



# Grass Sandals: A Mini-Unit on Haiku and Brush Painting

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**Featured Children's Literature:** *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*, by Dawnine Spivak

## Objectives:

1. Students will analyze haiku poems to discover the rules for writing haiku poetry.
2. Students will use the rules to write a haiku inspired by nature.
3. Students will learn about and form five *kanji* characters.
4. Students will embellish their haiku by creating a hanging scroll, gaining understanding of the Japanese tradition of combined literary and visual texts.

## National Content Standards:

### **Reading and Writing**

*Reading Standard 2:* Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

*Reading Standard 5:* Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and to the whole.

*Reading Standard 6:* Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

*Writing Standard 4:* Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

*Language Standard 3:* Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### **Geography**

*Geography Standard 4:* Students know the physical and human characteristics of places.

*Geography Standard 15:* Students know how physical systems affect human systems.

### **Visual Arts**

*Visual Arts Standard 1:* Students understand and apply media, techniques, and processes.

*Visual Arts Standard 2:* Students use knowledge of structures and functions.

*Visual Arts Standard 3:* Students choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

*Visual Arts Standard 4:* Students understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

### **Plan for Assessment:**

1. *Part 1:* Students will synthesize a chart with the rules of haiku poetry. They will be able to use the class-generated chart to write and analyze their own haiku poetry.
2. *Part 2:* Students will
  - Successfully form five *kanji* characters.
  - Paint appropriate illustrations to accompany haiku.
  - Present a final project that exemplifies good craftsmanship.A checklist for assessing students' work is provided.

### **Notes:**

This is a mini-unit written for the early elementary grades but easily adaptable for older students. Part 1, in which students complete a chart of rules for haiku, will take three to four 20-minute class periods. The number of lessons needed will depend on the level of your students and their past experience with guided inquiry. Pace the reading of *Grass Sandals* accordingly over several days. For this interactive read-aloud lesson, the children should be on the carpet with easy view of the chart. They should be seated with predetermined discussion partners or teams.

Part 2 builds on Part 1, focusing on the visual arts and the Japanese tradition of combining texts and visuals to create works of art. This part of the unit will require four class sessions of 40 to 60 minutes to complete.

Matsuo Bashō, the main character in the featured story, *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*, is a famous Japanese poet who lived from 1644 to 1694, during the Edo period (1603-1868). In literary circles, he was a well-known teacher of a collaborative linked poetic form called *haikai no renga*. His talent for writing the introductory 5-7-5 syllabic lines of a *haikai no renga* popularized the art form of haiku. Despite the prohibition on travel, Bashō assumed the robes of a Buddhist monk and traveled by foot throughout Japan, recording his thoughts in the form of both haiku and prose (*haibun*) for each of his journeys. Of the five *haibun* travel-diaries he published, his most famous, *Oku no Hosomichi*, is considered a canonical classic today. A few of his calligraphic works are preserved on hanging scrolls at several museums around Japan. *Grass Sandals* was inspired by and combines the places and spirit of several of Bashō's published travels.

### **Materials—Part 1:**

1. *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*, by Dawnine Spivak
2. **Pictures of Yamadera PowerPoint** (provided)
3. *Waraji* grass sandals (Optional)
4. Additional Basho haiku poems (Optional)
5. Chart paper and markers; label the chart paper “Rules for Haiku”
6. Haiku poems on pages 3 and 5 of *Grass Sandals* written out large enough for children to see easily from where they sit
7. Character for mountain (found on page 3 of *Grass Sandals*) written large enough for children to see easily from where they sit
8. Highlighter tape
9. Computer, LCD projector, screen

### **Implementation—Part 1:**

#### ***Introduction***

1. Help children build or tap into their prior knowledge by discussing how books and poems have been records of history for thousands of years. Ask students: Today when we see something we want to remember, we can take a picture. But cameras are a fairly new invention. Before photography was invented, how could someone capture a visual image? (*They could write about it or draw it.*)
2. Show the cover of *Grass Sandals* and explain that Bashō was a Japanese man who lived over 300 years ago. Bashō went on many trips during his lifetime and often wrote about his journeys. Sometimes he wrote poems to capture what he was seeing. This book has three different kinds of writing: text, poems, and *kanji*.
3. Show students the *kanji* for mountain and explain that it is Japanese writing. The symbol represents a mountain. Ask students to look for all three forms of writing as you read the book.
4. Introduce the blank chart and let students know they will be closely examining the poems in the book, looking for similarities. Introduce the term *haiku* and let the children know it is a specific form of poetry with specific rules. Explain that they will be looking for the rules of haiku as you read the poems in the book. Let them know that all the poems in the book are haiku.
5. Show students the **Pictures of Yamadera PowerPoint** and, if available, show students actual grass sandals. Bashō visited Yamadera and wrote about this place in his travel diary, *The Narrow Road to Oku*. Discuss the pictures and sandals using “juicy”/descriptive words. (Note: *Juicy words* is a term Lucy Calkins, founder of the Teachers College Writing Project, uses for descriptive words.)

#### ***Instruction***

1. Start to read the story. On pages 2 and 3, point out the text, *kanji*, and haiku poem. Read the poem a second time, asking the students to visualize the scene Bashō was describing. After the second reading, show the students the large print version of the same poem. Read the poem a third time with the students as a shared reading. Ask them to discuss with their partners or teams which words helped them visualize the scene. Give two to three minutes for discussion. Have groups highlight

2. Ask the students what else they notice about the poem. Give discussion time in teams and highlight the findings.
3. Continue to read the book. Stop at the second poem and repeat the poem, again asking the students to visualize the scene Bashō was describing. Pull out the large print version of the poem and repeat the process used on the first poem.
4. Once both poems are highlighted, hang them side by side and ask students to compare them. They should look for similarities and differences. Give three to four minutes of discussion time in groups. After discussion, have the groups report their observations to the class.
5. Based on the class findings, ask students: What are the rules of haiku? Give discussion time. Chart the class findings on the blank chart.
6. Continue to read the book, stopping at each poem. Read each poem several times and have discussion teams decide if it follows the rules on the chart or not. Give a chance to add or subtract haiku rules from the chart with each poem. If children are having trouble discovering the rules of haiku, guide the discussion of the poems and point out important features.

### **Conclusion**

1. Review the rules on the chart. Make sure the students included simple imagery using the senses—sight, touch, sound, smell, taste, and/or feelings—and “strong” or “juicy” words. Metaphors and similes are not used. Haiku tell of one specific event or observation and are written in the present tense. No time passes during haiku poems. Haiku also break punctuation and capitalization rules.
2. After students have the sense of haiku, introduce the 5-7-5 pattern and 17 syllables. Add this to your chart. Tell the children about the pattern and have them clap out the two large print poems.
3. Review the chart and add or subtract any necessary rules.
4. Have students write haiku poems inspired by the **Pictures of Yamadera PowerPoint** or something they feel inspired by in nature (as Bashō did) during independent writing. If you want to provide students with visuals for inspiration, a search for *nature photography* on Google Images (<http://www.google.com/images>) will turn up hundreds of images you could project via the computer. You could also have students choose a nature image from a walk outdoors.
5. When students have finished writing, ask them to self-assess their poems by comparing them to the criteria on the chart and the two large-print poems.
6. If you plan to use Part 2 of the mini-unit, read and edit students’ poems. Depending upon age and ability of students, either the teacher can word process the poems on the computer, selecting an appropriate font, or students can rewrite the final poem by hand on good quality painting paper.

### **Materials—Part 2:**

1. *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*, by Dawnine Spivak
2. Copies of **Grass Sandals Classroom Museum Worksheet** (provided) for all students

3. **Incorporating Japanese Brush Painting PowerPoint** (provided)
4. **Hanging Scroll from Japan Teacher’s Resource PowerPoint** (provided)
5. Samples of haiku poetry (one source is *The Narrow Road to Oku* by Matsuo Bashō)
6. Japanese paintbrushes and thin, black tempera paint (or brush pens and ink)
7. Painting paper (12 in. x 36 in.) for all students
8. Colored paper (20 in. x 40 in.) for all students
9. Rubber stamps, Styrofoam squares, or potatoes for border printing
10. Water-based block-printing ink, metallic (gold or silver) and red, and brayers or roller-brushes
11. Narrow paper strips for all students
12. Cord or hangers and a wooden dowel for suspending the scroll (for all students)
13. Computer, LCD projector, screen

## **Implementation—Part 2:**

### ***Introduction***

1. Review with students the combination of *kanji* characters, pictures, and words used in *Grass Sandals*. Talk about the emotions evoked by looking at selected pages.
2. Give an introduction to *kanji*. Use Section I of the **Incorporating Japanese Brush Painting PowerPoint** for visuals.
  - *Kanji* are written characters that originated in China.
  - Each character has a meaning.
  - Some simple characters are pictograms; that means the character is a clear illustration of the word it represents. This is the case for *ki* (tree), *yama* (mountain), and *kawa* (river) as introduced in *Grass Sandals* and studied in this lesson.
  - Traditionally, *kanji* are written and read in columns from top to bottom and right to left. Today they are also written horizontally from left to right.
  - When writing characters, stroke order is important.
  - There are more than 50,000 characters. In Japan, elementary children learn 1006; in junior and senior high school, students learn 939 more.
  - *Kanji* is one of three character sets that make up the written Japanese language. The others are *hiragana* and *katakana*.

### ***Instruction***

1. Show Section II of the **Incorporating Japanese Brush Painting PowerPoint**, which shows a *kanji* writing practice in a Japanese elementary school classroom.
2. Explain that, like the Japanese students in the photos, the students will now have a chance to learn and practice some of the *kanji* they saw in *Grass Sandals*.
3. Explain the general rules of stroke order for writing *kanji*.
  - Write from top to bottom and from left to right.
  - Write horizontal strokes before vertical strokes. However, write horizontal strokes that “cut” through a character last.
  - Write center vertical strokes first, left-side strokes second, and right-side strokes third.
  - Write right-to-left diagonal strokes before diagonal strokes that go left-to-right.
  - Write the left vertical-stroke of an enclosing stroke first. Write outside enclosing

- Finish a stroke appropriately, with a 1) quick and straight *stop* mark; 2) *flowing* stroke that tapers at the end; or 3) a stroke that abruptly *hooks* at the end. Use the character for tree in *Grass Sandals* for reference.
4. Teach and practice five *kanji* characters from *Grass Sandals*: mountain—*yama*, rain—*ame*, river—*kawa*, tree—*ki*, and friend—*tomo*. Students should use the general rules of stroke order as they practice the *kanji*.

**Guided Practice** (see the **Hanging Scroll from Japan Teacher’s Resource PowerPoint** for a visual guide to the following implementation steps)

1. Show examples of hanging scrolls (Section III of the **Incorporating Japanese Brush Painting PowerPoint**). Explain to students that Bashō’s poetry was displayed in this fashion, and they will create a hanging scroll for their haiku as a final product. Note the asymmetric, yet unified, positioning of text and illustration.
2. Have students take out the haiku they wrote at the end of Part 1 of the lesson. If they have not copied the final poem on good quality painting paper, have them do so.
3. Using the example of *Grass Sandals*, have students add a *kanji* character and a painted black-ink illustration that are related to the subject of their haiku. First have students practice their black-ink illustration on a separate piece of paper. Encourage students to discover black-ink painting’s range of color (from black to shades of gray) and variety of texture produced by different brushstrokes and amounts of pressure applied.
4. Show examples of the border designs of hanging scrolls (Section III of the **Incorporating Japanese Brush Painting PowerPoint**). Demonstrate the steps to print a border along the outer edge of the color paper using Styrofoam squares, rubber stamps, or potato print. Practicing their printing techniques on a separate piece of paper first, have students (1) carve patterns into their stamp; (2) ink the stamps; (3) align the stamp at the edge of the paper; and (4) apply pressure. Students should repeat prints evenly, one next to the other, to create a decorative border for the hanging scroll.
5. Using a small piece of Styrofoam and red paint, have students create and print an original chop mark (artist’s seal) design on the painting paper.
6. Attach the paper with text and illustration to the center of the bordered color paper. Attach two narrow strips of paper from the top edge of the color paper to the top edge of the text and illustration to divide evenly into thirds the area above the text and illustration. Attach a cord or hanger on the top and a wooden dowel on the bottom to complete the scroll.

### **Conclusion**

1. Have students title their works. Display final products in a classroom museum. Allow the students to walk around the room and use the **Grass Sandals Classroom Museum Worksheet** to evaluate a classmate’s work. As an alternative, the worksheet can be used as a rubric. Instead of check marks, score 1-4 to grade effectiveness.
2. Invite other classes to view the illustrated haiku scrolls in the classroom museum.
3. Have small groups of students demonstrate the *kanji* characters they learned to

### **Extensions and Cross-Curricular Ideas:**

1. Discuss syllables and have students clap out spelling words, friends' names, content words, etc.
2. *Social Studies:* Help students map Bashō's journey on a map of Japan. Use Bashō's travel stories as told in *The Narrow Road to Oku* to learn about the geography of Japan. Encourage students to compare travel long ago to travel today. Compare the use of haiku in the past and photographs today to help illustrate and remember travel. After a field trip, have students borrow Bashō's idea and write haiku of what they saw.
3. *Writing:* Introduce *tanka* and *renga* poetry forms, which are predecessors of haiku.
  - *Tanka* are 31-syllable (5-7-5-7-7) stanzas and often express passion and heartache. (See **Poetry Talk** lesson in this *Texts and Contexts* curriculum collection.)
  - *Renga* is collaborative poetry in which writers link *tanka* poems written with one or more partners. Typical *renga* are 12, 18, or 36 stanzas of 5-7-5 or 7-7. They include nature images, season words, and subjects of daily human life.

### **Resources and References:**

#### ***Resources for Use in Lesson***

Spivak, Dawnine. *Grass Sandals: The Travels of Basho*. Demi, illustrator. New York: Atheneum, 1997.

#### ***References for Teacher Background***

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