

Six Haiku by Matsuo Basho



1. under my tree-roof
slanting lines of april rain
separate to drops

2. The oak tree:
not interested
in cherry blossoms.

3. First day of spring--
I keep thinking about
the end of autumn.

4. Awake at night--
the sound of the water jar
cracking in the cold.

5. A caterpillar,
this deep in fall--
still not a butterfly.

6. A bee
staggers out
of the peony.

Matsuo Basho (1644 - November 28, 1694), was a Japanese poet. He is best remembered today for raising the haiku form to the highest level.

He was born near Kyoto, and was known as Kinsaku as a child - he took the name Basho, which means banana tree, in the 1680s when he moved into a hut alongside a banana tree and became a recluse. He was the son of a low-ranking samurai, and initially worked in the service of a local lord, Todo Yoshitada. He began writing poetry while there, but moved to Edo (now Tokyo) upon his lord's death in 1666. There he gained a reputation as a great poet and critic.

It was Basho who raised the haiku from a comic verse, often written for light relief, to a serious form, imbued with the spirit of Zen Buddhism.

Basho travelled very widely during his life, and many of his writings reflect his experiences on his travels. His book *Oku no Hosomichi* (The Narrow Road Through the Deep North), written in 1694 and widely seen as his finest, is an example of this. In it, prose descriptions of the landscape through which he travelled are interspersed with the haiku for which he is now most famous.

Basho died in 1694 in Osaka.

(Taken from http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/ma/Matsuo_Basho)