



Poetry in Bloom: Haiku Writing

Today we're going to explore a really quick, fun form of writing that is really effective and results in small, beautifully crafted pieces: Haikus.

First, go for a walk in nature (Powerscourt Garden is the ideal place) and choose nine objects or natural phenomena and note them down. Next, group your words in threes, so: Leaf, stream, wind/bark, squirrel, twig/grass, fern, cloud...

Next, you're going to use the objects you've chosen to inspire your own Haiku.

What is a Haiku?

Originally Japanese, a Haiku is a poem of three lines with each line having a fixed number of syllables. Haiku were traditionally inspired by nature, so they are the perfect form of poetry to celebrate nature in bloom.

The key feature that makes a Haiku is the syllables: there are 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second line and 5 in the third line. Here's one with no words. Read it aloud to get the rhythm:

*Ba-dum ba-dum ba
Ba-dum ba-dum ba-dum ba
Ba-dum ba-dum ba*

Now, try with real words, the words you've chosen. If you have trouble keeping track of syllables when you're composing your Haiku try imagining the *beats* of each word, or clap along to the rhythm of the words: *in-to/to-mor-row/ex-cit-ed/leaf* or maybe keep track of how many times the shape of your mouth needs to change when you're saying the word out loud... if you still have doubts, double check by looking up a syllable counter online.

So, now to write our Haiku... give yourself 5 minutes with each group of three words and write as many Haiku using those three words as you can... the words can be pluralised and can appear in any order. So, my first example:

*The fountain dances
Winds blow the gardens gently
Flowers bow and bend*

If you pair your Haiku with illustrations, maybe a comic panel for each line, even better.

Haikus are a great form of writing. They're short and having to write within rigid rules is almost freeing in a way. If you want to write a longer poem, try stringing Haikus together, a different Haiku for each verse.