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.

Write a haiku inspired by autumn nature scenes, especially the full moon.
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
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
The Japanese text above is a well-known Japanese children's song about the rabbit and the moon.