

Haiku Hike

By: Judy Rose Sensibar

Education level: K-12

Genre: Poetry

Time frame: 50 minutes

Objective: Learn to write a haiku and how to count syllables. Remind ourselves where, when and with whom we feel a sense of belonging.

Prior knowledge and skills: None

Required materials: Pencils, paper, and equipment to project computer files on a large screen

Literary model: photograph and haiku by Enrique Aldana

Sequence of Activities:

1. Tell students there is a contest each year and if selected, they can have their poems on display outside downtown. Every year there is a theme for the poems; this year it is “Belonging.” Show students how their words might look if their poems are picked. The links below include information and photos from the 2025 Haiku Hike:

<https://downtowntucson.org/events/haiku-hike>

<https://downtowntucson.org/events/haiku-hike/photos-haiku-hike-2025>

(5 minutes)

2. Tell students, that before they focus on the structure of the poem, that it’s more freeing, especially because of the very constrained form of the haiku, to begin with the content and not worry about the form. Ask students to make some lists, divided by these three categories, of what “People, Places, and Thing” make them feel good. Call this their “Belonging Chart.” (15 minutes)

People

Places

Things

After this, ask students to “imagine a scene -- with some of these people, places and things -- where you feel comfortable.”

Where might this be?

- Your house? Which rooms?
- School? Which class/space?
- After school?
- What are you doing in these spaces? Why makes it feel like you “belong” there?

Another way to describe a sense of belonging:

Think of a place where you feel safe, or how you feel especially connected when doing a certain activity.

3. After students feel comfortable with the theme and have plenty of specifics to choose from, introduce the haiku structure, 3 lines: (5 minutes)

First line: 5 syllables

Second line: 7 syllables

Third line: 5 syllables

Show them this example, by local writer Enrique Aldana, with the accompanying photograph. Count the syllables out together; have students use their fingers to count. Many students seem to have been taught to clap out the syllables, but this doesn't allow them to count them, which is necessary to do for a haiku.

*A Curve-billed thrasher
Nesting with eggs in the brush
Nature's new chapter*



5. Give students time to work and encourage them to tap out their lines using their fingers. Also encourage strong verbs, alliteration, and rhyming -- always a bonus! (15 minutes)

6. Students might want to share their work and hear their peers' haiku. If, at first, they are shy to read aloud, perhaps offer these examples below, by 7th and 8th graders from Safford K-8 School. (10 minutes)

Riding my scooter,

Feels like flying in the air

No more worrying

- *Kratos*

Light and colorful

Quiet and calm all day long

Cozy and pink bed

- *Nyla*

Home is a good place,

But school has this warm feeling,

‘Cause friends give comfort.

- *Ruben*

Mist on evergreen

With vast mountains and large trees

This is where I'm from

- *Aash*

The court is my home

They all call me MJ's clone

I was born to ball

- *Andrew*

I'm at my Grandma's

Full of joy because I'm here

She is my best friend

- *Andre*

Cleats on, time to shine

Mindset clear, my chance is here

Everyone locked in

- *Jorge*