

Poetry From Around the World **What Is a Haiku?**

A Haiku is a Japanese style of poem. It is made up of seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven and five. Traditionally, they were used to explore images of the natural world, but can be written about any theme. In Japan, these poems are valued for their simplicity, openness, depth and lightness. Haikus don't need to rhyme, but some poets add additional challenge by rhyming lines 1 and 3.

Where did Haikus come from?

Haikus originated from the opening stanza of a 'Renga', a type of Japanese poetry which is written by more than one author working together on one piece. Matsuo Bashō, one of the most famous Japanese poets, is generally recognised as the greatest master of Haiku and credited as popularizing this form of poetry. By his time, the opening stanza of a 'Renga' was being used independently and was known as 'Hokku'. This was renamed in the late 19th century to haiku.

What does a Haiku look like?

An old silent pond...

A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

- Matsuo Bashō

Task:

Read the example Haiku. Can you identify if the poem has the following features:

- 5 syllables in line 1
- 7 syllables in line 2
- 5 syllables in line 3

