

Observation & Analysis: Haiku

A **haiku** is a type of Japanese poetry traditionally inspired by nature but can be about several topics. Haikus have three lines and are noted for their 5-7-5 syllabic style, where the first line has five syllables, the second has seven, and the last, like the first, has five.

Line 1: 5 syllables

Line 2: 7 syllables

Line 3: 5 syllables

scent of orange blossoms: haiku

by *Teresa Mei Chuc*

scent of orange blossoms –
memories of my late grandma
who planted this tree

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/148341/scent-of-orange-blossoms-haiku-senryu>

Poets have used haiku to express their observations about artwork. Haiku might focus on works' shape and form, color, imagery, or texture. For inspiration, see The Getty's resource, *11 Haiku to Teach Kids about Art*.

Observe and analyze colors, lines, shapes, patterns, imagery, and other features that lend an artwork its uniqueness. Choose a piece that appeals to you and decide which element—shape and form, color, texture, etc.—you'd like to focus on in your haiku. Remember to follow the haiku structure outlined.

Social, Political, & Historical Moment: Narrative Poem

A **narrative poem** is a poem which tells a story. Like traditional stories, narrative poems feature elements such as characters, plot, conflict, setting, and resolution.

Consider the example to the right:

I, Too

By Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47558/i-too>

In "I, Too" by Langston Hughes, an African American man who appears to be a domestic servant asserts that though he's been ostracized and made to feel inferior in America, he is as American as anyone. In this poem, the speaker has a "message" for the world. This message alludes to racial segregation during the early twentieth century, when African Americans faced widespread discrimination, including being forced to live, work, eat, and travel separately from white Americans as well as having to contend with economic hardships.

Look into the social, political, and historical identity of an artwork and/or artist you find tells a story. Considered how these factors shaped the development of the art you see, including the process of making, materials, and appearance.

Borrowing from the structure of "I, Too"—the first person voice, especially—write a message poem from the point of view of the artist you chose to research, making sure to touch on at least one aspect of social, political, or historical identity.

Reflection & Connection: Rhythmic Poem

A **rhythmic poem** is identified through the stressed and unstressed patterns of words. Often, each line of the poem has one stressed syllable and one or two unstressed syllables. There may also be a rhyme scheme.

Consider the example to the right:

We Real Cool
THE POOL PLAYERS.
SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

By Gwendolyn Brooks

We real cool. We
 Left school. We

Lurk late. We
 Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
 Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
 Die soon.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/28112/we-real-cool>

In “We Real Cool,” Brooks employs the communal voice of a group of rebellious teenagers she once spotted playing pool during school hours. Through stressed repetition of the word *we* and rhyming couplets—*cool* and *school*; *late* and *straight*, for example—Brooks creates something like a chant or song that might be recited by her subjects.

Choose an artwork that has a lyrical quality for you. Following the structure of “We Real Cool”—the repetition of “*we*” and rhyming couplets—write a rhythmic poem that explores the artwork you chose; something that might be sung for an audience.