Students write or type a single haiku on a small piece of paper (say A6 or a similar size of irregular paper) and prepare a backing sheet (say A4) which they paint – or colour with felts, pastels or coloured pencils – or collage – in a way that suits that haiku. This backing image might well be minimal or abstract, but certainly that is at the discretion of the artist. Reserve a space for gluing on the poem. Alternatively, students who are confident with their handwriting could write their haiku directly on the image, perhaps interweaving it with their visual motif or using expressive lettering.

Another possibility is computer graphics made with a Paintbox-type programme. This would work for older students who have no art materials in the classroom and for younger students who have the skills.

3-D haiku: For a festive celebration at the end of the haiku unit, consider making a three-dimensional display. The sky is the limit with such displays, but here are three ideas I have seen done on a small scale which would be fantastic as a gathering of the poetry of the whole class:

- poems hung on lines of string or yarn with mini clothes-pegs
- mobiles made from several sticks tied together, with poems dangling from individual strings. A hole is pierced in each poem-page for the string to go through, using strings of different lengths so the poems don't overlap too much to be read. Using coloured paper and/or writing the poems with different colours of felt tip pens would look particularly wonderful, especially if bright streamers, such as ribbons, are added. Older students could make a more sophisticated presentation combining photos and haiku into small mobiles.
- **Haiku path:** For a one-day celebration – weather and school culture permitting – students could make a festive haiku path through the school grounds. This would simply involve attaching colourful versions of their poems to vegetation (with pegs) and buildings or fences (with Blu-Tack), choosing their spot with that particular haiku's theme in mind. The class could proceed along the path to enjoy each other's work and then leave them up for viewing for passers-by. Close-up photos of the poems, each in its setting, would make a wonderful anthology/album – especially if you include a close-up portrait of each poet beside his/her work.

Submit haiku to our competition: Of course, we at the New Zealand Poetry Society would warmly welcome your students' submissions to our annual Junior Haiku Competition. Since the ultimate purpose of haiku is to share experience, why not share as widely as possible? To submit work to a competition is a rather exciting way for poets to acknowledge the value of their work, and if published, to have it appreciated far and wide. The Junior Haiku Competition runs from March 1 to May 31 each year.

Chapter Three: Techniques of Writing Haiku

Exemplary poems by students

Rather than presenting the key qualities and techniques of haiku in a general essay, I have identified these in bold type in my comments on successful poems from past Junior Haiku Competitions. You can see directly and specifically how everything works together in these 45 wonderful and varied exemplars.

At the end of this chapter is the Index arranged by themed lists, referring to each haiku by its number. You can use this to search for poem subjects, specific techniques and qualities.

1.

spring
the calf
comes alive

Nicholas Sharr

The **simplicity** of this haiku makes it technically perfect. Its five small, **plain** words form a poignant **drama** within a single moment. With the skilful arrangement of these words line by line, it is not until the last word that we realise what is happening. No descriptive emotion words tell me what to feel, so the haiku is completely **open** for me to discover my own feelings – the suspense of the long moment before the newborn calf moves and the relief of its first signs of life: *oh! the very moment that new life takes hold!*

By increasing the number of syllables in each line, the form of the haiku also expresses the suspense and the gathering energy of the calf. Line one does much more than generally setting the season. Re-reading, I found the energy of spring itself became the real subject, the power of life that prevails even in the most difficult circumstances. We also associate the word “spring” with vitality, as in ‘a spring in their step’. Taking on the largest subject, the poet (at age 8) places the poem precisely at the balance point of life and death.

2.

pohutukawa
I hang my stocking

Anna Doak

A **seasonal** word is not always used in Western haiku these days, but it can be a powerful device, as in this poem. Here it is the **key word**, “pohutukawa”, the iconic seaside tree with its richness of delightful, summery associations. The **unusual form** of two lines sets up a kind of puzzle between them. Each line claims a realm of its own, dividing and thus contrasting the natural and the human worlds. The reader needs to take a **leap** from one line to the next, in order to identify their relationship – the **hidden links** that actually connect them. We are free to enjoy finding these ourselves, because no clues are given by extraneous words.

If we are New Zealanders, we recognise line one, allowing us to discover Christmas, the colours red and green, the feeling of receiving something pleasurable, valuable. Between the two lines,

a whole atmosphere of anticipation, of forthcoming abundance, is created within what is *not* said – all that arises in the reader’s imagination. This poem is a good example of the basic haiku technique of pairing a brief image (in this case, the single word of line one) with a longer one (line two). This technique is often called “**fragment and phrase**”. You will see it used in most haiku.

3.

autumn morning
eggshells in the sink

Lizzy Ray

The **leap** in this haiku is a bigger one, requiring a bit more exploring of the two images in order to find a connection. What quality of an autumn morning could possibly be expressed by those eggshells? The associations are **subtle**, nothing about colouring leaves or cooling weather. Once I found a **hidden link** that made sense to me, I felt the delight of solving a puzzle, imagining the rush of getting the family out of the house and off to school and work. No time to tidy up, as during the more relaxed summer holidays; the stress that I am picturing is reflected in the jagged edges of the shells. It is impressive the way this image of the eggshells, so small and ordinary, can vividly convey a whole atmosphere. Some of the best haiku are about such commonplace happenings, given eloquence through the power of **direct perception** – nothing fancy added, simply the significance of things just as they are, suddenly noticed. This haiku is also a good example of how **metaphor** works in haiku. Instead of saying (as one might in a Western poem), “our rushed morning is (or is like) a broken egg”, the two images here just lie side by side, so the reader can sense that the eggshells have the quality of that morning.

4.

autumn
her feathers
start to colour

Rylee McBride

As I said in the introduction, there really is no such thing as ‘children’s haiku’ – either the work is fully haiku or it is not. This is an outstanding exemplar of my statement. After relishing the particular mystery and richness of this haiku, I was intrigued to learn that the poet was aged 7! In addition to the **openness** of the subject identified only as “her”, we are given the **surprise** of feathers which change colour with the season. The **originality** of this idea is startling. Is the subject a bird (perhaps spring-hatched and now developing mature plumage, or perhaps magically morphing in harmony with the landscape, or a mix of both)? Is it a feminine-looking tree with feathery foliage? Is it a person, maybe even in the poet, clothed in her own imagination with plumes like a shaman? Whatever you picture, delight comes from the way the autumnal energy of the brightening colours is powerful enough to infuse this creature.

5.

winter morning
I stir a rainbow
in my pot

Lily Pringle

I especially appreciate a haiku which links the grand happenings of nature with some little thing observed in the domestic realm. This haiku **zooms in** from the panorama outdoors into a small, personal detail, giving the sense that the elements work equally at large and small scales. The seasonal setting of the first line allows the reader to picture, perhaps, the dramatic atmospheric effect of southerly gales outside, somehow also appearing indoors with the poet's own turbulent stirring – through **imagination** or through some actual iridescence happening in the pot? She has somehow invited the natural forces inside. By showing just the action, and the **contrast** of the ethereal rainbow with the earthy pot, the poem leaves me with that mystery of how the rainbow has appeared, so it is pure magic. Putting a rainbow and a pot in the same haiku offers some **word play**, as we immediately wonder, what's in the pot... gold? Rainbows as subjects can easily seem sentimental or childish, but this one avoids all pitfalls.

6.

frosty morning
I wear a lamb

Lily Pringle

Some poets are able to do original work with the most ordinary and often-used subjects. Others have the ability to find fascinating and unique subjects that others would miss. This poet is one of the latter (as we also saw in the previous haiku). Here is an unusual sharing of **bodily sensation** with an animal – brightly **humorous** in its **surreal** imagery. The humour comes from the **key word**, “wear”. Most odd, yet I can picture a real event, as a child on a farm picks up a lamb (possibly a pet orphaned lamb) and drapes it over her shoulders to warm them both in the cold. This is an excellent choice of a quirky image which readers will enjoy with a smile, presented with utmost **simplicity**.

7.

spring
my pony
grazes the wind

Lily Ellis

Here is another haiku of **surreal, imaginative originality** – by another 7-year-old. It builds by moving through two ordinary lines to finish with a lovely, otherworldly image. Instead of a literal perception of the pony *seeming to* eat the wind as it grazes, the poet has had a leap of the imagination into poetry, where the pony does indeed partake of the wind. This haiku pairs with another of similar qualities:

8.

my horse breathes
I ride the wind

Sophie Lee

In this one, the poet also leaves behind the mundane realm of *seems to* – through its powerful breath, her horse takes in and becomes the wind itself. The basis of the haiku is not only her experience in the **imagination**, but also an intensely-felt **bodily sensation** of oneness with her horse, dream-like and lyrical. The reader can enjoy sharing the exhilaration.

9.

global warming
my penguin runs away

Hugo Sudell

Two ways of subtly **evoking emotion** are to make something else, a **proxy**, stand in place of the poet, and for the substitute to take an action which is expressive of that emotion without ever naming it. An **imaginative** choice of stand-in ‘makes’ the poem, as here, with a small, cold-requiring penguin trying to escape a huge, hot problem. I can sharply feel the child’s fear and helplessness through the imagined scenario he has created for his vulnerable alter ego. This is a good example of a **sincere** haiku that deals with suffering rather than a ‘nice’ subject. It is very much in the spirit of haiku to confront big issues on a modest scale, in a single moment – and in a specific way that directly affects the poet viscerally, rather than making a general, intellectual statement as in some long-form Western poetry.

10.

midnight
my kitten
remembers the earthquake

Anna Doak

This haiku very successfully uses a similar set of techniques as the previous one. However, it seems not to be taking place completely in the poet’s imagination. This poem presents a quiet, realistic scene of a sleepless young person and a nervous kitten in the aftermath of a big shake. The kitten carries the projected anxieties of the poet (how can one know what a cat is really feeling?). Are they awake at the same time feeling afraid, or has the kitten woken the poet with a start, so she in turn remembers the quake? The mutual connection between person and pet illustrates a deep **empathy**. This haiku reminds us that during a period of emergency, the event itself may be over, but the emotions remain for a long time, prompting the empathy of the reader, in turn, for the poet and all the others who endure the difficult times.

11.

wedding ring
alone
in the box

George Persson

Here is another example of using a **proxy** to express strong and complex emotion. This poet gives us something tiny, yet powerful, to represent something else large and significant. This is certainly not a narrative poem, because it takes place in a single moment, but contains **hints of a story**. With elegant **conciseness**, the ring not only stands for the whole history of a marriage relationship, but also bears the consequences of its ending. I can imagine that just as the ring is abandoned in the confinement of its box, the ex-wife or widow is isolated in a small house or flat. The theme of **loneliness** is one of the most common in traditional haiku, always requiring the most careful **plainness** of expression, as in this poem, to avoid sentimentality.

12.

darkness
my shadow goes
alone

Amelia Marshall

Darkness, shadow and aloneness could easily be the vocabulary of fear or sadness. However, this is a mysterious, very **open** haiku, allowing many possible readings and not slanting our view in any one direction. It could even present an adventure, because of the intrigue of the shadow moving invisibly within the darkness, apparently separate from its person. No setting, season, or time of life is indicated, so it becomes rather **surreal** or dream-like in its indefiniteness. This scenario raises all sorts of interesting questions, including where is the poet, if the shadow goes on without her? and, how can a shadow move through darkness? The reader has the pleasure of completing the haiku with his or her own speculations.

13.

the heart machine
 walks
the lifeless sky

Stephanie Lester

The meaning and emotional power of this mysterious single image arise largely from the **expressive arrangement of the words**, with the long space through line two, then its single last word. This spacing creates a great sense of suspense, depicting an emptiness actually present before action resumes. The vivid **contrast** here is between words and no words, rather than in the usual way between two word-images. Because of this arrangement, I imagine that this is a bedside scene in a hospital, with the line of an ECG tracing the path of a heartbeat on its screen (though I am sure there could well be other interpretations). This seems not to be an emergency (the machine is ‘walking’), but it is deeply foreboding because of the **key word**, “lifeless” in the final line. The chilling atmosphere comes from making the machine the subject,

with no human presence or emotions indicated. As cool and enigmatic as the cutting edge Japanese haiku called *gendai* (*gen-dye, the /g/ as in "go"*), this is a most sophisticated poem, by a 14-year-old.

14.

lightning
the albatross
cries

Finn Pearce

Creating a variation on a **famous haiku** can be a fruitful fusion technique, melding different times and cultures. In the traditions of Oriental poetry, it is common and praiseworthy to make a personal version of a well-known poem.⁶ In this case, the source is apparently a haiku by the pre-eminent Japanese master, Basho: lightning /a heron's cry stabs /the darkness.⁷ The haiku is re-made with two worthwhile changes: first, the poet brings the poem into the **New Zealand context** by substituting a well-known native bird. Choosing an endangered bird as the subject adds an extra level of contemporary disquiet. Also, in a rigorous spirit of **conciseness**, our poet has eliminated three of the seven words of the original translation, bringing it to its essence. What would Basho think?

15.

wild boar
the gun shudders
in my hands

Amelia Gordon

Two qualities work together here. The first is an exceedingly vivid, yet subtle, **key word** ("shudders"). This is an example of a word that by its exact rightness and originality 'makes' the poem. Here 'shudders' is so much more powerful than 'shakes', for example. It impressed me with the physicality of its **direct perception**. Long after reading it, "shudders" continues to resonate in me, with its undertones of horror.

The second quality is **ambiguity** or **openness**. The other words of the haiku give me no clue whether the gun shuddered because it was fired or because of the shock of the sight of the boar (so much better than telling us what happened by saying 'recoils', for example). Readers have the pleasure of creating a resolution of their own. I also really enjoy that, in the best Japanese style, the presence of the poet remains in the background, as the observer only, with the gun doing the reacting and emoting.

⁶ But it would be prudent to always identify the source, to banish any possible question of plagiaristic intentions. In this case, one could add a note to the submission, saying, "after a haiku by Basho".

⁷ Basho haiku: translation by Jane Reichhold

16.

inside the crevice
my makeup brush
searches for fossils

Juliet McLachlan

The subject here is a very strange and amusing meeting of paired opposites in the first two lines. Our curiosity, about why in the world these two subjects are getting together, is not satisfied until the conclusion of line three. This meeting makes it a haiku of quirky **originality**: the **contrasts** set up by the poet, of hard and rough vs. soft and pliant, ancient vs. youthful, crusty vs. fresh, now vs. then, could not be more extreme. **Layered** underneath this is the unstated but very present contrast of girl vs. fossil, life vs. absolute lifelessness – even frivolity vs. death. Excellent technique supports this imagery, with **key words** (“crevice”, “makeup”) providing the vivid sensory contrast. Also, I enjoyed the subtlety of the poet absenting herself: the brush is the one that is doing the searching.

17.

beach café
view of the calm ocean
over my grandma’s hat

Laura Collins

It’s “grandma’s hat” that makes this a special haiku. The poet inhabits an **original** viewpoint encompassing near (the hat) and far (the ocean), indoors and out, the personal and the elemental. Yes, they do **contrast**, but this is not the point of the poem. Instead, the poet gives us another **layer**, the surprise of their **similarity**. The calm ocean and the particular presence of grandma (and her distinctive hat) in the café each contribute to an atmosphere of pleasure, relaxation and emotional warmth that the poet in turn conveys to the reader. This **direct perception** of an ordinary scene is refreshingly free of attempts to embellish it; for example, the poet chooses a **plain** word to describe the ocean, rather than a more poetic word such as ‘tranquil’ or ‘serene’.

18.

cradling the teacup
Grandma reads the future,
the day in her hands

Louise Rutherford

This poem is the trail-blazer; appearing first on the page in the first-ever presentation of the Junior Haiku Competition, it was the winning haiku in 1997. A well-written haiku shines when it is about an unusual subject. I was intrigued to discover the gypsy-ish grandma of line two. Then the very clever **word play** of line three makes this poem thoroughly delightful. The meaning of this haiku is conveyed by the way it **zooms out** from the moment of holding the cup to all the future happenings of the day. We know that Grandma’s power is benevolent, because of the

key word, “cradling”, which opens the haiku. Along with the poet, we can enjoy the thought that Grandma will be nurturing us with great care through this day.

19.

paua shell
the sea
in my hand

William Davidson

There is a lot of movement from line to line in this haiku, **zooming out** from the shell of line one to the vastness of the sea in line two, and **zooming in** again to the poet’s hand in line three. This shifting focus parallels the way the mind works, perceiving a specific object that holds extensive memories and associations, yet is **simplicity**, yet give the reader an opportunity to explore the richness of all the ways a paua shell contains and stands for the sea. The **New Zealand imagery** is eloquent for Kiwi readers.

20.

sparrows feeding
in toi-toi flowers –
the roughness of my father’s hand

Harry Frenz

This is a sophisticated poem, in which the connection between the two images is not at all obvious; the reader has to make a **leap** to connect the two. Because of the quiet beauty of the first image (the feeding, the flowers, the small birds enveloped in the large grasses), I was fairly sure that the second image was not implying that his father was aggressive. In order to explore the possibilities, though, I went outside and handled some toi-toi blooms. It was mid-January when I did this, so I was able to discover that while the newly-opening plumes are as silky-smooth as they look, the more ripened ones become slightly spiky, only then opening up the seed capsules for birds’ beaks.

Tuning in with great sensitivity, the poet’s **sense of touch** provided him with this unique **New Zealand imagery**. Because I shared the toi-toi experience through my own hands as well as through the haiku, I clearly felt that the connection between the images is the unusual association of roughness with nurturance. In this way, the haiku is a tribute to the poet’s hard-working father. The skilful **alliteration** also adds another layer of meaning to the poem, with its smooth /s/ sounds and harsher /f/ sounds – making this an excellent choice to read aloud.

21.

my pencil
all the ideas
in the world

Gloria Vlasin

The great poignancy of this haiku arises from the vivid **contrast** between the tiny, physical point of line one’s pencil and the abstract vastness of lines two and three. The irony is that the pencil

lead does potentially hold every idea, literally the large within the small! Most writers will recognise with a pang that distressing experience of confronting the abyss between infinite possibility and one's own capability to create. This haiku **evokes emotion** simply and subtly, through its choice of its two subjects, without itself ever mentioning an emotion. I was further touched that the poet, on receiving the challenge to write, was able to directly confront the hugeness of that task and make it her subject.⁸ She does so with such a light touch, such **simplicity**, that the haiku seems both to sparkle with wry **humour** and crackle with anxiety.

22.

my writer's journal
anorexic spine
from tearing out the pages

Talioaiga Luamanuvae

This witty haiku is a great example of **word play**, centred on the **key word** "spine". Puns are often frowned upon by Western poets, but the Japanese revel in puns; in fact the literal meaning of 'haiku' is 'playful verse'⁹. Western writers tend to use word-play sparingly, but it is a well-recognised technique that readers can relish. Here the pun is put to such good use to brighten the all-too-upsetting self-criticism that poets are prey to, with a sparkle of **humour** – however, layered underneath are the dark associations with the word "anorexic". Sometimes witty poems like this, commenting wryly on the human condition (with no mention of nature), are labelled *senryu*. However, as in our Competition, *senryu* are often not distinguished or separated from haiku.

23.

7 years of drought
a single raindrop
disturbs the dust

Amy Wells

A severe natural disaster can be effectively presented with subtlety, by means of **understatement**. This haiku **zooms in** from the lengthy time-scale of the drought to the one moment of the one raindrop. I can imagine the wider landscape parched and lifeless, but the desolation is vividly conveyed simply by the single pock-mark in dust. The poet creates tension by giving us the image of just one raindrop: I feel a little swoop of hope, but will there be others following? A striking feature here is the **alliteration**, with the repetition of two sounds: the letters /s/ and /d/ repeat in each line, especially line three. For me, the silky sound of /s/

⁸ A caution for teachers: it's best to have your students move on from haiku-making itself as a subject, into writing about their own themes.

⁹ Playful verse: Hirshfield, J., *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World*, pp. 52 -53; Reichhold, J., *Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, p. 62; an enthusiastic advocate of wit and humour in haiku.

corresponds to the dust, while the /d/ sounds echo the sound of a drop hitting the ground. In this way, the **contrast** of raindrop and dust extends into the heard experience of the haiku. The /d/ sound also creates a little magic in the reader's own sense of touch. If you read the poem aloud, you feel in your mouth the way the tongue momentarily hits, just like that drop.

24.

sailing against
the wind
the taste of my tears

Harry Frentz

A haiku often is working on two different levels at once. What is stated in words about the physical world may express what is going on in the realm of human emotions. This is how **metaphor** works in the traditional haiku: ambiguously, simply by placing two images in parallel. (Haiku also avoids simile, not using the word 'like' to compare one thing with another.) With haiku metaphor, one scenario may stand for another. The poet *might* be telling the reader about how when the wind at sea causes lots of tears of no significance; this provides the unusual opportunity to actually taste tears. Or he *might* be alluding to a purely emotional experience of encountering a difficulty with going forward in his life or regaining a sense of security, in which case the taste of the tears is sadness, pain, or frustration. Or the two experiences *might* be happening at once, as wind-tears and the struggle during sailing bring an awareness of some sorrow.

In any case, such a vivid haiku about the **sense of taste** is unusual and intriguing. Any haiku that skilfully uses one of the senses other than sight will be a stronger poem. This is a haiku to enjoy reading aloud, with the **alliteration** of the repeating /t/ sounds.

25.

rolling hills
I blink away the tears

Ella Lamont

To understand this haiku, we need to know that it was written in Christchurch around the time of the earthquakes.¹⁰ So the rolling hills are probably not just rounded, but actually moving. However, due to the **word play**, this possibility is subtly indicated, not spelled out. As in the previous haiku, tears feature completely without sentimentality, but this time they are not quite the main subject. Instead, the poet focuses with objective **simplicity** on her single physical action of blinking away the tears. She does not explicitly label herself as sad, frightened or

¹⁰ Having to be told the setting does weaken the haiku – the general reader wouldn't know what it refers to, especially in later years. So if your students' work refers to a current event, suggest that they make their subject clear.

empathetic. She could feel moved to tears for others nearby, or for the animals or people of the hills, as well as for herself; the haiku is so **open** that any or all of these, or even something else, could be the cause. There is a subtle parallel between the actions of each line, with the sharp shock of a quake echoed in the decisive blink with which she stoically resists sobbing.

26.

Christchurch
a butterfly
rests on a brick

Cerys Eggleston

Here is quite different haiku from the same time. The opening line, “Christchurch”, is shorthand for the earthquake period and its on-going aftermath. The poet reduces the vast landscape of devastation to a single brick – a perfect example of how haiku works with major issues at a very **small scale**. This haiku is also supremely **subtle** and **understated** in the way she has chosen a quiet moment of no drama as the subject of the haiku. Instead, for its terrific impact, this poem relies on layers of implied **contrasts** beneath the **plain** words: the stillness of the brick vs. the roaring chaos that dropped it on the ground; the airy fragility of the butterfly vs. the solidity of the brick; the suspended moment of peace and beauty amidst devastation and horror; the ignorance and innocence of the insect vs. the sorrowful knowledge of the human observer.

And yet, the spirit here is positive: also implied (though the poet herself doesn’t appear in the haiku) is that in this moment, the butterfly and the poet share an enjoyment of things just as they are.

27.

early morning
a butterfly
the only noise

Maddy Horton

Another butterfly, and again the subject is peacefulness, but in this haiku the poet and the reader are immersed in it, rather than relishing a fleeting moment. This butterfly seems to act as an expression of a whole serene environment, so that the subject becomes the morning, the place. I am intrigued that both these poets associate a butterfly (even one in flight) with peacefulness, when a more conventional view is their quality of restless fluttering. The sense of utterly quiet serenity is intensified by the **imaginative** imagery of tiny, audible, swishing sounds as the butterfly wafts through. The reader can believe that if we ourselves were quiet enough, we might just hear these sounds. It is always good to see how vivid a haiku can be when based on the **sense of hearing**, rather than simply on visual imagery.

28.

evening
the old boat
follows the tide

Bailey McIntosh

The image in each successive line of this poem adds another, harmonious layer of gentle melancholy. Traditional haiku aimed to create just such a tone with just such a topic, described by the Japanese words *wabi* (*wah-bee*) and *sabi* (*sah-bee*). These multifaceted terms have been translated into English in various ways, including 'lonely, aged, impermanent' and 'plain, rustic, worn', respectively. In the **simple** imagery of this haiku, the **key word** is "follows", which gives us the **profound** theme – also very much in the spirit of traditional haiku: acceptance of the naturalness of change and loss, of the constantly-flowing current of impermanence to which we are all subject.

29.

noon
a lone boat
drifts in blue

Ana Blakelock

The basic gentle image of a boat on the water is the same as in the haiku above, providing an opportunity to see what a difference the choice of words can make. This poem provides strong light and colour in its first and last words, unlike the rather sad dimness in haiku 28, above. Line three, "drifts in blue", is an **original** way to express the movement of floating. It creates a dreamy, almost **surreal** atmosphere, as if the sky and water have merged into one blueness. The atmosphere is skilfully intensified by the **alliteration** of soft /o/ and /oo/ sounds in each line: "noon" is a much better choice for line one than 'mid-day'. This boat is freed from gravity, almost dissolving in the seascape: drifting "in" – not 'on' – blue. Through the image, I can share with the poet a sense of this freedom and serenity in myself. This is definitely one to read aloud.

30.

hidden in the marram grass
 rippling dunes
 shift beneath me

Leika McIver

Infrequently seen, but highly valued in haiku, is the technique of the **pivot line**. Line two connects with line one to make an image, but then twists (or pivots) to make just as much sense in a different way with line three; lines one and two together are about the dunes themselves ("hidden in the marram grass, rippling dunes"), but then lines two and three together are about the poet ("rippling dunes shift beneath me"). The pivot provides the **surprise** of the poet's presence. The **key word**, "ripples", turns out to be more than just the motionless shape and texture of the dunes. Through the **word play** of its double meaning, the

dunes change from being simply a visual perception; now they move and give a vivid **bodily sensation**. The different lengths of the lines, balanced one on top of the other, suggest to me the instability of the sandy ridges.

31.

Anzac Cove
a wave
breaks the shore

Finn Pearce

The two **key words**, comprising the first line, set a particular scene of historic significance. By association, we immediately picture a great war, battle, bravery, tragedy, and more. Two words do all this. They also make the time of the poem **ambiguous**: is this about then, or is it about now, or is it timeless? With the final five words, poetry happens as the writer imaginatively envisions a **surreal reversal** of the ordinary way of looking. Here, strangely and movingly, it is the shore rather than the wave that breaks. So these could be waves of attacking soldiers breaking the shore, or waves of bullets and explosives – a war so violent that it disrupts the ordinary behaviour of nature. Or we could read it as today’s wave of water forever reminding us of the violence of the past in that place. A third possibility is that each breaking waves erodes the shore, standing for the erosion of memory and the loss of those who had direct experience at Anzac Cove.

In the hands of this 8-year-old, eight syllables do **profound** work. A final comment: the unusual way the three lines are arranged on the page, each centred (wave-like rather than conventionally text-like), shows the care with which the poet considered every aspect of his haiku.

I have grouped the next nine haiku together, following the one above, because each also uses an **unusual line arrangement**: some consist of only one line, some of two, and many use **unusual spacing** within the lines as well. In each case, the words stand as objects in the space of the page, in ways that add to the meaning of the poem. Also noteworthy is the grammatical **minimalism** in several of these – no verb needed, just phrases of nouns and adjectives.

32.

in shallow water
the young stag’s
last steps

Hannah Hudson

Very quiet, but powerful, this haiku also connects water and violence. The first two lines seem gentle, giving us only the lyrical connection between the shallow water and the youthful deer. Line three is also low-key and **understated**, but it skilfully **evokes emotion**; it shocks with the revelation of a sudden life-and-death **drama** brought to a quick conclusion. The two final, centred, words directly show that those last steps are short and few, making only a small, final ripple. The decreasing syllable count of the lines, 5- 3- 2, also conveys the fading of life. The

beauty of the first two lines and the quietness of the whole haiku make this event even sadder. The letter /s/ appears six times, like ripples, the **alliteration** of that soft, watery sound adding to the ironic gentleness of the poem.

33.

broken ice
 reflecting
 my image

Charlotte Trevella (11)

The form of this haiku echoes the jaggedness of the ice-mirror, with its offset lines and their words projecting at both ends like shards. **Connecting nature with human nature** is a characteristic haiku theme fulfilled elegantly here in only 5 words with a total of 9 syllables. The two realms are directly, literally linked by line two, “reflecting”. The reader can then explore the ways in which the ice may express something about the poet or about how she wants to be seen.

34.

 flooded street
my foot ripples the clouds

Marisol Hunter

Here yet another poet intuitively uses centred lines and **alliteration** of /s/ and /f/ sounds to express the nature of water. The two lines present the scene: from the shape of the haiku, it is almost as if the foot has dipped into the water on the road in line one and spreads its ripple widely in line two. From one line to the next, the focus of the poem **zooms in** from the ordinary to the **surreal**. Dream-like imagery presents the reader with the dual impossibilities of a foot high in the sky and clouds flowing rapidly. It took me a couple of breaths to understand that strange as it sounds, line two accurately describes a **direct perception** of an actual happening. Then I relished the sophisticated theme of reflections, real and yet unreal, turning the usual world upside down, sky taking over the pavement. The atmosphere of otherworldliness is intensified by the foot alone taking action, with the poet herself nowhere to be seen in the haiku.

35.

 sitting on the edge
the motion of cascading leaves

Ema Xharra

So **open**, so **ambiguous** – this haiku could be thought of as a piece of abstract art. It takes a certain courage to present a haiku so enigmatic. “Cascading” is the **key word**, upon which the richness of the imagery depends; the rest of the haiku is **plain**. The poem raises **layers** of questions: who sits, the edge of what, why sit there in a precarious spot, what moves the leaves, how do the moving leaves affect the sitter? And then: is this a dangerous situation? (A sense of risk is conveyed by the way line one itself ‘sits’ far to the right, “on the edge” of the

poem, in a most unbalanced way.) Are there in fact any leaves, or just a movement (of what?... possibly thoughts ?) *like* that of leaves? The haiku offers absolutely no clues to these mysteries, so just as the poet freed herself from the limiting mundane details, she has also freed readers to enter the realm of their own imagination. This is one of those haiku where the reader is given the chance to do half of the creative work.

36.

after the storm

the homeless man

Ruby Murray

I admire the clever way that the arrangement of the two lines seems actually to show the man emerging from shelter into an open space once the storm is past. If I take line one to be a kind of roof, I can't help but notice that it has holes in it between the words – in that **subtle** way the poet provides an opportunity for me to contemplate the discomfort and insecurity of being homeless. The long space at the beginning of line two also seems to work in a different way to give another, **profound** level of meaning: that emptiness is where the state of mind and body of the man would naturally be described, as for example,

After the storm

the shivering desolation of the homeless man

However, instead there is that blank, which seems to express his isolation from passers-by, their lack of attention to the details of his condition and lack of empathy for him. Everyone has turned their eyes aside – except the young poet.

37.

white roses

darkness fills the room

Nathan Penrose

A well-crafted haiku works by a movement between images; it is rarely static. Here are several kinds of movement, first a **zooming out** from small roses to a large, encompassing darkness in the room. This gives a sense of the poet stepping back from his focus on the flowers, taking in the whole scene and now feeling something quite different. This sense of motion is enhanced by the change on the page from a short line to a long one; the second line expands just as the darkness does and expresses its power to take over the poem, becoming the subject. There is also a kind of movement in the strong **contrast** between the two lines (white vs. black, attractive vs. unsettling). This contrast works to make the whiteness of the roses stand out, and the darkness darker. The roses actually stand out in the space of the poem, too, with line one centred on top of the length of line two, the background. Is the haiku about the daily extinguishing of visibility by the coming of night – which in itself can feel disturbing – or are there more troubling **layers** with the presence of depression or death?

38.

always in a hurry fire
Caitlin Wickham

A single line of words, a **simple** statement, becomes poetry because of that big space. The empty place seems to illustrate the destructiveness of fire, as if something had been there which is now burnt up and gone. I imagine the flames racing through, about to consume that last word as well. The single-line form suits the topic perfectly, because one-line haiku seem to me to have an aura of intensity about them, as if running headlong. This poem is a great example of **direct perception**, in which the poet (bypassing the clichés of fire as hot or red) actually looks in a fresh way and sees its nature as swift movement. With just seven syllables, this **concise** haiku gives us this essence.

39.

sand dune the width of the wind
Harry Frenzt

Some people do wonder about the shape of the wind; I am one of these people. Here is another, who has made it the subject of a haiku, yet still leaving it a **mystery**. The whole haiku is intriguingly mysterious: what is the relationship between the dune, the empty space and the wind? Perhaps the unknowable, invisible form of the wind dwells in the large empty space in the poem – in the same way that fire itself seems to have a presence in the space in the previous haiku. Or the **unusual form** of the single line might represent irregularly gusting wind, giving the dune its shape and size, dropping, then blowing again. This is a wonderful poem to read aloud, with the rhythm of the single-syllable words and two kinds of **alliteration**: first its repeating /d/ sounds and next the voice of the wind in the whooshing breathiness of the /w/ sounds in the second line.

40.

wind
a butterfly
tells the story
Ella Lamont

This haiku, too, concerns the shape of the wind and also expresses the imagery through the poem's own shape as well as its content. Each line increases in length the way a gust of wind swells. Like the dune, the butterfly is something visible which gives form to the invisible – in this case with great delicacy. Both wind and the butterfly are capricious and ephemeral. The **key** word, "story", is not only a most **unusual** word to apply to the wind, but also, **imaginatively**, gives the sense of movement and intrigue in the flight of the butterfly.

41.

rainfall his draft letter
Philipp Hoeper

This is the shortest of the exemplary haiku. A poem could hardly be more **plain, concise** or

simply constructed, yet the one line and its six syllables create a tremendous impact and continue to resonate in my mind. The starkness of the single line gives an emotional intensity and merges the rain with receiving the letter into a single powerful happening: the scene unifies **nature and humanity**. All in one horrible rush, everything is beyond control. Only the rainfall expresses the emotionally charged significance of the moment. For all that is not said, the brutality of the moment is fully rendered. The haiku comes from **imagination** and **empathy**, perhaps from the story of a family member – a most unusual and striking choice of subject for a young person.

42.

first light
the soldier's
last letter

Stephanie Lester

A three-line structure gives a different kind of **drama** by building suspense, as the reader discovers more about the situation from line to line. This is also a work of **imagination** and **empathy**. The judge of that year's Competition noted in her comments that 2014 was the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, so perhaps the inspiration came from history class. The haiku has a bleak **simplicity**, with its sharp **contrast** of "first" and "last". "First light" carries a particular poignancy, as light is often associated with life itself. The bare minimum of words does all the necessary work to **evoke emotion** for the reader, without any emotional adjectives or verbs.

43.

the black world
the blind man sees
a sky without stars

Enya O'Malley

44.

early morning
the blind man
remembers summer

Sophie Mannis

These two haiku also form a pair through sharing a similar subject. As in the above war haiku, the poets here have left the usual haiku realm of immediate personal experience to enter in **imagination** the world of another. The strength and interest of these haiku lie in the quality of their **empathy**. Each poet imagines how it might be, to be blind – not in a sentimental, pitying way, but in an open-hearted, open-minded way envisioning the very different view of another.

In the first haiku, the poet reveals this world to the reader step by step by her careful choice of words for each line. She enters first the generality of line one, then line two startles – and carries the poem – with the simply-stated discovery that the blind man does see, and goes on

to specify in the third line his sky which is radically unlike ours. However, who is to say that this is a lesser vision? – certainly not the poet. The haiku would have lost its dramatic impact if she had written the last two lines as “the blind man sees the sky/without stars”. Instead, “the blind man sees” has the force of a revelation or a miracle.

The second haiku is very, very **subtle** in its perceptiveness and the way it connects its two **plain** images to create meaning and evoke pleasure. This poem sets up a puzzle to be solved, giving us only clues, not a solution to the **mystery**. By the end of line two, the reader knows that the man who is the subject can’t know from the light that it is now morning. However the significance of line one becomes clear when one reaches the end of line three, “summer”. Why does the man remember summer? It could be because of what he perceives with his skin instead of his eyes. When the early sun touches him, it is warm. Perhaps the subject of the haiku is that enjoyment of a warm touch, though the poet with great restraint leaves it to the reader to discover that. In a most delicate way, she shows how the past can still be vividly present now, through memory.

45.

autumn wind
following her footsteps
through the leaves

Sophia Frenz

I was delighted to discover again in this final haiku that rare technique of the **pivot** line. The second line gives the poem two equally valid ways of being read, with two different subjects. Lines one and two together form an image of the autumn wind following the poet’s footsteps, intensified by the breezy /f/ sounds. Lines two and three together make a new image, of the poet herself following someone else’s footsteps. This **surprise** twist means that the initial moment in nature can hold a larger and more **profound** meaning. It allows the interpretation of following the guidance and inspiration of another haiku poet. The autumnal wind, fallen leaves and small path evoke the gentle melancholy of traditional haiku, which our poet may be learning to explore.

First as we read, then as we write, we are following in the footsteps of all the haiku poets before us. Generation after generation, in the wind, through fallen leaves – despite impermanence – poetry remains. Poetry is always there to be found in our perceptions and what we make of them, and especially in the way we can touch others through imagery, sharing the freshness of the moment.

Index of Exemplary Haiku

Arranged in themed lists

Each poem below is identified by its number, as given in the text of Chapter Three.

Section One: introducing haiku

Haiku to listen to: Choose selections from these lists to read aloud to your class as their first experience of haiku.

Subjects:

- family 11, 17, 18, 20
- animals 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 20, 26, 27, 40
- the elements 8, 23, 24, 33, 34, 38, 40, 42
- land and sea 16, 17, 18, 19, 28, 29, 30, 31, 39
- seasons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 44
- time of day 5, 6, 10, 18, 27, 28, 29, 42, 44
- darkness 10, 12, 37, 42
- environmental events 9, 23, 25, 26, 34
- life and death 1, 13, 15, 32, 42
- war 31, 41, 12
- writing haiku 21, 22

New Zealand subjects:

- calving 1
- pet lamb 6
- pony and horse riding 7, 8
- penguin 9
- albatross 14
- pig hunting 15
- deer hunting 32
- paua shell 19
- pohutukawa 2
- toi-toi grass 20
- earthquake 10, 25, 26
- sea and shore 17, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 39

Special haiku qualities for the ear

- alliteration (repeating sounds) 20, 23, 24, 29, 32, 34, 39
- silences 13, 38, 39

Haiku to see on the page: choose selections from these lists to present these to your class in written form

Very short haiku (8 syllables or less) 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 19, 29, 31, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42

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- one line 38, 39, 41
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- two lines with unusual spacing 34, 35, 36, 37
- three lines unusually arranged on the page 13, 30, 31, 32, 33

Section Two: haiku for further discussion

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Subjects

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- storm 14, 36
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- sand dune 30, 39
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- hunting 15, 32
- life and death 1, 13, 32

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Also, for techniques of arranging words and lines, see Section One, Haiku to see on the page.

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Haiku of vivid vision 5, 17, 33, 34, 38, 43

Haiku of senses other than vision 8, 15, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27, 44

Resources

BOOKS: All of the 'top picks' below are available at one or more libraries in New Zealand. New Zealand libraries hold more than 150 books in English on haiku for adults and children, so a little browsing in your library may well turn up others of interest beyond those I have listed. Books held by the National Library at their Service Centres for schools are sent out for free and can be kept for a school term.¹¹ These are marked * on the list below. The National Library Service Centres hold 24 poetry books exclusively on haiku for young people (mainly for primary/intermediate levels).

Books held by any other library in New Zealand can be borrowed through interlibrary loan; the cost and length of borrowing time vary according to each library's system.

1. Handbooks on writing haiku for adults

Highly Recommended:

Reichhold, Jane, *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide* (Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, London, 2002)

The heart of this small but power-packed book is 50 pages of no-nonsense advice on writing techniques. Reichhold illustrates each point with one of her own haiku. Included is a short but valuable section for teachers.

Also:

Higginson, William and Penny Harter, *The Haiku Handbook: How to Write, Teach and Appreciate Haiku* (Kodansha International, Tokyo, New York, London, 1985; reissued 25th anniversary edition, 2009)

This is the standard, scholarly American guide, which has been popular over the years. The chapter on teaching is aimed at poets doing one-off workshops in schools, so not really relevant for teachers themselves.

2. Handbooks on haiku writing for young people

Highly Recommended:

* Donegan, Patricia, *Haiku: Asian Arts and Crafts for Kids* (Tuttle Publications, Rutland VT, USA, 2003)

A guide for children on writing haiku, presented through seven key points (form, image, season words, here and now, feeling, surprise, compassion) and five projects including haiga. Topics are well-covered, in 64 pages, with plenty of exemplary poems, many by

¹¹ Starting in 2016, the National Library has a new system for borrowing. Rather than filling requests by individual teachers, they receive orders through a School Loan Coordinator in each school. Your Coordinator can access the list of their haiku book holdings for you and add your requests to the school's order for the upcoming or present term. Books are sent out for free, but incur the cost of return by Courier Post. The National Library website gives more details: www.schools.natlib.govt.nz

children. Teachers could well use this book as a basis for lesson plans; one who has done so noted that he added an eighth point, the senses. The author is a well-known haiku poet and translator. It is recommended for ages 7 – 12, but seems rather advanced for younger readers to tackle without adult help.

Also:

Macken, JoAnn Early, *Read, Recite and Write Haiku* (Crabtree Publishing Co., published in Canada, USA, Australia, 2015)

Short and full to bursting with good ideas (32 pages), this guide is based on five themes for composing haiku, plus supporting information, advice and sample haiku. The author is not a haiku poet, but conveys a reasonable understanding (except for the lamentable version of a famous traditional haiku on the cover). Teachers could use the themes as a basis for lesson plans. Probably most suitable for intermediate/middle school.

3. Collections of haiku for adults

Highly Recommended:

Borrell, Nola and Karen P. Butterworth, ed., *the taste of nashi: New Zealand Haiku*, (Windrift, Lower Hutt NZ, 2008)

This is the most recent collection of New Zealand haiku, and is still available to buy through the NZ Poetry Society website/HaikuNewZ. Although intended for adults, the first two sections contain many nature-themed poems with specifically New Zealand subjects. These would work well as exemplars when introducing haiku to your class.

Also:

Blyth, R. H., *Haiku*, four volumes, (Hokuseido Press, Tokyo, 1949 – 1952, edition of 1971)

This is the fundamental classic: many hundreds of mostly first-time translations from traditional Japanese haiku (made in part while he was interned in Japan during WWII), which have inspired generations of writers and readers, with commentaries and background information. Volumes are arranged by season. Something for all age groups and interests.

Childs, Cyril, ed., *The Second New Zealand Haiku Anthology*, (New Zealand Poetry Society Inc., Wellington, 1998)

* Childs, Cyril, ed., *New Zealand Haiku Anthology*, (New Zealand Poetry Society Inc., Wellington, 1993)

These contain some gems which would be suitable for students of all ages.

Hirshfield, Jane, *Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World*, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2015)

Chapter 3, “Seeing Through Words”, presents the life and work of Basho, the originator of the stand-alone haiku form. For advanced high school students.

Van den Heuvel, Cor, ed., *The Haiku Anthology: Haiku and Senryu in English*, (W.W. Norton and Co., New York, 1999, 3rd edition)

A hefty book containing about 850 haiku by 89 North American poets, all of very high quality, of interest mainly to high school students.

4. Annual anthologies of haiku by adults and young people

The New Zealand Poetry Society has published a collection of the best submissions to their competitions each year since 1988, containing haiku along with long-form poetry. The Junior Haiku Competition has featured since 1997. A good source of haiku with local subjects and themes for all ages, the books are available from the NZPS website, with each year's edition being published in November.

5. Annual anthologies of haiku by adults

Red Moon Press, Winchester VA, USA has offered an annual anthology, gleaned from all English-language haiku published in a single calendar year, for more than 20 years. The work can be quite sophisticated and cutting-edge, but also includes more "traditional" haiku.

6. Illustrated haiku for adults

Highly Recommended:

Patt, Judith, Michiko Warkentyne, Barry Till, *Haiku: Japanese Art and Poetry*, (Pomegranate Communications, Petaluma CA, USA, 2010)

Though created for adults, this high-quality, truly beautiful small book would be an inspiring way to introduce haiku to any age group. It presents 35 traditional Japanese haiku, each matched with a traditional woodcut or ink painting – arranged by season. Along with skilful English translations, the haiku are also shown in Japanese calligraphy along with their phonetic readings (so we can hear how they sound in their original language).

* Addiss, Stephen, ed., with A. and F. Yamamoto, *Haiku Landscapes: in Sun, Wind, Rain and Snow*, (Weatherhill Publishers, Trumbull, CT, USA, 2002)

A book for all ages, with 120 Japanese haiku from the 17th to 20th centuries and prints by traditional Japanese masters.

7. Illustrated haiku for young people

Highly recommended:

* Higginson, W.J. and Sandra Spiegel, *Wind in the Long Grass: a Collection of Haiku*, (Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, New York, c.1991)

An illustrated collection of haiku from all over the world, selected by an eminent poet and scholar. Primary/elementary school to intermediate/middle school.

Also:

Most libraries of any size will have a few illustrated haiku books for younger children, varying in quality. These three are reasonably good ones I found in the Dunedin City Library:

* Gollub, Matthew and Kazuko G. Stone, *Cool Melons – Turn to Frogs! The Life and Poems of Issa*, (Lee & Low Books, New York, c.1998)

The biography of the beloved traditional Japanese “poet of the animals” is interspersed with his haiku. The illustrations are Japanese-style, with each haiku given in Japanese calligraphy in the margin. Primary/elementary school to intermediate/middle school.

* Prelutsky, Jack and Ted Rand, *If Not for the Cat*, (Greenwillow Books, New York, 2004)
This picture book consists of 17 haiku (not brilliant, but okay) by the author, each about a different animal. The illustrations are lively and appealing, their expressiveness adding greatly to the impact of the poetry. Primary/elementary school.

Shannon, George and Malcah Zeldis, *Spring: A Haiku Story*, (Greenwillow Books, New York, 1996)

Colourful folk-art style paintings accompany 15 traditional, seasonal Japanese haiku. Primary/elementary school.

ONLINE

1. Haiku societies

Highly Recommended:

www.poetrysociety.org.nz/HaikuNewZ

The New Zealand Poetry Society hosts HaikuNewZ, a tremendously rich resource created and curated by well-known haiku poet, Sandra Simpson. It includes:

- monthly articles, with an archive of many dozens
- book list
- Showcase of the work of 30 New Zealand poets, a good place to find exemplary haiku with a local subject
- My Favourite Haiku: features selections and commentary by a wide range of New Zealand and international poets
- Haiku Helpdesk: six articles on topics of particular interest to beginners
- Worth A Look: an astonishing compendium of a full range of haiku-related resources, including –
 - other haiku websites
 - online haiku journals
 - ‘free to read’ online
 - list of blogs, etc.
 - haiga and audio-visual material, including YouTube
 - list of seasonal words for Westerners, including some for the southern hemisphere
 - Japanese masters

www.britishhaikusociety.org.uk

Good resources, and especially noteworthy for their downloadable **Teacher’s Pack**. This is a complete set of materials for a unit (of approximately three days) on haiku which has stood the test of time in many classrooms, for students aged 9 -16. It looks excellent to me; my only reservation is that, prepared in the nineties, it is still advocating that students use the 5-7-5 syllable form. The pack consists of 5 pages of material for direct

use in the classroom (large-font exemplary poems, wall chart or hand-outs, ideas and questions for class discussion, two optional activities for class or homework) and 15 pages of resource sheets. The latter include 24 really wonderful, exemplary poems, both traditional Japanese and modern Western; a guidelines sheet for use in editing; and a short haiga (haiku plus artwork) unit with examples in both traditional Japanese and English.

www.haikufoundation.org

A rich archive of haiku and haiku-related resources. Among the many features, those that might be of particular interest to teachers include:

- the Per Diem daily haiku (one month per country, New Zealand haiku appearing during June 2016)
- many dozens of haiku galleries with work by invited poets, arranged by theme (including one called “the antipodes”), most containing a total of 21 poems each, by three poets
- digital library, an online collection of books and essays; “How to Haiku” is recommended for teachers to view
- video gallery of readings and more
- HaikuLife film festival archives of short films created for International Haiku Poetry Days
- haiga gallery (haiku plus artwork) (see *Resources* list below on haiga)
- a mobile app containing 1500 haiku from around the world

The **Haiku Lessons** feature provides many pages of lesson plans for all levels of teaching, from pre-reading through university. The most detailed and structured are those for primary/elementary school, following a pattern of introduction, writing and revising over several days. Teachers are given the choice of following the basic lesson plans or branching out using the list of alternatives, e.g., involving parent volunteers. All lesson plans are based on the Haiku Foundation materials provided with them. Students are invited to post their own haiku on the “Educational Wall”.

Also:

www.hsa-haiku.org

The Haiku Society of America website provides, among many other features, a section of educational resources, including three sets of lesson plans: a one-page plan for primary/elementary school, one for high school, and a summary of a two-week unit that is available on another website. The latter seems to me quite ambitious, with its emphasis on linked verses.

In addition, the HSA runs the Nicholas A. Virgilio Memorial Haiku contest for young people annually; winning poems are posted. It could well be interesting for older students to see what their overseas contemporaries are writing.

2. Online haiku journals and collections

Among the great number available, these are especially good value.

Daily Haiku www.dailyhaiku.org

A new haiku every day! Their info page lists other online haiku journals.

Per Diem www.haikufoundation.org

At the top of their home page is the haiku of the day, from poets around the world (one country per month, New Zealand in June 2016).

tinywords www.tinywords.com

A new haiku is posted every weekday, except when they are choosing work for the new issue.

Mann Library Daily Haiku <http://haiku.mannlib.cornell.edu>

From Cornell University in the USA, a collection of work is posted for a different poet each month. One can scroll through each day's selection to see all the featured work and visit the archive.

Heron's Nest www.theheronsnest.com

A quarterly journal (online only) noted for its selectivity.

A Hundred Gourds www.ahundredgourds.com

A quarterly journal (online only) with contributors and readers from many countries.

Graceguts www.graceguts.com

The website of Michael Dylan Welch, an eminent American haiku poet and teacher. It is full of resources for the haiku community. The starred entries on the Essays page are a good place to start.

3. Haiga websites: artwork containing haiku

Daily haiga www.dailyhaiga.org

One haiga is posted each day, featuring haiku only. The vast archive can be searched by topic/key word. Presents a huge range of styles, with photos, paintings and drawings, either printed text or calligraphy.

Haiga Online www.haigaonline.com

Presents exhibitions of haiga by individual artists, both photos and paintings. Not all poems are haiku (also includes the five-line Japanese traditional form called tanka).

Haiku Foundation haiga gallery www.haikufoundation.org

Extensive exhibitions of work by individual artist/poets. I recommend Stephen Addiss's haiga as a model; his spontaneous sketches and expressive hand-lettering are very much in the traditional Japanese spirit and not dauntingly "professional" looking.

A Sample Handout for Students

Your haiku should be

- about something interesting to you
- as short as possible
- about seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching
- made from one or two clear images
- in the present moment
- suggesting a feeling without naming it

Have you tried...?

- cutting out one or more words
- finding the best words
- adding a season word
- adding a surprise in the last line
- rearranging words and spaces into a different shape
- reading it aloud

Have you checked...?

- no title
- no rhyming
- no spelling mistakes
- fewer than 17 syllables
- no poetic language