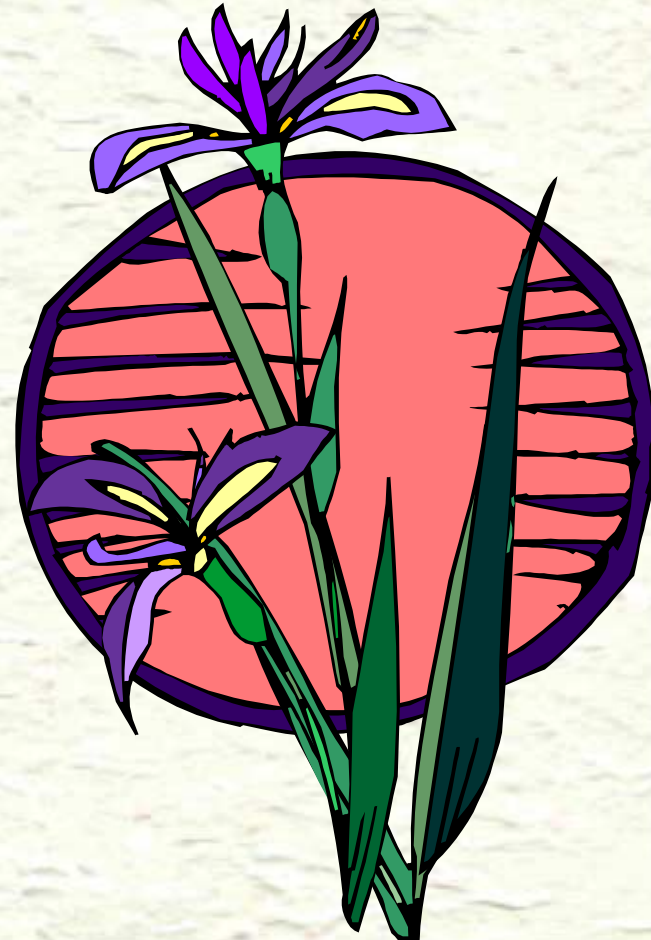


Matsuo Basho & Haiku

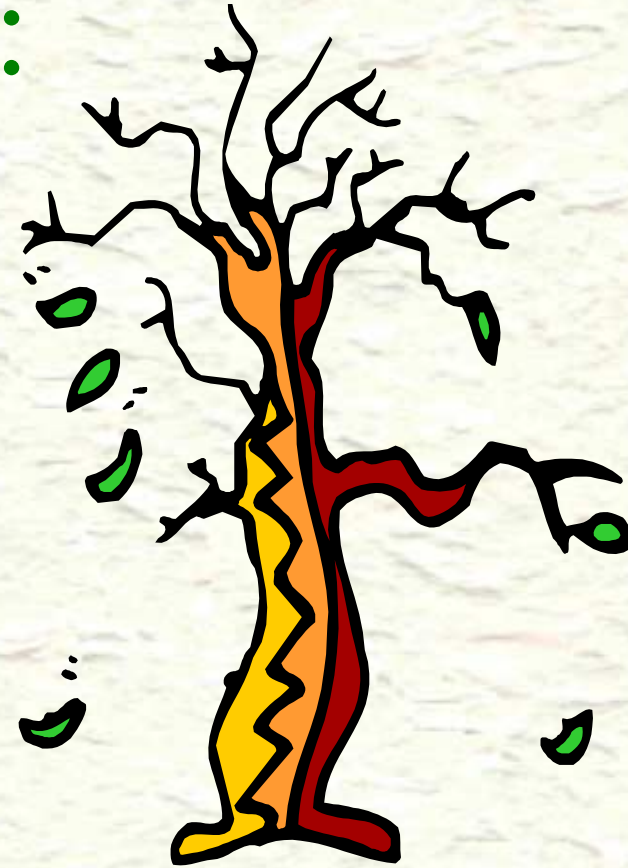
Kottie Christie-Blick
Cottage Lane School
New York



Basho lived in Japan in the 1600's
(around the time the pilgrims were
coming to America).



He created a form of poetry
called haiku:



Set off on a journey –

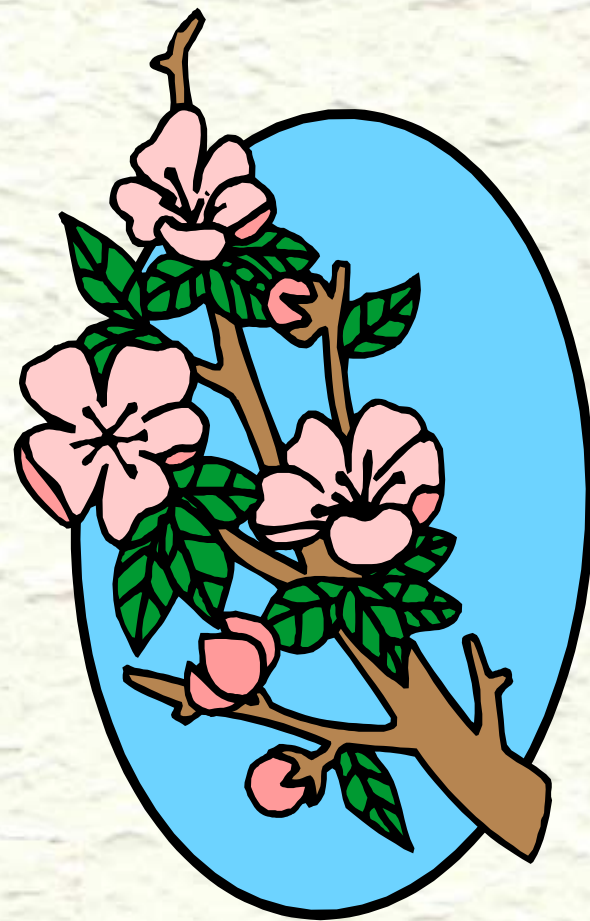
And then, one night

Take out my poems and understand...

The autumn wind

Ba^o

A haiku is very short.
If you read it only
once, or if you
read it too quickly,
you will miss its
beauty and its
importance.



As you read it, picture yourself as the poet, viewing the scene before you.



How does it make you feel?

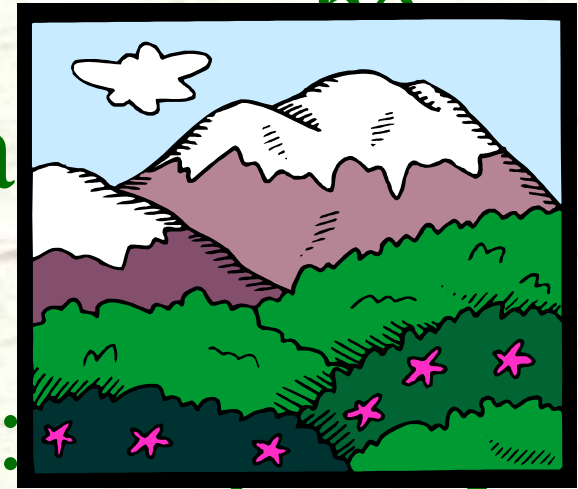
Of what does it remind you?



Basho traveled around Japan on foot and horseback.



“Wherever he went,
thought haiku,
taught haiku.
life was now his poetry:
was his life.” (Gill, 1999)



From a cloud base

Only fifty feet above,

Rain streaming down

On the spring willow...

🌧️ Basho



Basho was born to the samurai class,
but he gave up all his money to write
poetry and wander around Japan
teaching others.



He wrote over 1,000 haiku!

HAIKU

Often a poem with 17 syllables



First line has 5 syllables.



Second line has 7 syllables.



Third line has 5 syllables.

Remember that Basho wrote his poems in Japanese. The English translations of his poems are not always 17 syllables.

Many haiku written by others are not the traditional number of syllables. However, they usually follow the pattern:

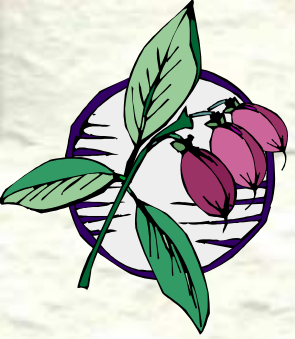
short line
longer line
short line



Just as it seems to fall
From the blade of grass,
Up the firefly flies!

↳ Basho





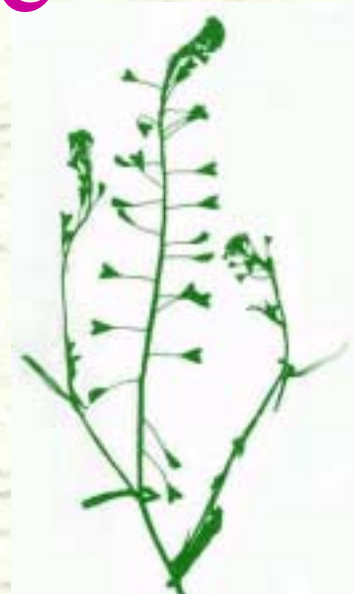
Haiku....

- catches a quick moment of thought.
- celebrates nature.
- shows appreciation for simple beauty.



Taking a close look –
In tiny white clusters,
Flowers of shepherd's purse
At the foot of the hedge

Basho



In the shepherd's purse poem, Basho notices a common white flower called a shepherd's purse. He encourages us to pay attention to every-day things – to see them and appreciate them.





Haiku...

- provides just a hint of the poet's experience. It is up to the reader to imagine the rest, based on his or her own experiences.



In Japan, people usually look forward to the first beautiful snowfall of the year.



You can imagine seeing the scene described in the next haiku.

It would fill you with pleasure.

The first snow –
Just enough
To bend
The narcissus leaves

 Basho



The beauty of the snow enhances the
beauty of the narcissus flower.

Objects in nature seem to
work together to create a
peaceful, enchanting scene.



Sometimes we see something beautiful and we want to capture its beauty in a poem.



Sometimes we read a poem and learn to see something as beautiful.



While some haiku focus inward on one small part of nature, others focus outward and capture an entire scene.



A dazzling magnificence –
The hillside aflame
With young leaves,
Green leaves
In the light of the sun

 Basho



When was the last time you really
looked at nature?



If you were to examine one plant
closely, what would your haiku
say?



Looking at nature – just one plant or an entire scene...

Writing haiku about what you see ...

Will make you feel peaceful inside.



Why don't you give it a try?

If you would like to share your haiku
with us, we would
LOVE to read it.

Just email it to us at school:

kchristieblick@socsd.org 

Please tell us the name of your school
and its location. Thank you.
Have fun!

Bibliography



Basho, Matsuo, *The Narrow Road to Oku*, English translation by Donald Keene, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1996.

Gill, Stephen and Andrew Gerstle editors, *Rediscovering Basho*, Global Oriental Ltd, UK, 1999.

Reichhold, Jane, *Writing and Enjoying Haiku*, Kodansha America Inc., New York, 2002.

Spivak, Dawnine, “Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho,” *McGraw-Hill Reading*, McGraw-Hill School Division, NY, 2001.