

The Weekly Avocet - #687

February 1st, 2026

Hello to our Poets and Nature-lovers of The Avocet community:

**the sun is bright
snow cover is shrinking--
sound of dripping water**

Jack Maze



Submitted by Edwina Kadera

The Long Gone

The sweetest sounds I never heard,
are those of long-gone birds.

No one made a squawk
when someone killed the last Great Auk.

Many pigeons gave their life,
to feed some city folks with fork and knife.

The Carolina Parakeet with feathers so green,
was gone in 1918, never more to be seen.

The Heath Hen was gone before I was born,
It's just another bird we can mourn.

The largest woodpecker ever found,
The Imperial is no longer around.

The Ion Swap with woods so fine,
was where the Bachman's Warbler did find.

But houses they did have to make,
so, the woods they did take.

The Ivory-billed they thought was refound,
has obviously gone to ground.

The Labrador Duck was last seen 1878,
another bird had met his fate.

Eskimo Curlews were killed by the millions,
'til there were few. They were last seen in 1962.

The sounds I wish I could have heard,
Are from those long-gone birds.

As I sit and think about those on the brink,
I wonder which one will be the next to sink.

Thomas V. Heatley - Harrisville, MI - tvheatley@yahoo.com

Human nature is destroying Mother Nature

“Here is the letter from the Audubon Society that was included in their newsletter along with the poem. Thomas V. Heatley has been a part of Audubon Society for years. He has taken part in banding young eagles in the nest and for the last ten years has taken photos of birds in the wild for articles in the newsletter.” - Carol Farnsworth

A Note from the editor of the Audubon Society:

“What you’re about to read is a poignant poem written by our member and dear friend, Tom Heatley. As one of my birding mentors, Tom has always told me something like, “There are a finite number of you can see, but an infinite number of birds you can share with others.” That quote always stuck with me, exemplifying what joy there is in watching beauty surrounding them. Most of the time, birding brings joy and this uplifting sense. However, there is a sad side to birding which Tom touches on here, the side that witnesses loss, habitat destruction, and rapidly shrinking wild spaces. While I know folks like Tom and I will always see the beauty and the good, it’s important to bring awareness to the loss as well. Perhaps we can be moved when we read Tom’s words. Perhaps we can care enough to help the world change. Without further ado, his poem The Long Gone.”

If we fail the sky will be empty in the next century...

A Different View

The view from space shows a jewel of a world.
Coral reefs sparkle under deep blue seas.
Golden sand dunes in the Sahara .
Photos have shown the top of the world looking
down the Himalayas glowing in the sun.
But man is callus in the use of this planet.
Burning rain forests to gain farmland.
Drilling to find all the petroleum from the land.
Floating miles of plastic and debris.
Looking closer from the sky,
we see a haze of burning and pollution blurring the scene.
Our planet is fragile, it’s the only one.
As good stewards, we must keep this planet for the children.
The planet is our home.
It cannot be replaced.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

Mother Earth is Growing Old

When she was young, she could recover from human assaults.

But Mother Earth is growing old.

The healing trees grown to replenish the air cannot keep up with pollutants.

Her winter runoff has slowed and become clogged with debris.

Mother Earth is growing old.

Her rivers dump chemicals and waste into her oceans.

Large floating plastic waste, blocks the sun from penetrating the surface.

Mother Earth is growing old.

Like any of us, she needs care and help to become healthy and whole.

She is precious and without assistance, she will die.

... and so will we.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

Alone with Myself

Morning sun broke over a sparkle-filled woods.

Carrying my poles and skis, I searched for a place to sit.

A long-fallen trunk offered a perch.

Jamming my poles into the drift,

I slipped on one ski, then the other.

I stood with the help of the poles, ready to push off.

The rhythm of the skis gliding made a soft swish

in the quiet of the day.

My mind was free to ponder as long-trained muscles took up
the remembered cadence of moving.

I saw the low-hanging branch and swerved to the right.

Snow and ice crackled underfoot as I crested the rise.

Tucking my poles under my arms,

I raced down the hill to the pond.

The clear, smooth surface called to me.

I turned away, fearing I would break through.

Instead, I rested to let my breathing slow and listen to
the sound of my pulse in my ears.

Worried thinking vanished as I joined nature awakening to the sunrise.

I breathed long gulps of chilly air.

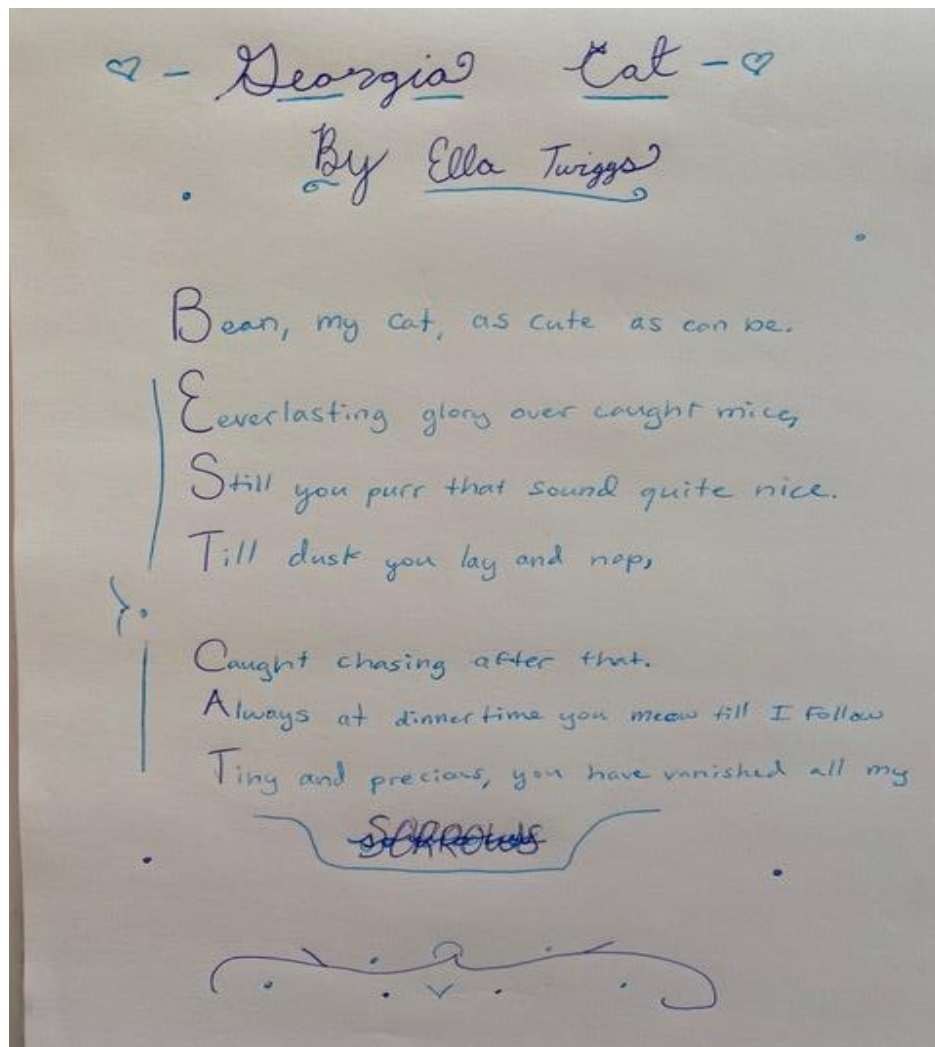
Renewed in body, mind, and spirit.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com

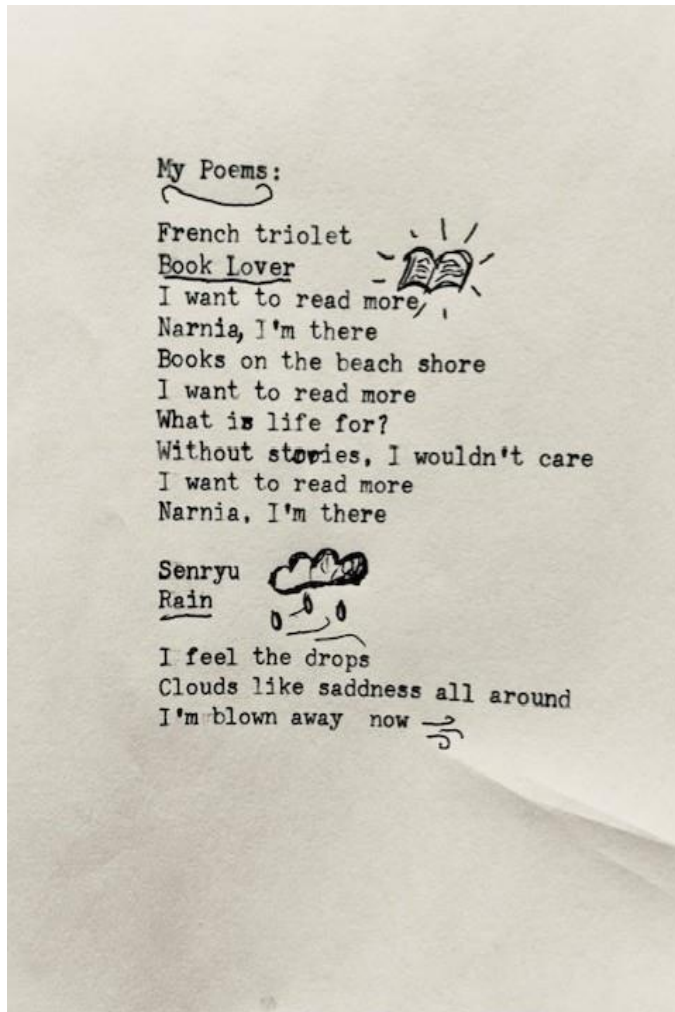
Snow Magic

New snow sticks to the gray picket fence.
Forming a pattern marking the boundaries.
Tired corn shocks stand as sentinels.
While snow piles between the rows.
Tiny tracks make their way to the abandoned barn.
A single bulb pools a feeble glow in the yard.
Freezing winter holds ice crystals suspended in the frozen air.
Nothing moves, nature holds its breath.
Waiting for eastern glow.
The only sound is the squeaking of my boots.
I stop feeling the magic of this subzero morning.

Carol Farnsworth - Ada, MI - carolfarn@aol.com



Ella Belle Twiggs (age 11) - sent in by Susan Twiggs - setwiggs@gmail.com (a proud grandmother)



Ella Belle Twigg (age 11) - sent in by Susan Twigg - setwigg@gmail.com (a proud grandmother)

Moon Maiden

What do you see, moon maiden
in this daytime reverie?
Is your dream fecund and flowered
as the cloud you lie upon?
Does your quilt cushion you from life's
pebbles and rocks?
Do you wish for a child to blossom in your womb?
Moon maiden, will you yield
when the sky is bright with diamonds
and the grass soon heavy with dew?
Moon maiden, tell me your dream
and I will wish it true.

Susan Schwartz Twigg - Marshfield, WI - setwigg@gmail.com

yellow leaves coat the ground
life's gone into hiding--
winter's not empty

Jack Maze



Photograph by Hiroshima Sugimoto (sent in by Josephine Voight)

What is Motherhood?
Far deeper than mere instinct
An inexplicable bond
Absolute love, compassion
Unconditional...pure bliss.

(Dedicated to Narges Rothermel - Loving mother, Compassionate nurse, Blissful poet)

Poem by Josephine Voigt - teach4life31@gmail.com

Inspired by the manatees of Blue Spring State Park, FL, a protective winter refuge, a haven for visitors from all over the globe, and an opportunity for volunteers, like myself, to interpret the wonders of its natural beauty.



Photograph by Hiroshima Sugimoto (sent in by Josephine Voight)

Midnight Chat

Come in, Traveling-Moon
Come in through my open window
Stay for a while on half-empty bed of mine
Stay till morning light returns to my window

Tonight, sleep has no room in this cluttered head of mine
Views from the Gulf, Oil covered-tides
too Ugly, too Heavy, too Disturbing
This mind is occupied, this mind is frightened

Explosion in the oceans
Untimely deaths of eleven Breadwinners
Abundant tears of Mourners,
Tonight, I host a sea of raw-emotions

Poisoned Ocean, Tainted Marshlands Perished dreams
Dying Pelicans, Disturbed lands
Whom can I blame?
Is the global thirst for Black gold or the Arrogance of mankind?

I don't know how to clean my own oil-stained hands
i am afraid. i am cold!
Stay on guard you Traveling-Moon,
Invading your deposits is next on tomorrow's chart of mankind--
One day the invasive-hands may rip your heart and your soil too.

Talk to me you, Traveling-Moon, I can talk no more
Tell me your view of my world
Sleep, tonight sleep has to wait at the shore.

Narges Rothermel

Stopping by woods limerick

Stopping By Woods by Robert Frost
Says much about the snow--
But what about the little horse?
That's what I want to know.

Dr. Emory D. Jones - Iuka, MS - pianot@bellsouth.net

Winter Sunshine

Breezes buffet clouds
Across slate sky,
Shiver naked trees,
And take
My leaf smoke in their draft.

Earth-bound trees heave twig fingers,
Scratch heaven--
Each ring brings them closer.

I toddle barked shins
In paling dusk,
Mount rungs of cold sun--
A gray-brown mist,
An essence of leaves.

Dr. Emory D. Jones

Snow

In early February it snowed.
We got about three inches of it
At first, we thought it was beautiful.

We looked outside and saw tracks--
A poor cat had made them
On her way to get under
One of our storage buildings.

We hoped she found a place
To sleep in relative warmth.

Then freezing rain came
And laid a crust of ice
On the snow.

We had this for several days
Until the sun finally melted it.

We hoped the cat survived.

Dr. Emory D. Jones

Deep Freeze

I am not going to say it is cold,
But when you milked the cows,
They gave ice cream,
And you could knock over
Any frozen goat.

The chickens hatched penguins,
And the horse snorted
Ice-sickles.

The windows of the house
Glazed over,
And as the inside heat
Melted the ice,
It became running rainbows.

The thermometer
Plunged to ten below zero,
And the trees exploded
Like cannon shots.

Now that was cold,
And if you believe me,
I will tell you another
Tall tale.

Dr. Emory D. Jones - Iuka, MS - pianot@bellsouth.net

“It is a delicious thing to write, to be no longer yourself but to move in an entire universe of your own creating. Today, for instance, as man and woman, both lover and mistress, I rode in a forest on an autumn afternoon under the yellow leaves, and I was also the horses, the leaves, the wind, the words my people uttered, even the red sun that made them almost close their love-drowned eyes.” - Gustave Flaubert

winter sunset--
bright orange captured by gray clouds
shared with the sea

Jack Maze



Rita Yager - Deerfield, IL - yagojohn@aol.com

I Would Rather Be

On a sandy shore
someplace else
anyplace but here,
where the wind howls
and streets and sidewalks
are covered in ice
as snow falls steadily
I fear falling.
my breathe freezes
in the frigid air
I want to put my
toes in warm sand
I want to pick up shells
smell salty air,
feel warm breezes
chase sea gulls
instead, I am here
so, I have chosen
to freeze time,
capture a moment
in miniature
bring a bit of
the beach back
for us to enjoy

Rita Yager - Deerfield, IL - yagojohn@aol.com

clear blue skies
the sun sparkles off mounded snow--
icy sidewalks

Jack Maze

Rent to Own

This morning he kept his distance,
did not cross that magic periphery,

lit off down the road when my dogs and I
got too close. There was a curtain of ice

from the freezing rain. It took me an hour
to realize who that Renard really was,

a guardian angel come at the worst time
in the six and a half years since father died.

Could it be he's been living all this time
just over the rise near the barn, watching

my children grow up and my hair and beard silver,
a *kitsune* come to Vermont, seeing

without being seen? Whose kits were those
my daughter discovered with purest delight

one spring a decade or so past?
In the classical Japanese

kitsu-ne means come and sleep
ki-tsune means always. My father knew

how to get you to relax and sleep, make
you feel every problem had an answer.

He's a *zenko* - one of those foxes
of the universe, looking down, saying

*you've been given two eyes, one to see with
and the other with which to overlook.*

There are plenty of people (including
a few in my own extended family)

who pay only lip service to that maxim.
Meanwhile, that fox keeps studying us

as we strain to see him. His winter red
hides him some, but he's definitely there.

(Renard is French for fox, a particularly wily fox, who appears in many folk tales.)

Jeff Bernstein - Woodstock, VT - jbernstein@hurricanelodge.com

Musings from Vermont With Snow Still Blocking Our North-facing Windows

I wonder is it a sunny day up on the Main,
how deep is the snow in Parc Lahaie
where I walked our dog four times
each day that benign October,
a year after she finished chemo
three hundred miles south in Boston?
Every morning I'd fill blank screens
with characters, recalling those walks
to the place I called Three Oaks,
the day after a new round of toxics
were unleashed in her body.

The northern skies prenatually warm
that succeeding fall in Montreal, croissants
shatteringly crisp, the Café Americain
rich and deep at that little café
on the corner on Rue Villeneuve
whose name in English means mess.

The filigreed branches by the feet
of the trees in our meadow crashed
straight down in the last storm,
bridal veils, there's something tragic
about them even as the light lingers
past the cocktail hour in this, last
gasp of winter. The wind rattles
like Cheyne-Stokes breath, then stops
for that moment of apnea, resumes
and repeats, hard and fading.

Jeff Bernstein - Woodstock, VT - jbernstein@hurricanelodge.com

on a tree trunk
lichens result in lichens--
snow in a wet tree trunk

Jack Maze - Vancouver, B. C., Canada - erry@shaw.ca

The Warming

Pseudo scientists still
proclaim that warming begs
a question. Yet this blue
planet warms, even in winter.
Earth's Ozone layer thins,
dead zones grow, ice shelves
crash in their calving and seas
rise as whales starve in open
ocean, their catch of salmon
growing scarce, may soon
be gone forever and polar
bears lean towards extinction,
washed up on Arctic beaches
as the snows of Kilimanjaro
melting fast, may vanish to
be seen no more. Today,
despite a calendar reading
December, plum trees bloom
in the heart of Boston, in
Brooklyn it's cherry trees,
plied by honeybees. In
Virginia, they're mowing
lawns on New Year's
Day and sails unfurl on
Michigan lakes that a year
ago were frozen.

Still, we drill deeper for oil,
addicts tapping earth's veins,
pumping air with carbon,
lungs with ink, while naming
our species sapient. What
space age Ark can save us now,
how long can we tread water?

William Scott Galasso - Laguna Woods, CA - scottgalasso@yahoo.com

Warning Signs

Black clouds crowd mountains,
fog broods in valleys, tombstone gray.
Wind begins to hiss, then howl
like a shrieking crone. A reek
of sulphur steals my breath,
smoke and fire rise to eclipse
a dull red sinking sun. Seas
rise, wave by restless wave
biting sand beaches, gnawing keys,
eating at the walls of coastal cities.
(I could dismiss this nightmare
but I fear I'm wide awake.)?

(Previously published in the San Diego Poetry Anthology)

William Scott Galasso - Laguna Woods, CA - scottgalasso@yahoo.com

elk wake

two dozen matted elk
slog-tread the west slope's
belly-high snow
keeping the smallest
close within the herd
encouraging them
to leap or trample
my wire fences

MJ Nordgren - Forest Grove, OR - maryjanenordgren@gmail.com

not yet

black-tail stag deer
munching tall grass
at the edge of the patio
nosing, but not entering
intrigued by the salt block
i haven't yet found
a protected place
to set out for them

MJ Nordgren - Forest Grove, OR - maryjanenordgren@gmail.com

Moonrise

*(After the painting "Moonrise Over Back Creek, Solomon's"
by Julie Allinson)*

A chill night
of not-quite-spring
silent and bleak-black
no stars, no light
raw wind and haze--
is this where you are?

I have been there.
Turn around. The river
is still rippling.
Turn around, and see the rise
of blue mist over the water
and the moon.

Kate Lassman - Waldorf, MD - konekoshijin@hotmail.com

Missing Mary Oliver

(After the painting "Great Egret" by Peggy Cook)

If she were here at the water's edge
Mary would have her notebook open,
composing lines about the great egret
stalking around this pond.
It is winter; he has returned
to his dormant castle
of frigid water, bent cattails,
and grasses brown and brittle.
As he shakes his snowy feathers,
Mary would glean wisdom from the elegance
of his deliberate steps, see humor
glint in yellow eyes, and then
she'd laugh in wonder
at his sudden lift in flight.
Alone, I can only describe
the white plumed monarch
and his reedy realm, only watch
as he fades flapping into January skies.

Kate Lassman - Waldorf, MD - konekoshijin@hotmail.com

Everything In Scarcity But Cold

Such butterflies and birds, as may,
note coming winter with dismay,
and flutter hence to warmer land,
and leave on wings, because they can.
While critters... up to major bears,
use holes for season-chilled affairs;
...hibernate in the earthly deep,
or mantled snow, to shield their sleep.
For now is Death, sincere inclined,
to bully nature most unkind,
and bounty, warmer season shared
...now dearth for all those unprepared.
Where storm and shards of frost confer,
the beasts and birdies must defer
to fluffy pelt and downy feather;
those not aslumber

brace 'gainst such weather
as hostile turned, so as to impart
cold trial to threaten valiant heart
and marrow of all creatures borne
through blizzard night

and crystal morn.
In lands where clime of winter rules,
concepts of mercy ridicules
realities other than hard and harsh
from mountain, to the lowest marsh.
Deer and sparrow must contest
however nature taught them best,
by instinct or parental show,
in forest, or by sere meadow.
Bereft of warmth and plentitude,
the strain of days will oft exclude
the old or weak or inexperienced
(who nourish others as dessert);
for, in final telling of the thing,
sleep, pluck or luck

will win the Spring.

Steven P. Pody - Fredericksburg, VA - s_pody@msn.com

Please be the reason someone smiles today...

Please be kind, write to each other...

HAIKU DEFINITION Haiku is an ancient unrhymed Japanese verse form. Generally written in three short lines containing a total of 10 to 17 syllables to convey a vivid message, Haiku typically contain a reference to nature. Haiku uses simple concrete images of things we can see, smell, taste, touch, or feel. The best haiku poems reveal the essence of a thing so clearly that the reader can experience the momentary scene or insight that inspired the author.

One of the greatest Haiku poets was the Samurai, Basho (1644-94). Basho's father was also a Samurai from the Iga province. To become a Samurai, Basho served a local lord who was fond of writing. Basho learned the style of writing Haiku, and wrote under the name, Sobo. During those years, Basho traveled throughout Japan writing and further developing the Haiku style. A few samples of Basho's haiku style are listed in the example section below.

Your poem should contain a sentence fragment (one line) and a phrase (two lines that complete a thought). The fragment can be either the first line or the third line. To keep your poem simple and direct, write in the present tense. Haiku typically do not make use of capitalization, punctuation, or titles.

Each traditional Haiku should contain a reference to a season, which indicates what season of the year the Haiku is set. For example, blossoms would indicate spring, snow would give the idea of winter and mosquitos would imply summertime. The seasonal word is not always that obvious, you might need to consider the theme of the poem to find it.

Structural Rules for traditional Haiku:

- Use exactly 17 syllables
- Syllables are arranged in three lines of 5-7-5
- Avoid similes and metaphors
- Refers to a season of the year

Clouds appear and bring
to men a chance to rest from
looking at the moon

The seasonal word in this Haiku is clouds, indicating the rainy season. Haiku poems are valued for their simplicity, openness, depth, and lightness.

English-language haiku have generally followed the form of five syllables used in the first line, followed by seven syllables for the middle line and five syllables for the third.

However, English-language haiku no longer adhere to this syllable count and are therefore as brief as the poem needs to be while keeping to the fragment-phrase structure. In English language haiku, the middle line is typically longer than the first or third lines.

HAIKU EXAMPLES

an old silent pond
a frog jumps into the pond
splash, silence again

M. Basho

over the wintry forest
winds howl in rage
with no leaves to blow

N. Soseki

In the twilight rain
these brilliant-hued hibiscus
a lovely sunset

M. Basho

empty house
echoes of laughter
in the rotting wood

E. Onyan

shifting shadows
deep in the hills
a dog barks

A. McCrossen

a crow has settled
on a bare branch
autumn evening

M. Basho

summer breeze
the flutter of clothes
thrown over a chair

L. Santiago

howling monsoon
winds dust devil coming
my way western dreamy draw

J. Sacken

lost in the woods
only the sound of a leaf falling
on my hat

T. Kikusha

toward those short trees
we saw a hawk descending
on a day in spring

M. Shiki

Haiku: Lesson Plan for teachers, grades 1-5

Read sample poems aloud. See attached sheet of “Haiku Reference Guide” and read aloud the example Haiku poems. Let the students absorb the poems without much introduction or explanation. Read slowly and leave space between poems. Missing one word can mean missing the entire poem.

Ask the students what they noticed about the poems. Which poems did they like best? Why? Ask how they felt when they heard specific poems. For example, did they feel surprised by the frog about to belch a cloud? Or did they feel lonely when they heard the poem about a crow on a bare branch? Were they excited by the ticket to a ballgame tucked in the math book?

Talk about images. Ask the students if they know what the word “image” means. They may offer something like “pictures with words.” Point out that images can involve all of the senses. Images can come from experience in the present moment (for example, a pen on their desk or a bird outside the classroom window) or from memory or imagination. Images can make us feel emotions. Instead of saying, “how we feel by the images we choose” in a poem, we can show how we feel by which images we choose to include.

Take an “Image Journey.” Have the students imagine they are at the beach (or in the woods, on a desert mountain, etc...). Ask what they see, what they hear, what they smell, etc... If they can remember a specific moment on a particular day, this will help add detail to their images. Write their words on the board and point out that these are images. Ask them to also think of images that show us what season it is. For example, “a hole in my sweater” tells us it is cold outside and probably winter. Remind the students to be specific and use as many different senses as they can!

Have students try writing poems. Ask the students to select words from among the images to form poems. For example, a child might write the following while doing the above brainstorming exercise: “I see roadrunner tracks all over the dry desert floor. I smell dusty air. My feet are hot. The city park is deserted because it is summer.” Ask which words are most important and most interesting. We can leave out some words, such as, “I see” and “I smell,” and write a poem something like this:

roadrunner tracks
crossing the dry desert floor
my hot feet are bare

In the above example, the words “deserted park” and “dusty air” are also good sensory words, but the poem would be too cluttered if we tried to include everything in one poem. The job of a poet is to select from everything around us just the few things that make the most powerful poem. Instead of trying to fit too much into one poem, write more poems!

Have the students share their work. Have students say what they liked about their classmates’ poems.

Haiku: Lesson plan for teachers, grades 6 -12

Read aloud sample poems. Attached is a selection of various Haiku written by poets from Japan and across the United States, including a few from Arizona. If possible, project the poems and have the students take turns reading poems out loud. Read slowly!

Ask the students what they notice about the poems. What characteristics or common features do they see? List these common features on the board as the students say them. Fill in any additional features so there will be a list for later use. The list might look like this:

- Short: Haiku are very short poems! They are usually written in three (or fewer) lines. Haiku can be written in the traditional pattern of 5-7-5 syllables but they do not have to be. Most haiku in English have fewer than 17 syllables.
- One moment in time: Haiku generally describe one brief moment in time. For example, “one tombstone with a crow” tells us only about the moment of noticing the crow; we do not need to know what happened before or after.
- Images: The poems contain sensory images (not only visual, but involving other senses as well). For example, “echoes of laughter” and “metallic taste.”
- Seasonal references: You can often tell what season it is by the references in the poem. For example, “the coarse wool of my blanket” tells us it is probably winter.
- Everyday language: Haiku generally contain common everyday words. Nothing fancy or complicated!
- Surprise: There is often a break or shift in the poem which creates a moment of surprise or sudden awareness. This is often called the “aha” moment.

Brainstorm for ideas before writing complete haiku. This step can be done individually by each student or as a group exercise on the board. Ideally, images can be collected by taking notes “on location” at an art exhibit or outdoors, but it can also be done in the classroom. Ask students what they saw, heard, felt, etc... at a particular moment in time at a specific place. By making a list of images, emotional responses, and seasonal references, there is no pressure at this point to produce complete poems. Let the ideas flow.

Opinion: How 17 syllables a day can change your life

Opinion by Tess Taylor

As 2022 fades away and 2023 begins, you might be pondering what practices to begin in the new year, what intentions to set. Some intentions might arrive as a desire to work out more, have a dry January, lose weight; some might be a willingness to deepen or engage a new habit.

I wanted to share a practice that’s been useful to me, as a writer: To write a haiku, or a loose haiku, every day. For me this habit began in a dark phase, when I realized I just wasn’t getting much creative time. I was feeling depleted. The pandemic was on, my kids needed a lot and I felt brittle and far from my heart.

A long time ago, I had a poetry teacher at the 92nd Street Y, in New York City, Marie Ponsot. She had raised nine children as a single mother and had gone years without publishing a book of poems. She was a wonderful poet, and deeply wise. She urged everyone she met to nurture their own creative practice, each day. “You can always write one line of poetry,” she’d say. “You can always write one line.”

Her words came back to me during this strange hard year and I decided, from birthday to birthday, to mark each day with a version of that one line -- a rough haiku.

What I mean by “rough” is this: My haiku didn’t have to be seventeen syllables exactly. It didn’t really have to be 5/7/5 the way sometimes people teach other people to make haiku.

Instead, I tried to follow guidelines that the poet Robert Hass has described as operating in the haiku of the wise practitioner Matsuo Basho: to include an image that would share the moment in time and an image that would let us know the season of the year.

Basho’s poems move between wider vistas and specific images like this:

*A cool fall night--
Getting dinner we peeled
eggplants, cucumbers.*

Or this:

*Many nights on the road
and not dead yet:
the end of autumn.*

I love how in the first poem, early fall is embodied precisely in seasonal eggplants and cucumbers; how in the second poem, many nights on the wild road become a figure for the autumn's-end sense of needing to be home. I love the way these poems gain energy by rapidly shifting their scale. I decided I'd model my rough haiku after them. Each day, I'd find a precise image from the day, and an image from the wider arc of month or season. This practice would anchor me.

With this resolution, I was off and jotting. What surprised me was how much this tiny game unlocked a curiosity and energy in the weeks that followed. Maybe the haiku would come first thing in the morning, in minutes before email or coffee. Maybe a little verse would worm its way in between meetings. Maybe I'd notice a bird, dog, child or spider. Maybe I'd record the glinting puddle after the first California rain.

Whatever it was, I felt more buoyant, more watchful. Looking for the day's haiku was a way of being present.

Slowly, I made 365 rough haiku, 365 one-sentence poems. Some days, suddenly, I had a burst of aliveness. Some days I had more poems in me -- a letter to a friend, a bit of an essay. Other days, I'd find a bleary deadness and was sure I had no internal life at all beyond spreadsheets and groceries and logistics and deadlines and family illness and afterschool plans for my children. But then the haiku would help me center. I'd scratch out a couple lines, and I'd send a plumbline to the heart.

Here are a couple I wrote that first December:

*Alarm clock in the early dark.
The legs of my dreams
scurry like spiders.*

Or:

*Midnight, half-hearted, rain comes:
Clap clap, clap clap.
Then at once: an all-night applause.*

When my haiku year was over, I stopped writing them for a while. But soon I found I missed the way the practice had inspired me. I missed the watchfulness of looking to record some part of even the busiest day. Things have been full here. Our whole family had Covid-19. My husband had surgery. Days crashed over like waves.

So I started again. My first two haiku were these:

*O sick child in my bed
I camp outside
holding health on the sofa*

and

*Where did they go,
the horses who left
huge cloudy tails on this winter sky?*

When I started talking to friends about my daily haiku, I found I wasn't alone. Suzanne Buffam, a poet who teaches at the University of Chicago, connected me with Luke Rodehorst, an account executive at Google, who lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Rodehorst is also a poet who shares a once-a-week email newsletter of his haiku to a wide network of family and friends.

He has written over 4,440 haiku over the last 10 years. For him, the practice also started as a New Year's resolution -- a way to make himself begin writing. "If I can't write a poem, I can at least get 17 syllables," he told me.

He described how the haiku practice quite literally became an anchor through deep injury. Two years ago, on the eve of his 33rd birthday, while playing with his one-year-old daughter, he felt a searing pain. He'd suffered a brain hemorrhage; a malformation between certain brain cells had led to dangerous bleeding. Rodehorst survived, but the injury led to loss of work and a long, uncertain and even now unfinished road toward healing.

Over these years, Rodehorst has found that his haiku practice helped him each day. He can do it no matter what is happening to him, good or bad, hospital or no, sick or well. "The creativity helps me fill and map the space that exists," he told me. "Whatever moment you choose, there's always something interesting in trying to make sense of it." For him, turning the creative lens on a moment is like "its own immune system."

He elaborated for me: "If you have a creative practice," he says, "you have this force within you, a way of meeting your life wherever it is." Which is to say: **When we meet our lives with curiosity and the desire to capture, transform, notice and savor, we nourish ourselves and build up our own internal resilience.**

Here are some of Luke's haiku, which are often bittersweet:

*In hospital bed
Lilly curled up next to me
And all these wires.*

*Through a pinched eye, I
See a spinning world - and joy
In unsteadiness.*

*Blood in my brain, but
It's the IV of all things
That makes me queasy.*

And this one, which is also joyful:

*Through kitchen window--
You laugh, I laugh. Tea kettle
Whistles along too.*

As the new year begins, I'll start 2023 by continuing to reflect on Luke's thoughts about having an art practice as a way of building a kind of immune system. I love the vision of the haiku as a way to steer our attention, just a little, in a world which often wants to use our attention for other purposes. It is good to connect to the selves we want to be, the selves we want to give to others. Of his writing Luke said: "You become aware of the time and attention you are giving to any moment. It's a way of taking control of your joy."

I love the idea of having more awareness and more joy. I love the idea of finding more space, even in the messy world we have, to find the beauty that is already around us. There is always time to write one line. Perhaps you'll also find that there are 365 one sentence poems leading you a bit closer to your own heart, too.

Opinion: How 17 syllables a day can change your life (msn.com)

**Time to share your Winter-themed poems
for The Weekly Avocet.**

Please read the guidelines before submitting

We love previously published poems!

Please send your submissions to:
angeldec24@hotmail.com

**Up to four Winter themed poems,
Photos (4), haiku (up to 10),
Saving Mother Earth Challenge poems
(as many as you can write)**

Please do not stack your info when submitting submissions, please have it: name - town, state - email address, in a line, just like it appears in both publications. Please do not make extra work for us. Thank you.

Please send your submissions to angeldec24@hotmail.com

Please put (early or late) Winter/your last name in the subject line.

Please be kind and address your submission to me, Charles. Thank you.

(Just so you know: I do not read work from a poet who doesn't take the time to address their submission to the editor, who they want to read their work.)

Please do not just send a poem, please write a few lines of hello.

Please do not have all caps in the title of your poem.

There is no line limit per poem.

Please no religious references.

Please use single spaced lines.

Please remember, we welcome previously published poems.

Please put your name - town/state - email address under your poem. No Zip codes.

Please send your poems in the body of an email or in one attachment, **no pdf file.**

We look forward to reading your Winter submissions.

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The Burning Question for us Earthlings is:

What are you/we going to do to stop or even just slow down Climate Change?

Do you feel like there is nothing you can do about climate change?

Well, there is, even if we all do small things it will make a great difference. Alice C. Hill (**the David M. Rubenstein senior fellow for energy and the environment at the Council on Foreign Relations.**) states the first thing we all need to do is not shy away from the subject. Talk about, write about, climate change to everyone you know and meet. Write to your congressperson and Senators. Let them know what you think and fear!

I want to have, at least, one Saving Mother Earth poem in each issue of The Weekly Avocet, so I am always looking for poems that address our most important issues of today, so please write about what you think and fear of the coming end of our world as we know it. A world our great grandkids will never know. A Mother Nature who is no longer kind.

But if we join together, maybe, just maybe, working together, we can make a difference to Save Mother Earth, the only home we have. Show you care. There are so many topics to write about when it comes to Climate Change. Please find one you are passionate about and write about it!

Write a Tell-off poem letting the world know what you are feeling about what is being done right before our eyes by those who claim to want what best for all of us. Think it out in your head, then put it down on the page, then

fight with it, get your rage out, then send it to us to share, so you can see your voice, your words, being read, being heard...

The American Avocet

I watch unseen this large,
long-legged shorebird,
with its pied plumage
and a dash of red
around its head and neck,
scampering along
the coastline
searching to snatch-up
some aquatic insect
or a small invertebrate
hidden beneath
the brackish waters
of this saltmarsh.

I watch unseen
it swing its odd,
long, up-curved bill
through the shallow,
still waters, catching
a tiny creature,
trapping it in its bill,
racing off to its nest to
feed her four hatchings
with this feast she found.

I watch in awe
as the male
grows protective,
fearlessly fending off
an encroaching
common black raven,
attacking this intruder,
striking at it with its bill.

I watch in wonder
as they swim as a family
just days after
the young ones are born,
then back to the nest to
rest where its kind flocks
together in a community.

Charles Portolano - Fountain Hills, AZ - cportolano@hotmail.com

We hope we provoked you; that you leave having experienced a complete emotional response to the poetry found in each issue of The Weekly Avocet. I want to thank our Poets for sharing their work with us this week. And “Thank you for reading, dear reader!”

Be well, see you next weekend,

Charles Portolano, Editor/Publisher and Vivian and Valerie Portolano, Co-Editors
of The Avocet, a Journal of Nature Poetry and The Weekly Avocet, every weekend.

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