

Haiku for Kids: An Annotated List

Cassedy, Sylvia and Kunihiro Suetake (trans.) Illustrated by Molly Bang. *Red Dragonfly on My Shoulder*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

This book had previously been published in the 1960s but was rereleased with Molly Bang's collage illustrations. The illustrations really make this book unique. The book actually opens up vertically—you have to turn it on its side. The poems are a collection of Japanese haiku that have been translated into English. They are all written along the top of the page in one long line, but the vertical illustrations made up of all kinds of items like material, cookies, buttons, rice, wire, and more really make this a “Bang” up book.

Clements, Andrew. Illustrated by Tim Bowers. *Dogku*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

This book is a collection of haiku about a family who gets a dog and their adjustment to each other. Each page contains a different haiku, but they are linked to tell the story.

Donegan, Patricia. *Haiku*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2003.

This book is part of “Asian Arts and Crafts for Kids” series. This is a step-by-step writer's guide to writing haiku geared toward kids. It gives a short history of haiku, and then guides kids through all of the key elements in a haiku (form, seasonal word, here and now, etc). There are dozens of examples of haiku throughout the book. It also guides young writers through five projects: writing a haiku, seasonal haiku, haibun, haiga, and renga. There is a glossary, a resource guide with Internet links, and a bibliography. This would make a great book for a serious young writer/poet, but it is a very useful haiku resource for teachers too.

Farrar, Sid. Illustrated by Ilse Plume. *The Year Come Round: Haiku Through the Seasons*. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2012.

Beautiful moments from every season of the year are highlighted in this haiku collection. Visit the haiku all at once or sip it season by season.

Gollub, Matthew. Illustrated by Kazuko G. Stone. *Cool Melons—Turn to Frogs! The Life and Poems of Issa*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

This is a picture book biography of Issa, a traditional Japanese haiku poet who lived in the late 1700s-early 1800s. The text is biographical with translated haikus by Issa interspersed throughout. Amazingly, the haiku fit with the text well. The back of the book includes an author's note, information about translation, and information about haiku.

Harter, Penny. Illustrated by Jeffrey Greene. *Shadow Play: Night Haiku*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

This book is a collection of linked haiku that tell a story, like *Dogku*. A collection of haiku all about night.

Issa. Illustrated by G. Brian Karas. *Today and Today*. New York: Scholastic, 2007.

Issa is a Japanese poet well known for his haiku. I did a review of this book here. Haiku translated from Japanese are arranged by season in this book and illustrated by G. Brian Karas.

Janeczko, Paul. *How to Write Haiku, and Other Short Poems*. New York, Scholastic, 2004.

One of the best haiku references I have come across. It was my bible when I was learning how to write haiku so I could teach my students how to write haiku. It also includes instructions for other types of poems as well.

Janeczko, Paul B. (ed) Photographs by Henri Silberman. *Stone Bench in an Empty Park*. New York: Orchard, 2000.

The illustrations are fabulous black and white photos of scenes in a city. Janeczko explains in the introduction that haiku are usually nature poems, but that the city makes great subject matter for poetry too. Janeczko has collected haiku from dozens of well-known poets in this collection.

Janeczko, Paul and J. Patrick Lewis. *Wing Nuts: Screwy Haiku*. New York: Little, Brown, 2006.

This is a hilarious collection of haiku. It doesn't follow the traditional nature content of Japanese haiku, but it still follows the format of haiku. These are lots of fun to read aloud.

Lewis, J. Patrick. Woodcuts by Chris Manson. *Black Swan White Crow*. New York: Atheneum, 1995.

The illustrations done in woodcuts are very simple and with muted colors, but they illustrate the simplicity of the haiku beautifully. This collection of haiku is all written in the traditional seasonal haiku format. A good book to add to a collection to have when teaching children what traditional, seasonal haiku is all about.

Lin, Grace and Robert Mercer (compiled by). *Robert's Snowflakes*. New York: Viking, 2005.

This gorgeous collection of haiku is accompanied by snowflakes illustrated by various artists for Robert's Snow (which proceeds go to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute). This is a beautiful celebration of haiku and art and is written and illustrated by many famous children's books authors and illustrators. My only wish for this book? It is small gift book format. I would love for it to be a regular size picture book to show off the beauty even more. One of my favorite collections!

Mora, Pat. Illustrated by Rafael López. *Yum! ¡MmMm! ¡Qué Rico! America's Sproutings*. New York: Lee & Low, 2007.

This book celebrates foods that are native to the Americas through haiku, sidebar facts about the food, and stunning acrylic illustrations on wood panels. Papayas, pecans, and prickly pears are just a few of the foods that are celebrated. It is a "feast" for the eyes and the mind.

Prelutsky, Jack. Illustrated by Ted Rand. *If Not for the Cat*. New York: Greenwillow, 2004.

Jack Prelutsky writes a haiku about different animals on each page. The fun thing about this book is that you can read them aloud to students (or show them poem) and have them guess what he is writing about, then show students the illustrations. They are riddle-like haiku.

Raczka, Bob. Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds. *Guyku: A Year of Haiku for Boys*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010.

Haiku for guys? The guys will enjoy the shenanigans of the boys in the book, but girls will probably get a kick out of it as well. The haiku are separated into seasons with mud puddle jumping in the spring to snowball pitching practice in the winter. Illustrated with Reynolds' whimsical watercolor illustrations.

Reibstein, Mark. Illustrated by Ed Young. *Wabi Sabi*. New York: Little Brown, 2008.

Wabi Sabi is a cat who is trying to understand the meaning of his name. He goes on a quest to truly understand. The vertical layout of this book, accompanied with Ed Young's collage make this a textural book to hold and experience. Reibstein tells this story in haibun—a prose story that sets up each haiku.

Rosen, Michael. Illustrated by Stan Fellows. *The Cuckoo's Haiku and Other Birding Poems*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2009.

Each haiku is about a different bird and accompanied by a few facts about the bird. The watercolor illustrations and handwriting-esque typeset really make this a beautiful nature book.

Rosen, Michael. Illustrated by Mary Azarian. *The Hound Dog's Haiku and Other Poems for Dog Lovers*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2011.

This collection of dog haiku is made even more stunning with Azarian's woodcut illustrations that capture every wrinkle and hair. Every haiku is about a different breed of dog.

Shannon, George (ed). Paintings by Malcah Zeldis. *Spring: A Haiku Story*. New York: Greenwillow, 1996.

This is a collection of spring haiku translated from the Japanese into English. Gouache paintings illustrate them in lively colors. This is a good collection to show students how the translation from Japanese to English retains the image of the poem but doesn't retain the syllabication.

Snyder, Betsy. *I Haiku You*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Haiku + Valentine = I Haiku You. This collection of Valentine haiku is a sweet celebration of all the good stuff in childhood—purple popsicles, s'mores, best friends, teddy bears, lemonade and more. It would make a good Valentine gift for your favorite child also.

Spivak, Dawnine. Illustrated by Demi. *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*. New York: Atheneum, 1997.

This is another picture book biography of a traditional Japanese poet. This is the life of Basho, who lived and wrote haiku in Japan in the 1600s. The biographical prose is also interspersed with translated haiku (like the Issa book). The illustrations are beautifully done ink drawings on textured paper.

St. Mary's Catholic School Fourth Graders. *Haiku Hike*. New York: Scholastic, 2005.

These young writers won the Scholastic Kids Are Authors award. It is available through Scholastic Book Fairs. It starts with children on a hike who notice things in nature and write haiku about them. Field notes or facts are included about each natural item. Written and illustrated by fourth graders, it will inspire other young writers.

Wardlaw, Lee. Illustrated by Eugene Yelchin. *Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku*. New York: Henry Holt, 2011.

Much like *Dogku*, *Won Ton* is a story told in a series of haiku, also called senryu. It follows the journey of a cat from the animal shelter to a loving home. The silly antics of the cat will capture the young reader and the older reader will be fascinated how a whole story could be told through a senryu.

Witte, Mary K. *Redneck Haiku*. Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2003.

This is a small book with a collection of haiku all about rednecks. This is a funny collection that might be appreciated by older students and adults. Some content may not be appropriate for a younger audience.

Yolen, Jane. Photographs by Jason Stemple. *Least Things*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2003.

I love Jane Yolen because she is such a beautiful writer no matter what genre she writes in. This is no exception. She takes her son's stunning photographs of things in nature and writes haiku about them. Also included is factual information about the animal in the photograph. This is a feast for the eyes and the poet's heart.