

### Response Paper #3: Haiku Unit

Your response paper is in two parts. The first part is a group renga; the second is an individual response paper. Your group should turn in a booklet containing one copy of the group's renga with each group member's name listed, along with a distinct reflection paper (min. 500 words) by each group member (i.e., there's only one renga, but each group member completes a separate write-up).

#### **Instructions for the Group Renga Composition:**

Before there were "haiku," there were renga (renku are essentially modern renga). Renga are linked poems comprised of two parts: the first stanza is a three-line stanza with the form 5-7-5. The second stanza is comprised of a couplet with the form 7-7. (When the initial stanza of the renga, which was known as the "hokku" was broken off from the rest of the poem, it became known as *haiku*.) The two forms together--5-7-5 and 7-7—are repeated to compose a longer, linked poem known as renga, which can eventually have as many as 100 or even 1000 verses. Renga were written collaboratively by a group of people; in traditional Japanese practice, they were written in one sitting at a renga party; today renga are often written by people corresponding with each other all over the world.

For this assignment, your group of **three people** will have to write only a 12-stanza renga; that is, six stanzas of haiku alternating with another six couplets. There is a total of 12 stanzas, so each group member composes 4 stanzas—2 haiku and 2 couplets.

1. Here are the rules—your group may add to these if they wish: Each of you must use a *kigo* (seasonal word). Someone must mention an autumn moon, spring flower, and a place name, and all of the seasons must be discussed at least once. **Between every other stanza (i.e., between the second and third, between the fourth and fifth),** there must be a shift – a sudden change of meaning, scenery, season, or reference; the catch is the two adjacent stanzas (e.g., 1&2, 2&3, 3&4) must still connect with each other in some way. You may be as contemporary or as classical as you wish. In other words, if autumn for you is hunting season or the start of summer is "fresh tarmac," that's fine. But the group has to agree on, and follow, a consistent attitude toward nature throughout the poem.
2. For the first stanza, you may either choose a haiku from our book (be sure to attribute it if you do!), or you may write your own. But be sure to begin with the present season.
3. Decide the order of writing. This order must remain *fixed!* This way, each group member will write two examples of each type of verse, the 3-line haiku and the 2-line couplet.
4. **Print your name on the right side of your stanza.** Number your stanza on the left side. Remember the renga form: 5-7-5 and 7-7.
5. **Title your renga** and, if you wish, make an illustration for the cover page.

## **Guidelines for the Accompanying Reflection Paper:**

This reflection paper (a minimum of 500 words) is both to illustrate your grasp of our readings and to discuss how the process of writing a renga in a group deepened your understanding, appreciation, or perhaps dislike of haiku and the haiku masters we are studying. Suggested questions for your consideration follow:

- What connections do you see between medieval Japanese culture and Buddhist philosophy and the themes, requirements, and structures of renga and haiku?
- How do our modern American culture and use of technology influence our relationship to nature and to the haiku tradition?
- How has your relationship to nature and to ordinary experience changed based on your experience? Be specific and give examples.
- How do notions of individual authorship in the West affect our appreciation and our expectations regarding the composition of a group poem?
- What habits, expectations, and desires did you have to give up—and why—to enjoy haiku and renga? What unexpected pleasures or benefits did you discover?
- Consider the extremely formal requirements of haiku and renga as a kind of spiritual discipline forcing immersion of the individual ego in the greater world: How might you come to view the requirements of haiku as your friend or spiritual teacher?
- If you still absolutely hate haiku and renga, develop a well-reasoned rationale for your distaste. For example, offer thoughtful reflections as to why haiku do not satisfy your criteria for lyric poetry and try to persuade your reader that you are not merely being biased by our Western culture's emphasis on poetry as emotional expression.

Please note that you are neither expected nor required to like haiku and renga, but you are required to consider your likes and dislikes critically, drawing upon our reading and our comparative notions of lyric poetry from different cultures. This said, an “A” reflection will express what lesson you learned by working within these restrictions, not just recount what the restrictions were or that they were complex, annoying, etc.; e.g., the difficulty of working out schedules to complete the project shows the difference between medieval Japan and contemporary America and suggests...

You may communicate via ANGEL with group members, and you are welcome to compose your renga via IM, Facebook, or any other virtual communication, so long as the order of composition is respected. However you compose, you will be required to turn in a finished, proofread, and bound volume. These will be graded as a response paper. Your individual grade is an average of your performance on both the group task and the individual write-up.