



# *Eight Things I Learned from My Cats*

## *About Writing Haiku*

A Writer's Workshop with Lee Wardlaw  
Grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>

*Your tummy, soft as  
warm dough. I knead and knead, then  
bake it with a nap.*

Haiku is not just the world's shortest poetry... or a unique part of Japanese culture... or even a school lesson about syllables.

Haiku is also cat-like (compact, elegant, speaking volumes in a few choice 'meows'); and learning to write it helps children spy, pounce and capture the deceptively simple moments that happen in their world every day...and to feel more connected to that world.

This workshop will focus on eight keys to writing haiku:

1. Tabbies vs. Siamese ('Breeds' of haiku)
2. Waiting for the Mouse (Observation)
3. The Pounce ('Aha!" Moments)
4. Living in the Now (Writing in Present Tense)
5. What Part of Meow Don't you Understand? (Imagery)
6. Catnip! (Playful Writing; How/When to Break the Rules)
7. The Art of Lap-Sitting (Care & Compassion)
8. Catnap! (Importance of R & R – Rest and Revision)

*Grades: 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>*  
*Time: 60-90 minutes*  
*Workshop size: 6-20 students*



For this workshop, students should have access to *Won Ton – A Cat Tale Told in Haiku* by Lee Wardlaw. Depending on the age group, featured themes may be pets (petku), school (edhaiku), nature (traditional haiku), etc.

# What is Haiku?

by Lee Wardlaw

## Haiku is...



pronounced *hi-koo*



a non-rhyming form of poetry that originated in Japan during the 9<sup>th</sup> century



the shortest form of poetry in the world!

## Haiku are...



only three lines long, with a total of 17 syllables: 5 in the first line, 7 in the second, 5 again in the third



focused on a moment in nature, and usually feature a *kigo*, or season word



always written in present tense

## Haiku will...



paint a picture in the reader's mind



turn an ordinary moment into something extraordinary



surprise you with a feeling of *a-ha!* or *ahhh...*

# How to Write a Petku Haiku

by Lee Wardlaw



## 1. Observe

Sit or stand quietly and watch your pet in action: sleeping, playing, eating running, etc. Pay attention to every detail. (If your pet is not with you, close your eyes and observe a memory of it in action.)

## 2. Use your Senses

As you observe your pet, think about what you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. (Think, too, about what your pet might be seeing, hearing, smelling, touching or tasting!)

## 3. Feel

What kind of mood are you in? Does your pet stir up any emotions within you? What are you feeling? What do you think your pet is feeling?

## 4. Take Notes

Jot down words to help you remember what you've observed and felt.

## 5. Write!

Describe your pet and what you observed in three short sentences. Write in the present tense, as if the moment is happening right now. Remember to use five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five again in the third line. (If you prefer, you may create a 'What am I?' petku.)

## 6. Revise!

Read your poem aloud several times. Does it paint a picture for the reader? Do you think your reader can see, hear, smell, taste, feel the moment as you do? If not, think of words that are stronger, more vivid, expressive.

## 7. Repeat!

Read and revise your poem again and again until you think it's the best it can be.

## 8. Illustrate

Using your best handwriting, write your poem on the lines of the petku sheet. Draw a picture to illustrate your poem.

