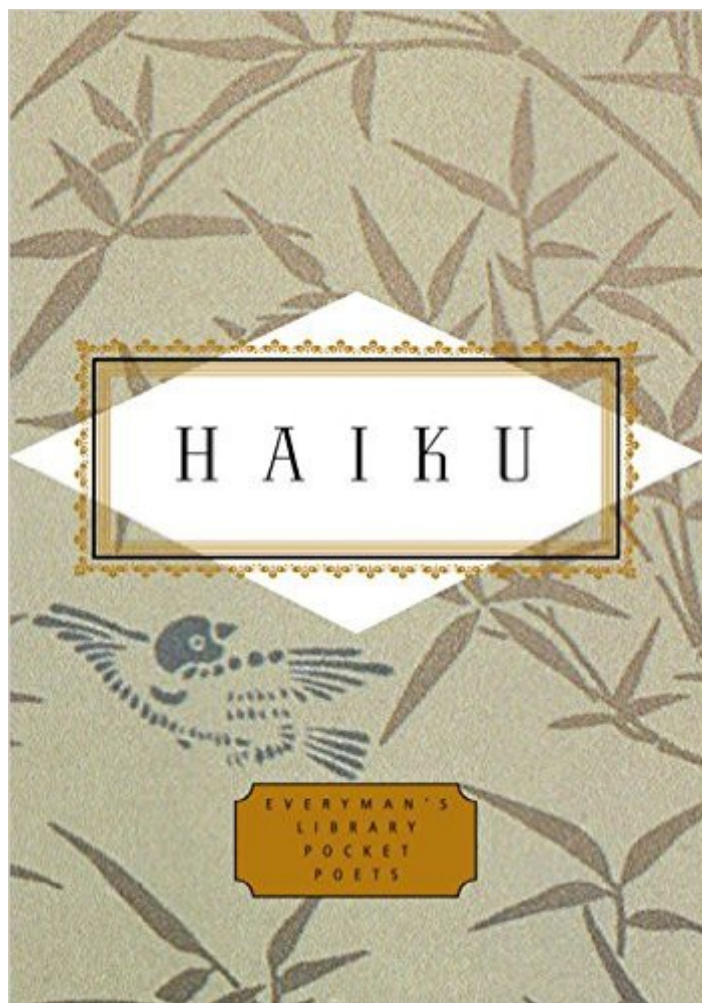


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Haiku (Everyman's Library Pocket Poets)



Synopsis

Simple yet capable of great complexity, the haiku is a tightly structured verse form that has a remarkable power to distill the essence of a moment keenly perceived. For centuries confined to a small literary elite in Japan, the writing of haiku is now practiced all over the world by those who are fascinated by its combination of technical challenge, expressive means, and extreme concentration. This anthology brings together hundreds of haiku by the Japanese masters—Basho, Issa, Buson, Shiki—with superb examples from nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers. The pioneering translator R. H. Blyth believed that the spirit of haiku is present in all great poetry; inspired by him, the editor of this volume has included lines from such poets as Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Thoreau, and Hopkins, presented here in haiku form. Following them are haiku and haiku-influenced poems of the twentieth century—from Ezra Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro” to William Carlos Williams’s “Prelude to Winter,” and from the irreverence of Jack Kerouac to the lyricism of Langston Hughes. The result is a collection as compact, dynamic, and scintillating as the form itself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is simply a wonderful anthology. It is designed to be read whenever and fits in one’s pocket or purse. The first section of the book comprises of R.H. Blyth’s translations of the Japanese masters. This section is divided into themes such as; Buddha nature, phases of the moon, birds, creatures,

and the five seasons--New Year's--is considered a short season in Japan. The second half of the book moves to the other side of the Pacific and is titled "Western Haiku". This half of the book is then broken down into two remaining chapters "Traditional" & "Modern". The one issue that some practicing haiku poets have concerns about is the "Traditional" chapter where haiku-like poems by Wordsworth, Scott, Keats, Shelley, Thoreau, Whitman and many more appear. However, these critics somehow did not read carefully Peter Washington's introduction. He writes: "In an appendix to his magisterial work, Blyth makes the controversial suggestion that the spirit of haiku is present in all great poetry, claiming that there are many haiku 'buried' in familiar English poems. In part two, bearing a universality in mind. I take up this idea, offering some of his examples and more of my own." Therefore the examples in the section are NOT haiku, but have present some components of the haiku spirit. So this is important to note. The last section titled "Modern" finds haiku on the shore of an English language literary world. We see how haiku develops through time and understanding starting with Pound and ending with several contemporary poets. There is a slight feeling that the last chapter of the book could continue, and that is true. However, this simple could reflect the editor's feeling that haiku continues to thrive that the ending should be left open.

You might appreciate knowing the contents: Foreword..... 7 JAPANESE HAIKU Buddha Nature..... 11 Happiness..... 23 Phases of the Moon..... 29 Birds..... 41 Creatures..... 63 Spring..... 77 Summer..... 113 Autumn..... 159 Winter..... 181 New Year..... 207 WESTERN HAIKU Traditional..... 217 Modern..... 231 Acknowledgments..... 253 ***For most of my life I did not know that the haiku art form existed. When I discovered it I was instantly smitten and developed an intense desire to know everything about it including how to compose it. This book does not teach you how to compose haiku, and yet indirectly it does because the poems within serve as the best examples of successful haiku. I mean after all, these originally came from the likes of Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki and Chiyo-ni (as well as some lesser known but no less skilled classical-era haiku poets). If one would want to learn from the best, then study the haiku from this book. Read them very slowly both out loud and to yourself many times; concentrate on one and discover what it has to offer in terms of meaning as well as imagery; search out the subtleties in tone, mood, etc. ***There's a section containing some very good modern English haiku toward the back of the book. Admittedly, (for right now anyway) I favor reading and studying the classical Japanese haiku from the masters preceding the twentieth century. That isn't to say that I ignore or don't appreciate modern haiku (or modern Western haiku). Indeed, I certainly 'can' and 'do' appreciate great haiku created by anyone in the world today.

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