



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

**Part 1 by:** Carridy Koski, Rebecca Laverdure, Mandy Lover, Nina Marks, and Lynn Williams

**Part 2 by:** Sue Grieshaber, Gina Dupre, Gayle Greene, and Casey McMorrow

**With:** Jill Fenn, Jill Maxwell, and Axel Reitzig

**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 Bashō*, 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 Basho was a Japanese man who lived over 300 years ago. Basho 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. Basho 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 Basho 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 not

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.

### **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 Bashō*. Demi, illustrator. New York: Atheneum, 1997.

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

Burleson, Patricia. "The History and Artistry of Haiku." *Japan Digest*. Bloomington, IN: National Clearinghouse for United States – Japan Studies, Indiana University, October 1998. <http://spice.stanford.edu/docs/138>

Donegan, Patricia. *Haiku: Asian Arts & Crafts for Creative Kids*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2003.

Matsuo, Bashō. "Narrow Road to the Interior." *Narrow Road to the Interior and Other Writings*. Sam Hamill, translator. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2000, pp. xxxii-36.

Matsuo, Bashō. *The Narrow Road to Oku*. Donald Keene, translator. Miyata Masayuki, illustrator. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1996.

Sakade, Florence, ed. *A Guide to Reading and Writing Japanese*. Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959.

Stroke Order. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stroke\\_order#Basic\\_rules\\_of\\_stroke\\_order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stroke_order#Basic_rules_of_stroke_order)