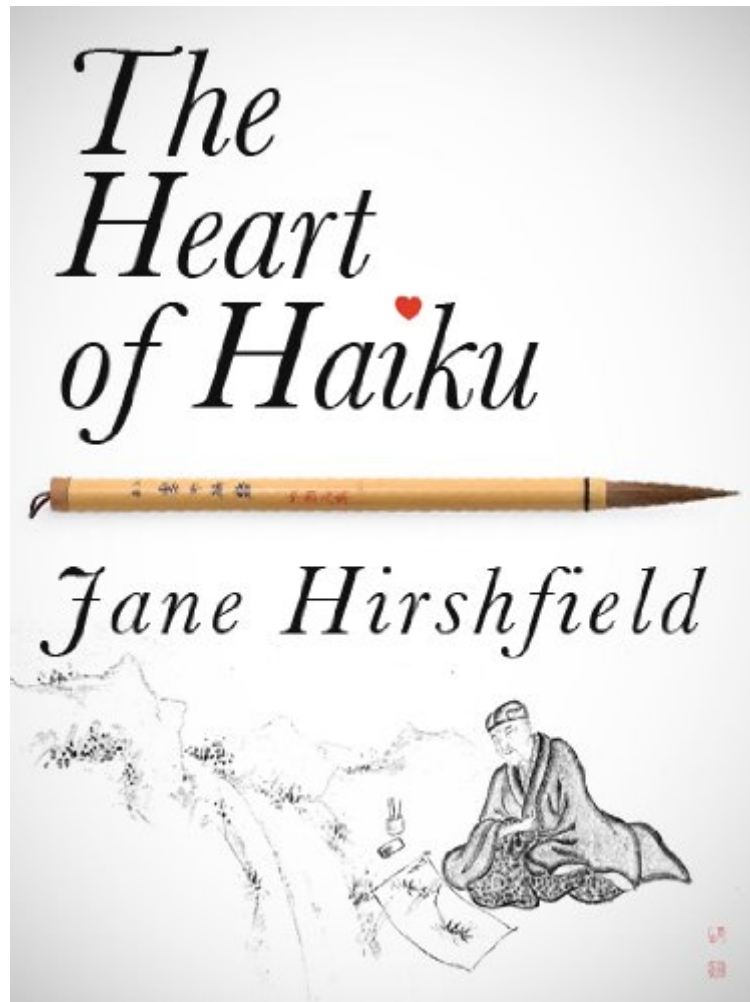


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# The Heart Of Haiku (Kindle Single)



## Synopsis

In seventeenth-century Japan, the wandering poet Basho developed haiku, a seventeen-syllable poetic form now perhaps the most widely written type of poetry in the world. Haiku are practiced by poets, lovers, and schoolchildren, by political haiku twitterers, by anyone who has the desire to pin perception and experience into a few quick phrases. This essay offers readers unparalleled insight into the living heart of haiku—how haiku work and what they hold, and how to read through and into their images to find a full expression of human life and perceptions, sometimes profound, sometimes playful. Jane Hirshfield is an award-winning poet and author of the now-classic *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry*, as well as an equally classic book introducing earlier Japanese poetry, *The Ink Dark Moon: Love Poems by Komachi and Shikibu*, *Women of the Ancient Japanese Court*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jane Hirshfield's *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry*, a series of deep but approachable, gentle but commanding essays on poetry, is my favorite book on literature of all time. I am not a poet myself, but a life long admirer of poetry. Hirshfield illuminates the poet's mind and experience with the authority of an accomplished poet, but with a total lack of self-importance or contrivance. She

brings that same wonderful depth of knowledge to this piece - a must for anyone who loves the haiku form - or wants to write better tweets! Hirshfield never disappoints, and I can't recommend this short piece highly enough for anyone fascinated by one of the most intricate and deceptively simple poetic forms, the haiku.

I love poetry. I love Haiku. But the one book of Basho's poetry that I've had before this gem had such a drearily dull introduction that it put me off the poetry for a good long while. Now Jane Hirschfield brings her poet's voice to the topic, and poet's insights to Haiku and Basho. Even from the first few lines, I knew I was in good hands. What a happy bargain this is!

Jane Hirshfield's sparkling prose rivals her poetry. This essay on Basho and the origins of Haiku call to mind her delicious 1990 book *Ink Dark Moon*, translations (with Mariko Aratani) of the love poems of Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, women of the ancient court of Japan. I find Hirshfield's observations not only insightful, in a scholarly way, but luminously informed by her long practice as a poet.

I'm the daughter of a poet, yet I'm sometimes dissatisfied with my lack of understanding of the poetic form. My mom gifted me with an ear for cadence and rhythm, which means I can write a limerick in no time flat and readily win online haiku contests with little effort. But I feel weirdly guilty this ability; I had the sinking suspicion that I've been missing out on something huge by treating the haiku as nothing more than the playful form it was before Basho got ahold of it. Thank goodness I picked up this thoughtful essay by Jane Hirshfield, a wonderful poet in her own right (*After: Poems*, etc). Haiku is great as playful verse, but she has managed to explain to me that there's so much more to it than I had realized, and I can begin to slow down and enjoy it on a deeper level. How cool is that?

I first encountered Jane Hirshfield's poetry in *The Atlantic*; it was June of 1996 that I read "Three Foxes by the Edge of the Field at Twilight" on my computer and then heard her reading her poem on RealAudio. I was entranced, and thus began my journey. I found *The Lives of the Heart: Poems* and fell in love with her work. The true test of a poet's strength, for me, is if lines of their poetry come back to me unbidden -- I know, then, that the poetry has taken root. Hirshfield's poetry can make that claim. I have purchased several copies of *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* to hand out to friends; it is a book that I consider essential. We took turns reading poems from *Women*

in *Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women* at the bedside of a loved one; those poems, those ancient voices, provided vessels for our grief. I will always be grateful that they were so thoughtfully woven together and made available in this anthology. The essay on Basho is a gift of thought about form. There is nothing to do but accept the gift and bow to the generosity. It is wonderful.

I have absolutely no background in poetry, or in arts of any kind. As a sporadic dabbler in all things cast in verse, I find this book arresting. The collection of verses in this book, for someone who otherwise does not have a knowledge of haiku, is both overwhelming & leaves you wanting more. Overwhelming because of the possibilities & suppleness of the verse, the beauty of the visual imagery, & the perceptions that permeate your senses. The symbolism is sometimes inscrutable. In sort of a zen like way, like the way you cannot clutch water from a stream. The threads of acceptance - another zen like feature of this style, or perhaps, Basho's style - run deep. Add to this Hirshfield's text. I reckon the word "explains" is rather petty for what she is able to do. Illuminates is more apt. She lights up a veritable mess of mystic mumblings & teaches us to see the whole the way we want to see it & experience it. She sets context, but hardly analyzes. She records history, but rarely opines. She takes us through a mollifying journey of the poet's life & points out how his circumstance changed affected his verse. She, like Basho, stays away from the dramatic & displays remarkable composure in stitching this story of remarkable beauty & pathos. I'd recommend this book very highly. @souvikstweets

"The Heart of Haiku" is a small e-book written as a Kindle Single by Jane Hirshfield. It is a short 94 Kb download. This is a short biographical book about 17th century Japanese poet Basho. A figure that revolutionized poetry in his native land with his ongoing development of previous Japanese poetic structure and schemes into what is now known as Haiku. I knew very little about Haiku but this short work caught my eye, I downloaded the sample available to me on my Kindle and was hooked. Hirshfield has obviously studied Basho's life (within the limit of historical recordings made during his lifetime). She gives the readers some basic knowledge of his upbringing, his persist lifelong poverty, his artistic development/maturity (poetry) and finally some of his frustration and annoyances as he became older. Of course there are many examples of his Haiku poems...poems with only 17 sounds and in Western form are broken up into three lines. Short statements that superficially appear to have only the remotest (if any connection) until you study them a little more deeply. I found the explanations of some of the poems by Hirshfield were particularly insightful. They helped to point

the way so I could 'begin' to get a gist of the meaning what was presented before me. Conclusion: For the uninitiated, like myself...the most basic of primers. But interesting and intriguing enough to make me want to learn more. 5 Stars. Ray Nicholson

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