

# Haiku & Micro-Poetry — Workbook

This workbook turns the Haiku & Micro-Poetry course into hands-on writing and revision of your own short poems. Each section maps to a course module and pairs drafting exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists you can run against any poem in progress, plus editable templates for a personal season-word palette, a haiku draft-and-revision sheet, and a form-sorting log for haiku, senryu, and tanka. Work one section per module, keep a running draft file, and use the action plan to take one moment from observation to a finished, fully cut haiku.

## What Haiku Actually Is

Unlearn the 5-7-5 rule and ground yourself in image-first, one-breath writing modeled on the four masters.

### Exercise: Count What the Editors Print

Find five published haiku from a real journal such as *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, or *The Heron's Nest*, or from a Basho, Buson, Issa, or Shiki collection. Write each one out and count its English syllables. Note how many hit a strict 5-7-5 and how many run shorter. Then write three haiku of your own aiming for roughly ten to fourteen syllables, short-long-short, ignoring the seventeen-syllable rule entirely.

- What was the syllable range of the five you counted, and how many were a strict 5-7-5?
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- Which of your three drafts felt padded when you tried to reach seventeen, and what did you cut?
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- Which master's mode (Basho's depth, Buson's eye, Issa's warmth, Shiki's realism) does each draft lean toward?

### Exercise: Show, Don't Tell, Rewrite

Write down three flat statements that name an emotion directly, for example I felt lonely at the station or the morning was peaceful. For each, throw away the emotion word and write only the concrete scene that produced it, something you could photograph. Let the feeling arrive through the image alone.

- Which named emotion was hardest to replace with a pure image, and what detail finally carried it?
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- Did any rewrite accidentally smuggle the feeling back in as an adjective, and how did you remove it?
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- Read each rewrite to someone: did they feel the emotion without being told it?

### Worksheet: One-Breath Diagnostic Sheet

Fill this in for one draft to test whether it is a true haiku or a short lyric in disguise.

The draft, written out in full

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English syllable count (total)

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The single concrete image at its center

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Any named emotion or abstraction present (and the image that should replace it)

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Can it be said in one breath? (yes / no)

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Which master's mode it most resembles

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One word that could be cut without losing the moment

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### Checklist: Image-First Check

- I am counting syllables only as a rough guide, not as the rule that defines the poem
- The poem shows a concrete scene rather than naming a feeling
- I have cut most adjectives and nearly all adverbs
- Nothing in the poem reads like a greeting-card caption
- The whole thing can be spoken in roughly one breath

### The Season Word: Kigo and the Saijiki

Anchor every poem in a specific, lived season through one well-chosen concrete detail.

### Exercise: Lived-Season Inventory

Go outside, or to a window, right now and spend ten minutes recording only what tells you the season: light, smell, sound, temperature, what people are wearing, what plants and animals are doing. Write at least eight concrete details. Resist borrowing classical imagery you have not seen; record only what is actually in front of you, in the spirit of Shiki's shasei, sketching from life.

- Which detail most surprised you as a season marker once you noticed it?

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- Which saijiki category (sky, earth, daily life, animals, plants) did you almost forget to look at?

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- Which one detail is fresh enough that you have never seen it in a poem before?

### Worksheet: Single-Kigo Build Sheet

Take one season detail from your inventory and build a haiku outward from it.

The season word or detail (one only)

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Its season and saijiki category

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The cluster of associations it carries for you (mood, memory, sensation)

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A second image to set against it (from a different sense or scale)

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The drafted haiku

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Check: is there exactly one season cue, with no competing second season word?

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## Exercise: Swap the Cliche

Write a haiku deliberately using a worn season word such as cherry blossom, autumn leaves, or falling snow. Then rewrite it twice, each time replacing the cliche with a fresher season detail from your own palette that carries a similar mood. Compare the three versions aloud.

- Which fresher detail kept the original mood but felt more particular and earned?

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• Did removing the cliche force you to change the second image too? Why?

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• Which version would you actually submit, and what makes it the strongest?

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## Checklist: Season-Anchor Check

- ] The poem contains exactly one clear seasonal anchor
- ] The season detail is one I have actually observed, not borrowed
- ] There are no two competing season words confusing the time of year
- ] The season cue is true to my own climate and hemisphere
- ] Removing the season word would collapse the poem (proof it is doing real work)

## Juxtaposition and the Cut

Build each poem as two images across a clean cut, and choose pairings that make the reader re-see.

### Exercise: Fragment-and-Phrase Drill

Using Jane Reichhold's method, write five fragments (single concrete images, often a season word) in one column and five phrases (a separate image or small action, two lines each) in another. Then pair them across the columns, trying non-obvious matches. Mark the cut between fragment and phrase with a dash, colon, or ellipsis. Keep the best three pairings.

- Which fragment-phrase pairing sparked the strongest sense of a gap to leap?

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• Did any pairing run as one continuous sentence by accident? How did you break it back into two parts?

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• Where did you place the cut in your best poem, after line one or line two, and why?

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### Exercise: Too Close, Too Far, Just Right

Pick one strong first image. Write three second images to pair with it: one that is too close (means nearly the same thing), one that is too far (no possible relation), and one in the resonant middle (unlike on the surface but secretly related). Keep only the resonant pairing and finish it as a haiku.

- Why did the too-close pairing feel redundant, and the too-far one feel random?

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• What hidden likeness or tension does your resonant pairing reveal?

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• Does the second image make you re-see the first? If the link explains itself, how did you make it more oblique?

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## Worksheet: Cut-and-Lineation Sheet

Fill this in to control where the pause and the cut fall in one poem.

Part one (the fragment / image)

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Part two (the phrase / second image or action)

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Cutting mark used (dash, colon, ellipsis, or clean grammatical break)

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Where the cut lands (after line 1 / after line 2)

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The poem set as three lines (short-long-short)

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The same poem set as a single line (monoku)

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Which version delivers the pause and cut more cleanly, and why

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### Checklist: Two-Part Structure Check

- The poem is built from two parts, not one continuous sentence
- There is a clear cut, marked by punctuation or a grammatical break
- The two images are neither too close (redundant) nor too far (random)
- The link between the images is implicit, left for the reader to complete
- Read aloud, I feel a pause at the cut and a small jump between the images

## Senryu, Tanka, and Brevity as Craft

Sort your short poems into the right form and revise each down to only its necessary words.

### Exercise: Haiku or Senryu Sort

Write four short three-line poems from everyday life: two centered on nature and the season, two centered on human behavior, relationships, or social comedy. Then label each as haiku or senryu based on its center of gravity, using the focus test: nature and season point to haiku, human psychology and comedy point to senryu. Let the senryu be funny or wry.

- Which poem sat on the border, and which way did you finally label it and why?

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- Did any nature poem secretly turn out to be about people (or the reverse)?

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- Which senryu earned a real laugh or flash of recognition, and what concrete detail did the work?
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### Exercise: Grow a Haiku into a Tanka

Take one finished haiku and add two more lines, roughly 7-7, that turn from the outer image toward inner feeling, memory, or reflection. Reshape the third line so it works as a pivot: it should finish the image above and open the reflection below. Allow stated emotion and the word I, which haiku usually forbids.

- Does your middle line truly face both directions, completing the image and starting the reflection?

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- What feeling or memory did the two extra lines let you say that the haiku could not hold?

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- Did the poem genuinely want to be a tanka, or was the haiku already complete on its own?
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### Worksheet: Revise-by-Subtraction Sheet

Run one wordy draft through deletion until nothing more can be removed.

Original draft and its word count

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Articles removed (the, a) and whether the line survived

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Adjectives and adverbs cut (keep only the indispensable one or two)

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Any line that named or explained the emotion, now deleted

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Redundant words in part two that merely echoed part one, now cut

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Any abstract word replaced with the concrete thing that produced it

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Final version and its word count (aim for at least three fewer words)

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### Checklist: Finished-Poem Check

- Every remaining word is load-bearing; removing any one would lose something necessary
- I have cut the concluding line that explained the feeling
- There is no abstract word left where a concrete image belongs
- The poem is labeled correctly as haiku, senryu, or tanka
- It is finished because nothing more can be removed, not because nothing more can be added

### Your Action Plan

1. Read ten published haiku from Modern Haiku, Frogpond, or The Heron's Nest and count their syllables to retire the 5-7-5 rule.
2. Build a four-column season-word palette from your own life using the saijiki categories, at least eight entries per season.
3. Carry a pocket notebook for one week and record one raw seasonal observation each day, sketching from life.
4. Pick your single strongest observation and identify its one clear season anchor.
5. Find a second image from a different sense or scale and test the pairing: too close, too far, or resonant.
6. Build the poem as fragment plus phrase, and place a clean cut after line one or line two.
7. Set it as three short lines (short-long-short), then test it as a single-line monoku and keep the better shape.
8. Revise by subtraction: cut articles, adjectives, explanation, and redundancy until nothing more can be removed.
9. Decide whether it is a haiku, a senryu, or wants to grow into a five-line tanka, and label it.
10. Submit one finished poem to a journal or contest, or share it for feedback, and start the next from a new observation.









