

The Tokutomi Memorial Haiku Contest

This contest is for English language haiku written in the traditional form in three lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables. Each poem is required to contain one and only one season word from an assigned list. The poets chose from among the following kigo:

New Year:

champagne corks, first calm

Spring:

bee, artichoke

Summer:

toad, mid-summer rain

Autumn:

rattlesnake grass, Halloween

Winter:

lamenting owl, winter camellia

HONORABLE MENTION

into a wee hour- / the cork from resealed champagne / enters the stillness

D. Claire Gallagher

champagne corks popping / gushing into the morning—/ Yosemite Falls

Paul Gaskins

popping champagne corks / the diner waitress still wears / last year's tiara

Wendy Wright

first calm, just at dusk / across the far off mountain / a golden light streams

June Hopper Hymas

first calm. The silence / cannot cancel the photos / of roadside bomb dead

June Hopper Hymas

plucking artichokes / from an unfinished pizza, / the homeless children

Michael Dylan Welch

mid-summer rain storm... / our police daughter salutes / her captain's coffin

Kay F. Anderson

in a little lull / between mid-summer rain squalls / I take out the trash

An'ya

ancient adobe / only several bricks high—/ a mid-summer rain

D. Claire Gallagher

a mid-summer rain- / happiness in the first time / the fish-bobber sinks

Francis Masat

deep in the rowboat / after a midsummer rain—/ osprey's reflection

Mara Mills

mother's pots and pans / forgotten in the sand box—/ a mid-summer rain

Michael Dylan Welch

in mid-summer rain / suddenly remembering / this sea-smell, rain-smell

Wendy Wright

a toad takes the sun / at the edge of the chasm / my long dream of peace

June Hopper Hymas

toad at the path's edge / sounds of the surging river / carry me away

June Hopper Hymas

Halloween windstorm / bits of twigs and sticks skitter / across the sidewalk

June Hopper Hymas

the soldier's mother / switches off the nightly news / winter camellia

June Hopper Hymas

vacant eyes flicker / with fugitive memory / winter camellia

Jean Rasey

each blemish concealed / with a dusting of her brush—/ winter camellias

Wendy Wright

Contest Judges

Naoki Kishimoto, born in 1961 in Okayama Prefecture. Inspired by Ryunosuke Akutagawa's haiku, he began writing haiku in junior high school. As a student at Tokyo University, he joined haiku groups led by Tetsuo Kosada, Akito Arima, and Seison Yamaguchi. He won the Shinjinsho ("New Voice") Award from the Association of Haiku Poets (Haijin Kyokai) in 1995. He has published three haiku collections, *Keito (Cockscomb*, 1986), *Shun* (name of an ancient Chinese king, 1994) and *Kentan (Healthy Appetite*, 1999), as well as two books of essays on haiku. He is a leading member of the Ten'i ("Providence"), Yane ("Roof"), and Yu haiku groups. His writing, following the traditional style, is known for its simplicity and plainness.

Yoko Senda, born in 1962, began writing haiku when she was fifteen. As a student at the University of Tokyo, she joined *Aki* ("Autumn") haiku group led by the late Yatsuka Ishihara as well as a haiku seminar led by Tetsuo Kosada. She joined Akito Arima's *Ten'i* ("Providence") haiku group when it was established in 1990. She has published two haiku collections, *Hashi no anata ni (Beyond the Bridge*, 1991), and *Kumo wa ohkan (Crown Cloud*, 1999), and is a coauthor of *Jyuuni no gendai haijin ron (Twelve Essays on Modern Haiku Poets*, 2005), in which she writes about Ishihara. She is also a member of the Association of Haiku Poets, and the Japan Writer's Association.

The contest committee and judges congratulate the winners and express their appreciation to everyone who participated.

Cover art: "Winter Trees," brush painting by Patricia J. Machmiller.

Yuki Teikei Haiku Society

Tokutomi Memorial Haiku Contest 2006



Judged by

Yoko Senda

Naoki Kishimoto

The Tokutomi Memorial Haiku Contest 2006

Prize Winning Haiku

Judges' Comments

First Prize - \$100

**Halloween twilight
Again this year my son waits
Alone by the door**

Roberta Beary

Why doesn't this boy join his friends to visit others? Who is he waiting for alone? If he is waiting for visitors, he is inside the door, maybe he is sick or something, and cannot go outside again this year. If he is waiting for his parents, is it an example of an everyday problem of too busy parents? Though various situations can be assumed, this haiku never tells one truth...just the image of a lonesome boy at twilight. (NK)

This haiku may portray a lonely boy in the Halloween twilight, but it can be interpreted in another way: the boy has been dead for years, and has returned home on Halloween night to see his family. Halloween, which originated in Ireland as the pagan Celtic Samhain (Harvest) Festival, was believed to be a special occasion for the dead to revisit this world, and the author has seen the ghost of his or her poor boy waiting "alone by the door" to be found "again this year" by his family. The intent of the author is not necessarily clear, but this haiku changes into a poem of never-ending lament according to this interpretation.

The haiku presented below is another interesting haiku about Halloween. Its vivid description reminds me of the Halloween night that I experienced in the United States.

*Halloween windstorm / bits of twigs and sticks
skitter / across the sidewalk*
June Hopper Hymas

Second Prize - \$50

**a mid-summer rain
the clearness of sea water
in the shore stone's bowl**
Carolyn Thomas

This haiku portrays only "sea water in the shore stone's bowl" with "mid-summer rain" drops. It is an extremely small world, but is astonishingly beautiful. The clear sea water is delicately waving with repeated rain drops as if subtle music such as pieces of Debussy or Ravel were heard. It is a very sensuous poem. The sea water reflecting the grey sky may be a symbol of the essence of this world, nothingness or vacuity, according to a more religious interpretation. (YS)

This haiku gives a simple view of the seashore. It has neither verb nor tense, so it could be anytime. Its words are simple and therefore open-ended. It could possibly remind readers of any seaside they have seen. This is the scene I have in mind: a mid-summer rain falls all around. Maybe there is a slight smell of the sea and the sound of waves and rain continues on. A sudden perception of clearness dawns in the sight of the rainy shore. The sea water left in a hollow of stone stays clear in the rain. That clearness must be the essence of the sea in summer. (NK)

The following haiku is also appealing as a haiku on mid-summer rain due to its humor.

*in a little lull / between mid-summer rain squalls /
I take out the trash*

An'ya

Third Prize - \$25

**a lamenting owl
is darkening the forest
aged lovers kiss**

D. Claire Gallagher

Hearing and sight mingle together in this haiku. An owl's hoot is deepening the darkness of the forest. Otherwise the silence of the forest contrasts the owl's note. As in Basho's haiku of cicada, the sound of nature emphasizes the silence around. Within the image of the dark and silent forest, aged lovers kiss. "Aged" suggests their intimacy and calm love: cozy little place in the darkening world. (NK)

By means of synesthesia, Basho felt whiteness in the quacking of ducks on the sea. Likewise, the author found blackness in the hooting of an owl in the forest. It is a wonder that auditory and visual senses are mysteriously fused! "Aged" is an appropriate word for a thick forest that has continued to grow for hundreds of years and has included many decayed trees as well as for an old couple in the twilight of life. Their love has matured. It won't be long before they die hand in hand, but they are enjoying the present moment, filled with the aroma of the forest as a cradle of life and death. Isn't it a sheer bliss! (YS)