
What Makes the Student Haiku Contest Different

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Learning Through the Process

Learning and writing haiku in the classroom with the language teacher is the heart of the contest. Students explore the rhythm, play with the sound and beauty of words, and figure out how to express their idea in just a few lines.

To keep the focus on learning, all submissions come through participating teachers instead of directly from students. Each student can propose up to three haikus. Each teacher can submit up to forty entries.

The Student Haiku Contest welcomes students from Grade 1 to university, along with their teachers. The goal is not just a finished poem. It is the classroom work that gets you there.

Basis of a Global Conversation

By exchanging poems in the classroom, students develop awareness and respect of differences. This aspect is later amplified at the Awards Ceremony. When haikus appear in different languages, readers meet voices from other languages, cultures and age groups. That exchange builds global connections that start with a single poem.

What begins in the classroom culminates towards the end of the school year with the Awards Ceremony held at the United Nations International School and an exhibition on the premises of the winning haikus in all languages. The ceremony can also be viewed later on from anywhere in the world. A digital booklet of the winning haikus is also available.

Voices From Many Places

The Student Haiku Contest is organized by Movement for Language and Culture, with support from the United Nations International School (UNIS), the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, along with language and cultural education communities around the world. The contest's multilingual format is a key feature. It draws entries from a wide network of schools and supplementary language programs. Students write in the language that feels most natural to them. Already, the contest has showcased haikus in Japanese, English, French, Spanish, Italian and German. Each language category has its own haiku expert as a judge.



Up to 2026, the contest has seen students' haikus from eight states in the United States, from Quebec (Canada), Slovenia, Japan and Kenya. Recent years have also brought entries from Tajikistan, Turkey and Indonesia.

It Takes a Village

What begins as a quiet moment of observation becomes a celebration of creativity and cultural connection. In over 20 years we have seen how poems broaden students' sense of self and their world, and how teachers strengthen their community with shared writing. At the awards ceremonies, families, siblings and friends gather to listen with pride as young poets read words written from the heart.

We want this tradition to continue for many years. To do that, we need more people who believe in creativity, language learning, and cultural exchange.

- Teachers of any language who bring haiku into their classrooms and give students space to express what they notice. Their guidance turns observation into voice.
- Schools from everywhere in the world that value multilingual expression and cultural learning. By participating, you give students an opportunity to be heard on a wider stage and to connect with peers across borders.
- Sponsors who help us keep the contest free, expand our outreach, and share students' work with a wider audience.

This contest is more than an annual event. It is a movement rooted in inquiry and expression — in noticing the world, and in finding the words to share it.

With your involvement, we can ensure that the next 20 years bring even more young voices to the page, more classrooms to the conversation, and more communities together through poetry.

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