
Haiku Contest for Students – Guidelines

September 1, 2026

Giving Young People a Voice

Organized by the Movement for Language and Culture (MLC) and the United Nations International School (UNIS), the contest is under the auspices of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. The contest aims to amplify the voices of young people. It includes several language components.

Participating with your class is a source of pride for both students and the school. It is also a time for connection: by discovering the poems submitted each year, we recognize ourselves, understand other points of view, and broaden our horizons.

Participation Guidelines

Free and open from January to March of each year. Submissions are made on the dedicated page of the United Nations International School:

<https://www.unis.org/haikucontest>

Once the contest is open, the page will be titled with the new year. There you will find the expected format and submission procedure.

A teacher can submit up to 40 haiku in total for all their classes, at a rate of 1 to 3 haiku per student. The same teacher may separately submit 1 to 3 personal haiku.

Poems must be original, by the indicated author, and must not have been submitted to any other competition. Individual submissions will not be accepted.

The winning haikus are selected by independent judges, one for each language. The choices take into account the intrinsic value of the poems as well as the age of the participants.

A section on the Sustainable Development Goals

If the United Nations SDGs are part of your teaching or are a concern for your students, you can submit separate haikus focusing on one or more of the Goals. The winning poems in this section will be chosen by the Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations.

Ceremony and Commemorative Booklet

The winners are announced before the end of the academic year during a ceremony at the United Nations International School in New York. Participating teachers are informed of the date of the ceremony. A video link is shared if available.

Winners, including the honorable mentions are offered a certificate. Those in attendance at the ceremony are presented with the paper copy. A souvenir booklet is created and contains the winning poems, the honorable mentions, and the commentaries of the Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations and of each of the judges. A digital copy of it is provided to all participants for easy retrieval and sharing.

An exhibition showcasing the winning haikus is set up at the ceremony venue to prolong the discussion with the participants and their families attending the event.

Haiku: a Short Form, a Great Freedom

Present on every continent and practiced at all ages, haiku is an accessible and universal creative tool. Teaching it in the classroom offers students a literary activity that stimulates attention, imagination, and linguistic precision.

Next January, give your students a space to name the world as they see it and what matters to them.

Luce Pelletier, for the team at :

Movement for Language and Culture

Mami Masuya Fleming &

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Co-presidents

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