

The Missouri Poet Laureate Haiku Project, January – May 2023

Guidelines, Tips, and Examples

Hi, everyone, I'm inviting you to participate in this statewide Haiku Project. It's open to anyone of any age in Missouri. I want everyone to write haiku and share them. You can submit up to three haiku poems to me, but you can create as many as you want in multiple ways. When you submit a poem to me, you automatically give me permission to publish it in any written or virtual form. If you post your own online, please use the hashtag #mopoetry so that we can see what you've posted. Send me your poems, your photos of your poems or your videos to wagnermaryfrances@gmail.com, and I'll try to add as many as I can to Facebook groups and other venues.

Tips on the Haiku

Many think haiku is strictly a 5-7-5 syllable pattern ending in a 17-syllable poem, and it can be that, but more important is the **image**. A haiku is the fewest words, one to three lines, that appeal to the senses and focus on nature. Haiku poems do not rhyme. I'm inviting all Missourians to write haiku poems that reflect nature in Missouri and share them, read them, or turn them into art. Some poems will be published on Facebook groups, some in tweets, some on printed cards we'll hand out around the state. You could help in that distribution as well!

When you write haiku, here are guidelines to follow for this project:

- 1. Use Imagery.** Appeal to senses and create an **image** the reader can see. Make the reader see what you see in a moment like a photograph.
- 2. Let it suggest a Missouri season without naming it:** a rosebud blossom, a red leaf, a crow on a bare branch, snow on a log, tadpoles in a pond.
- 3. Avoid abstraction or general words.** Don't explain anything. Don't use words like exciting, beautiful, scary, cosmic, fantastic, vast, etc. No ideas but in concrete things.
- 4. Make every word matter.** Use the fewest words.
- 5. Try more than one sense (optional).** Although a visual image puts the reader there, you can try to appeal to more than one sense. Make the reader **smell, feel, taste, or hear** something.
- 6. Zing (optional).** Many haiku have a little zing at the end, a turn that startles.

The goal is to spread poems all over the state and show how important poetry can be for the human spirit. You are not limited to haiku on paper. Post them on Facebook, on your front door, at your office, in your window. Post them around your city, neighborhood, parks, in store windows or anywhere you have permission to put them. Chalk them on sidewalks, hang them on trees, tape them to poles. Hand them out to friends, strangers, relatives, drop them into grocery bags, set them on store shelves, hand them out at concerts, sporting events, leave them on restaurant tables, under bill tabs, or give them as gifts. Text, tweet, or snail-mail them. Read them around a campfire or a firepit, type them, paint them, illustrate them, turn them into concrete poems, calligraphy, sculpture, or art pieces. Sing them, rap them, perform them in dance, at readings, on Zoom, on street corners, at festivals and parades, at parties, for friends. Take pictures or videos of what you produce, and I'll post as many as I can.

Get others to write haiku too. I hope schools, celebrities, writers, and athletes will help us out. You can help with that. I want to give everyone a voice. The project will culminate at the end of May with a Zoom event of poems we receive.

For more information, check the Missouri Poet Laureate Haiku Project website:
<http://tmplhp.fieldinfoserv.com>

Here are a few haiku samples:

Autumn moonlight—
a worm digs silently
into the chestnut.

Basho

The lamp once out
Cool stars enter
The window frame.

Basho

On the one-ton temple bell
a moonmoth, folded into sleep
sits still.

Buson

campfire extinguished
the woman washing dishes
in a pan of stars

Raymond Roseliep

One nub on this bush
has chosen to scratch awake
a cicada.

Steve Shireman (age 16)

A rabbit sprints
through icy night, finds his
feet warm from the run.

Suzy Latare (age 15)

winter dusk
the crows
clot the wind

*Olivia Babuka Black**

through the teeth
of the jack-o-lantern
the wind

*Addison Owen**

pawpaw thuds
toss scent
lure ants to the feast

Maryfrances Wagner

on hosta
the slug chews
a doily

Maryfrances Wagner

hearing the wren
the old woman sews its song
into the quilt

Frank Higgins

tornado warning
moths swirl at noon
around the streetlight

Frank Higgins

mums in an old truck
moonshine over the next hill
middle of nowhere

Scot D. Young

on closer look,
relief: only a red
shop towel in the street

Robert Stewart

watermelon flesh deep in summer

*Taz DePalma**

a lightning strike gives us a flower

*Rob Dingman**

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