



Haiku by Buson and Issa

Haiku is a form of brief poem that developed first in Japan and became a treasured part of Japanese culture. The classical form of haiku has three lines and seventeen syllables, five syllables in lines one and three; and seven in line two. Haiku often use images or scenes from everyday life and invite readers to experience or share a moment of discovery. Buson and Issa were two of the greatest haiku masters, Buson in the eighteenth century and Issa in the early nineteenth century.

Misty grasses,
quiet waters,
it's evening.

—Buson

Cover my head
or my feet?
the winter quilt.

—Buson

The owner of the field
goes to see how his scarecrow is
and comes back.

—Buson

Seen
through a telescope:
ten cents worth of fog.

—Issa

Even with insects—
some can sing,
some can't.

—Issa

A huge frog and I,
staring at each other,
neither of us moves.

—Issa

MAIN IDEAS

1. Haiku try to capture a single moment in time. Choose one of the haiku and describe that moment.
2. Haiku often describe an object or event in nature. What are some of the natural objects described in these haiku?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. **Making Inferences** Put yourself in place of the speaker in one of the poems. What do you do or say next?
4. **Synthesizing** The Japanese have preserved the haiku form for centuries. What does this tell you about Japanese culture?