



*An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again*

*Haiku
Matsuo Basho*

Painting by Nigel Radcliffe

Capturing Moments with Haikus

Nisa Reyta

Sometimes writing a lengthy poem that evokes emotions can be a challenge. However, can you imagine placing these emotions into merely three lines and seventeen syllables? Surprisingly, it has been done since the 17th century in Japanese literature, where it first emerged. This form of poetry is known as haiku.

For those unaware, it is amusing—perhaps even shocking—to find out that three lines is considered a form of poetry. Despite being brief, it spares no expense in capturing the beauty of nature and bringing it to life in readers' minds.

The haiku displays the Japanese aesthetic of minimalism, views of nature and principles of Zen. It concisely portrays our physical world, yet, much more deeply, it allows us to have an intimate image of a moment we often miss.

This is exemplified in 'The Old Pond', a famous haiku made by Matsuo Basho, who is a pioneer of this form of poetry. Its powerful imagery, written in a limited 17 syllabic pat-

tern, does not fail to present the readers with a compelling account of a natural and commonplace event as we can see below.

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

The old pond by Matsuo Basho

Translated by Harry Behn

‘The Old Pond’ successfully achieves its purpose in giving readers a sensorial experience by contrasting a serene moment of the pond with its disruption when a frog leaps into the water. Yet, the old pond returns to its calm, as if nothing had touched its surface.

Today, haikus are beloved around the world. So what are the definitive rules of writing one? Here are the basic rules of writing a traditional haiku:

- 1) A haiku is composed of only three lines.
- 2) It follows the 5-7-5 structure; the first line, as well as the last, consists of 5 syllables, while the second line is with 7 syllables.
- 3) It does not have to rhyme.
- 4) It describes a moment of time taking place in nature.

Haikus are not only enjoyable to read, but they are also enjoyable to write. Sometimes the rush of life does not allow us to appreciate the beauty in our surroundings. Every once in a while, take time to embrace details that we frequently overlook in our restless lives. So why not take up the challenge and write a haiku yourself? Who knows? Maybe you could be the next Matsuo Basho!