

Writing Haiku

Use this simple form of poetry to capture nature

Great for...

- **English language** appreciation of poetry and descriptive vocabulary

Activity

- 1 Discuss how images are used to portray a feeling or moment in time. For example, instead of 'in the winter' words such as snow, ice or cold could be used. Outside, choose an area of your school grounds. Split the class into three groups and ask them to think about what they can see, hear, feel and taste at the moment and come up with a list of words to capture this. Then ask them to imagine the same area in an other season.
- 2 Choose a number of features in the grounds and get each group to come up with a line that could describe it – for example, *the tree, the giant tree, the gnarled giant tree, the gnarled giant tree in the quiet corner.*
- 3 Explain that Haikus capture a sense of surprise. Take the class's favourite line from the previous activity and practice altering the ending – for example,
 - *The gnarled, giant tree
in the quiet corner,
cradles a ladybird asleep.*
 - *The gnarled, giant tree
in the quiet corner,
winces at the 3 o'clock bell.*
 - *The gnarled, giant tree
in the quiet corner,
hears the whispered secret.*Do this as a class to start with, then in pairs and then individually – you could ask the children to decide their own endings or have trigger words such as 'winter', 'summer', 'happy', 'sad', 'lonely', etc to help them.
- 4 Ask them to spend time on their own in a spot and pay attention to what is going on around them – the sights, sounds, smells etc that they can see and hear. Ask them to focus on anything that surprises them – and to look carefully at the smallest detail. After 10 minutes come back together as a group and encourage them to share anything they found surprising. Give them time to create their own poems in pairs based on the descriptions of what they found surprising.

What you need

- **A number of Haikus** printed out or in a book that can be passed round. Try for example, *Asian Arts and Crafts for Creative Kids: Haiku Activities* by Patricia Donegan (Tuttle Publishing) ISBN 0-8048-3501-2.
- **Flip chart or white boards** for recording.

Preparation

- Introduce Haikus and discuss what makes them different to other forms of poetry. They are short, simple poems – usually three lines long – that should be recited in just one breath to capture a passing moment (unlike traditional Japanese Haikus they do not need to have a strict syllable count as this can destroy the effect of a passing moment).
- Ask each child to read a Haiku out loud – this won't take long as they are so short!

Less challenging

- Have pre-prepared Haikus about your school grounds with a number of the lines/words missing for them to fill in.

More challenging

- Ask the pupils to write their own Haiku.

Your notes

Use this space to evaluate the activity



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