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Haiku Research

Haiku is a form of poetry that was invented in Japan. Today it consists of a 3 phrase model. Each phrase can be any word or words but they have to follow a particular number of syllables to be a haiku. The order of syllables is 5 then 7 then 5 again. But it is not just as simple as that. Haikus are an interesting part of poetry for everyone. First there are special words that are used to make haikus genuine. Second is the history and knowledge of a famous person in Japanese history that has influenced the haiku many years ago. Last is the overall picture of haikus and what they might mean to people today. An original haiku must have some form of traditional style of language called Kigo and Kireji.

First, Kigo is a style of words that correspond to the seasons and have specific feelings as well. For example, if the haiku expresses spring time the words might refer to youth, innocence or infatuation. Fall depicts words that are mysterious or even paranormal with regret and also loss to name a few. Kireji is a structural word that holds the haiku together. Kireji are specific in where they are placed in a haiku. They are mostly located at the ends of the phrases. This helps separate and contrast different feeling and or concepts the haiku is about. To the Japanese culture, Kigo and Kireji is an essential part of the haiku and its Japanese identity. For us westerners it is not as enforced when making haikus because the haiku is still a free form of expression no matter where you are from. Although haikus are still very popular today they started very long ago and one specific famous person made a huge impact.

Second, a man named Matsuo Basho was born in 1644 in Japan. This was considered the Edo period in Japan and he was from a town called Ueno which now is a part of the illustrious Tokyo megacity. He was mainly known for starting a haiku form that consisted of a collaborative form of writing. One person would write the first verse of a poem then a second person would write the second and so on. The verses back then were not the simple 3 verse (phrase) model, but more something like 14 to 17 verses, which eventually turned in to today's haiku. Basho was well educated and received great honors in literature through the Edo area but he finally gave up

on an urban lifestyle and became a wanderer. He would continue to write poetry and was recognized for his simple and natural style of writing. At around age 45, Basho decided to go on a long journey with an apprentice. The journey would take him to the northernmost parts of the main island the west and down along the coast back home. It took him 2 years to complete and during that time he wrote many haikus that are considered his finest works of his career. He died not long after in 1694 at the age of 50 but his legacy of writing poetry was forever remembered. A book was published in 1702 that was called *Oku no Hosomichi* which means, *The Narrow Road to the Interior*. Unfortunately it was published after his death but became a great success.

Lastly, haikus have inspired many poets over the years and gave a rich form of art and poetry styles within the Japanese culture. People today get incredible feelings and meaning from reading different works of haikus and can create an appreciation to Japanese literature once people understand.

Overall, the lesson learned from doing this research is that haikus are not that simple but invoke fascinating language that makes sense in a small but powerful way. The famous poet, Matsuo Basho, is considered one of the most influential person that started haikus and his works are still in print today. This research has me more curious on the history and culture of Japanese literature in general and helps motivate me to learn more.