

Write an Autumn *Haiku* 俳句

THE JAPANESE HOUSE ACTIVITIES



Write a haiku inspired by autumn nature scenes, especially the full moon.

1. Learn about *Tsukimi* and *Haiku*

People in Japan say that the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar, which usually falls in late September or early October, is the most beautiful full moon of the year. People call it “the marvelous moon of the mid-autumn.” Because it occurs during the harvest season, people celebrate it by setting out autumn harvest foods such as fruits, soybeans, sweet potatoes, and special rice dumplings as offerings to the moon. Often, people gather in parks or on the grounds of temples or shrines for an evening moon-viewing festival, called *tsukimi* or *o-tsukimi*.

Another way to celebrate the moon is to write *haiku*. *Haiku* is a form of traditional poetry and has been practiced in Japan for hundreds of years. A *haiku* has a total of 17 syllables, divided into three lines of five, seven, and five syllables. Often, the language used refers to the human senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste) or to movement. Each *haiku* should have at least one *kigo*—a specific word that references the season. The *kigo* could be the month or the name of the season, but it can also be something associated with the season, like “snow” for winter or “firefly” for summer.



TIME:

20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- *Haiku* activity sheet
- Markers, crayons, pencils, and colored pencils

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Tsukimi: *Tsu-key-me*

Haiku: *Ha-ee-coo*

Kigo: *Key-go*

2. Write a *Haiku*

1. *Haiku* are traditional Japanese poems with the following rules:
 - Haiku* have 3 lines and 17 syllables.
 - The first line is 5 syllables, the second is 7, and the third is 5.
 - Each *haiku* should have at least one word that refers to the season.
 - Haiku* don't have to rhyme.
2. Look for inspiration in the natural world—the park, your backyard, the sky, anywhere!
3. Write your *haiku* and decorate.

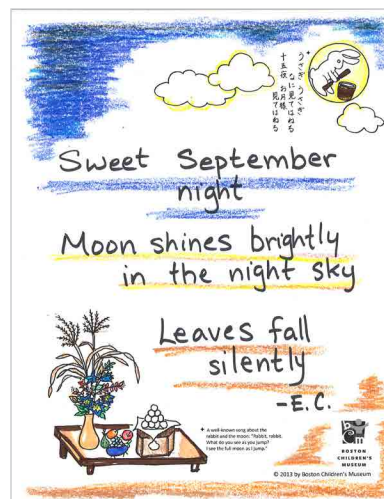
Example *haiku*:

Oh lunar lapin
Make your mochi sweet and full
Soon is the harvest

Under glowing sky
I contemplate in silence
Rabbit on the moon

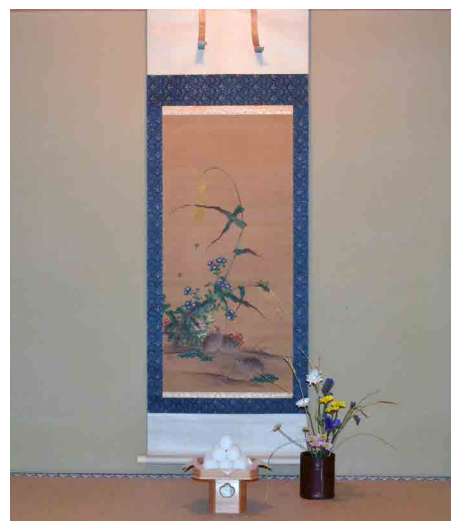
Mighty autumn oaks
Release their ripened acorns
I need a hard hat

Sweet September moon
Beautiful, bright, and orange
Hanging low and large

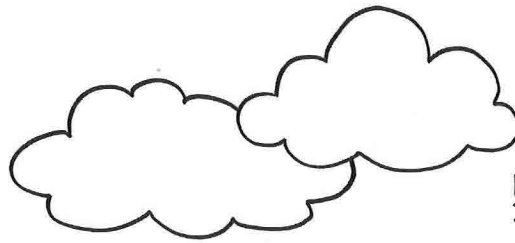


3. Things to Talk about

- *Haiku* is a famous form of Japanese poetry. Do you know the names of any types of English poems?
- Children in Japan can clearly see a rabbit on the face of the moon. When you look up at the moon, what can you see on its face?
- If you're interested in learning more about Japan and the moon, try these books:
 - *The Bamboo Princess (Kaguya Hime)*, Kamishibai for Kids
 - “*The Rabbit in the Moon*” in *Japanese Children’s Favorite Stories*, Tuttle Publishing



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うさぎ うさぎ
なに 見 て は ね る
十五夜 お月様
見 て は ね る



The Japanese text above is a well-known Japanese children's song about the rabbit and the moon.
Usagi, usagi. Nani mite haneru? Jugoya o-tsuki-sama mite haneru. Translation: Rabbit, rabbit. What do you see as you jump? I see the full moon as I jump.