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# Haiku in English

by Harold G. Henderson

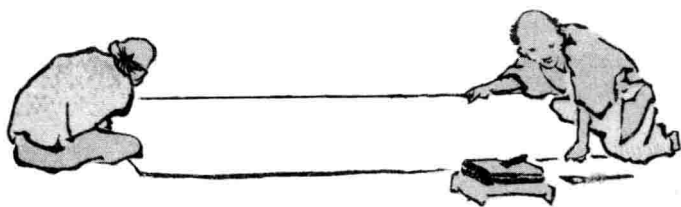
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俳句の作り方

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by Harold G. Henderson



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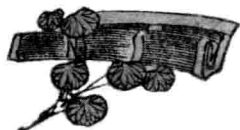
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# Haiku in English

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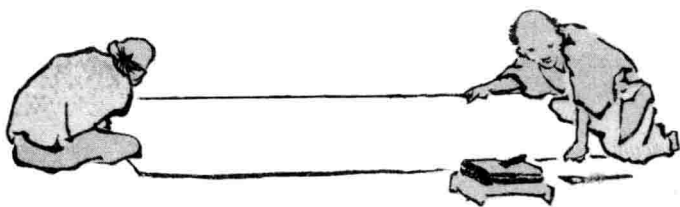


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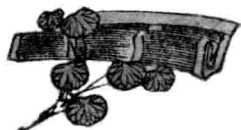
I wish to express my thanks for the generous cooperation of all those who have assisted in preparing this discussion of the problems involved in writing haiku in English, most of whom are mentioned in the text. I wish particularly to acknowledge my indebtedness to the staff of the Japan Society for its continued encouragement and support and especially to Mr. Daniel Meloy whose untiring assistance has been invaluable.

HAROLD G. HENDERSON



The Japan Society is an association of Americans and Japanese who desire to help bring the peoples of the United States and Japan closer together in their appreciation and understanding of each other and each other's way of life. It functions as a private, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization interested in serving as a medium through which both peoples can learn from the experiences and accomplishments of the other.

Inquiries should be addressed to the Executive Director, Japan Society, Inc., 112 E. 64th St., New York, N. Y. 10021.



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## Publisher's Foreword

HAIKU, in recent years, has gained a worldwide popularity that has both pleased and displeased the purists of the art in the country where it has been in existence for centuries. Many of them believe that one *must* be Japanese to experience the full impact and emotion to be gleaned from the abbreviated form of poetry. Others are happy and appreciate the attempt by Westerners to understand and therefore become enriched by the explosive simplicity which haiku is meant to impart.

The non-Japanese speaking world has had only translations by which to expose themselves to this art. While being a far cry from the originals, they have been sufficient to ignite the spark that has made haiku current.

Its concise nature has given many to the belief that haiku is not a difficult form of poetry—neither to read and understand nor to write. The result has been thousands of mechanically produced 17-syllable poems that can be called haiku with the same effect that one might get in comparing a giant sequoia to bonsai.

To assist those who are interested in finding out more about haiku before they undertake to create



their own compositions, we are proud to be able to offer this introductory booklet with an eye to providing greater understanding to the large numbers who have given it the enthused attention it has received in the last several years.

*Haiku in English* was originally published by the Japan Society of New York, a group with the purpose of bringing "the people of the United States and Japan closer together in their appreciation and understanding of each other and each other's way of life." Our cooperation with the Society which enables us to give this work a wider circulation is another step toward fulfilling our goal of providing "Books to Span the East and West."



## Introductory Note

Haiku is a form of poetry which Japanese have practiced for centuries, and which, literally, millions of Japanese are writing today. In the last ten years or so it has become popular in America. First hundreds, then thousands, now many tens of thousands of Americans are writing haiku—or at least trying to.

The Japan Society has received numerous requests for information about how to write haiku in English. We do not feel that we can give any complete or even adequate answer to this question. Nevertheless, it may be possible to propose certain guide lines, and suggest certain ideas, which could be of help to those who wish to produce haiku in English.

It seems to us that the problem may well be divided into three parts:

1. What is a Japanese haiku?
2. What is, or should be, a haiku in English?
3. What should an English-speaking person do in order to write (or teach) haiku in English?







## Japanese Haiku

The ideal first step in learning just what a Japanese haiku really is, would be, of course, to read a great many in the original Japanese. This, however, is not possible for most Americans, and the only substitute is to read them in translations.

Unfortunately, no translation of a poem is ever *absolutely* faithful to the original, and many so-called translations of haiku have been very unfaithful indeed. For the serious student we recommend R. H. Blyth's monumental *Haiku* in 4 volumes, and especially his recently published *History of Haiku* in 2 volumes (Tokyo, Hokuseido Press, 1964). These books give the original Japanese as well as translations, and almost every haiku is discussed separately. We also recommend H. G. Henderson's *An Introduction to Haiku* (New York, Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1958, also in paperback). This is a far less comprehensive work than Blyth's, but has the advantage of footnotes which give both the originals and word for word translations. Another useful book is Kenneth Yasuda's *Japanese Haiku* (Rutland, Vermont, Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1957) even though it does not give the Japanese originals.

For those who cannot go back to the originals we