Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry. Traditional haiku poems link nature to human life. A Haiku has no rhyming scheme and 17 syllables in 3 lines, 5-7-5.

Traditional Haiku indicate a season using nature words: cherry blossoms indicate spring, snow indicates winter. Sometimes these nature words are obvious and sometimes they are more subtle... but they always add more meaning to the poem through symbolism.

Some of Matsuo Basho’s haiku:

Won’t you come and see loneliness? Only one leaf from the kiri tree.

On a withered branch
A crow has alighted:
Nightfall in autumn.

April’s air stirs in willow-leaves... a butterfly
Floats and balances

The oak tree:
not interested
in cherry blossoms.

Matsuo Basho was a famous Japanese writer who lived from 1644-1694. He helped develop Haiku as a form of poetry. He used haiku to comment on everyday human feelings and experiences.

Matsuo Basho wrote in Japanese, so the translated English versions of his Haiku don’t always follow the 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

Arbor Day is a spring holiday when we celebrate the beauty and benefits of trees. Write a Haiku about a tree in your yard or school. Think about what that tree means to you at different times of year and how that tree makes you feel. Use nature imagery to try to convey those feelings.