



an activity idea to promote walking to school

Walking Haiku

walking to school with eyes & ears open

...becoming aware of how the weather, people, birds & perceptions change from day to day on the walk to school

1. discuss the Haiku (see below)
2. assign a week (*or two!*) of Haiku journal writing for students to write about what they see and hear while walking to and from school (...*consider assigning "walking to and from school" as homework!*)
3. consider adding an art component where students illustrate their favourite ones
4. discuss the different themes and the influence that weather has on what the students see and hear
5. repeat in different seasons

What is a haiku?

"*Haiku* is the modern name for a Japanese verse form that is over 300 years old. It is also a general term for a poem or a group of poems that follow haiku conventions of form and content" (& 3 short lines)

from: <http://nc-haiku.org/haiku-what.htm> (accessed 9th April 2008)

Here is a definition from *Frogpond*, literary journal of Haiku Society of America:

- (1) An unrhymed Japanese poem recording the essence of a moment keenly perceived, in which Nature is linked to human nature. It usually consists of seventeen *onjii* [sound symbols].
- (2) A foreign adaptation of 1, usually written in three lines totalling fewer than seventeen syllables.

Origin

Matsuo Basho, a seventeenth century Japanese poet, is often credited with developing haiku into a vehicle for serious artistic expression. In Basho's time, a *hokku* (as a haiku was then called) was simply the first stanza in a linked verse form called [renga](#). Basho infused his hokku with a depth and clarity that was not typical of the form up to that time. Some of his hokku capture a moment of heightened awareness in which the boundary between subject and object seems to disappear. This heightened awareness—and the role of Nature in inspiring it—are two of the most discussed and elusive characteristics of literary haiku.

Form and Content

A traditional Japanese haiku includes a seasonal reference and has a total of seventeen syllables arranged in units of five, seven, and five syllables. Hiroaki Sato and others have noted that while

most Japanese poets write their haiku in a single line, the single line is often broken into three lines when the poems are translated. Perhaps as a result, the three-line haiku may be the most popular form for haiku written outside of Japan.

Many haiku poets writing in English use a form that was inspired by the traditional Japanese haiku: **three lines of five, seven & five syllables.**

by identifying with a slice of time, a spot in the world, you are opening yourself to the interconnectedness of all things.

Naomi Beth Wakan

...from Haiku-writing: Learning from the Pine, *Green Teacher Magazine* 72: Fall 2003 p. 14.
"Writing haiku poetry helps students to pay attention to the moment, and grasp the interconnectedness of all things – important tools to developing environmental awareness." from <http://www.greenteacher.com>

here's an example:

1. while walking look and listen...
2. let your eyes and ears wander until something gets your attention (*a squirrel climbing a tree, a construction worker carrying planks of wood, etc.*)
3. write a few lines describing what you see or hear
4. read what you wrote, and lightly circle the best parts
5. write out those parts again, adding any new parts that come to mind
6. read it again and like before, make any changes that you feel would give it a better sense of what you are seeing, or hearing or feeling

the wind blows through the
trees and the branches
clap their leaves like I've
just **won a gold medal**

the wind blows
trees clap their leaves
won a gold medal

the wind blows
trees' leaves applaud
I take a bow

This is an update of an activity developed for the Off Ramp program by Arthur Orsini while working at BEST.