

# Haiku

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# Haiku

The mentalist holds a small book.

*“Do you know haikus? It’s a form of Japanese poetry from the 17th century and that is still ongoing today. In the Western world, poems are often long, with a story or a moral. Haikus are very different. It’s a very short text, describing an image, an emotion or a sensation. Let’s see some examples together.”*

The mentalist reads one of the book’s haikus.

*“Warm summer night,  
scent of hair  
overwhelming me.*

*Then it’s up to the reader to interpret the text for himself. The one I just read could be a sensation or a personal memory.”*

The mentalist turns the page and reads another example:

*“The bridge holds  
the two banks of the river.*

*This one is more like a landscape. The reader can see a message in it. For example, the bridge may be the relationship that connects him to another person, each of them being a bank of the river.”*

The mentalist turns the page and reads another example:

*“From its water-lily,  
the frog jumps  
into a big cloud.*

*This one is completely stupid. A frog cannot jump into a cloud. But maybe the poet saw a frog jump into the reflection of a cloud, on a lake, and he decided to make the haiku more symbolic. Again, it’s up to the reader to interpret the text if he wants to. If you feel bad or if you’re a negative person, maybe you will think that the frog was stupid to be deceived by the illusion of a reflection. And if you’re a positive person, maybe you will think that the frog was right to try to reach something greater than itself.*

*You know how you have a favorite song in a music album? It’s the same for me, I have a favorite haiku in this book.”*

The mentalist looks for a page around the middle of the book then reads his favorite haiku out loud.

*"A petal from a cherry tree  
falls on my hand  
then continues its journey.*

*I like the image depicted by this haiku but also the idea that something beautiful (the petal from a cherry tree) touches me for a brief moment before going away. To capture it would be to destroy it, so I must learn to appreciate it while it lasts.*

*I have my favorite haiku, so I would like you to take the time to find one that you like too. Go through the book and choose a haiku (in English). Maybe it will make you think of someone important for you, or a personal memory, or a project that you have."*

The spectator takes the book and goes through it until she finds a page that she likes.

*"Once you have found your haiku, do not read it out loud, simply read it in your head a few times. Once you're done, you can close the book; keep the page with your finger if you want.*

*Now I am going to ask you to move away from the text of your haiku and to try to form a mental image from what you have read. If it is not too abstract, visualize the image depicted by your haiku and focus on the emotion or the sensation it gives you."*

The mentalist focuses too.

*"OK, I feel that it is more like an image, maybe a landscape. You are in nature. There is also the idea of something high. Does this make sense to you? Perfect.*

*Let's try to share this image together, in black and white, with simple shapes."*

The mentalist takes a big notepad and a piece of charcoal. He focuses then draws something without showing what it is.

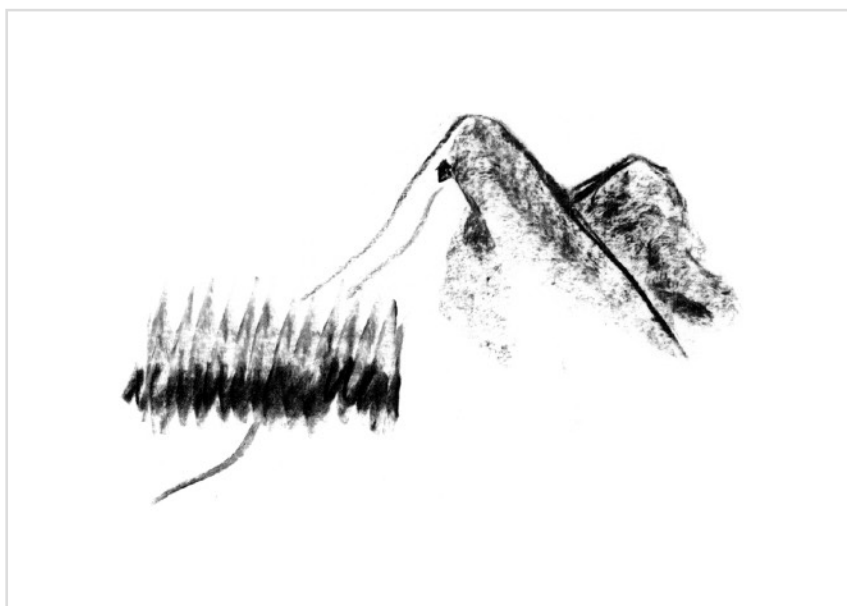
*"Good, I think you will be able to understand what I have drawn, I will leave it like this.*

*Do you remember the text of your haiku? Perfect, please read it out loud."*

The spectator reads her haiku:

*"In altitude,  
the temple hides  
and has to be earned."*

At the same time, the mentalist turns the notepad around to show his drawing to everyone:



## *Method*

“Haiku” is an effect that evolved a lot over time: the type of book being used, the presentation, even the method. Its creation comes from the convergence of three specific elements. Firstly, I have been interested in Japan for more than ten years so I have seen a multitude of Japanese movies and animated films that forged a specific sensitivity for this culture.

Secondly, around the time of the creation of this effect, I wanted to perform a book test that would not only be an intellectual challenge. In magic and in mentalism, the audience too often walks away with only one thing in mind: *“How did he do it?”* I wanted to provide an emotional impact, in addition to the intellectual impact. The goal was to deceive the audience, to show them something impossible, but that would also have a personal value for them. If you perform a trick to someone and he thinks that you are only trying to prove your superiority, it creates an unpleasant conflict that will prevent the audience from enjoying a nice moment with you. On the other hand, if you create a pleasant, sharing moment and if you add a mysterious element to it, the audience will accept your proposition more easily. When doing research on the theme of book tests, I found out that one of the very first presentations consisted in guessing poetry verses. Since poetry inherently produces an emotional impact for people, it seemed to me to be the ideal type of text to obtain the result I was trying to achieve.

Thirdly, at the beginning of the 2000s, I found a small Japanese notepad. I recognized the format because I had seen it a few times in Japanese movies that I watched. It seemed to be the perfect object and it became the final piece of the puzzle: a book of Japanese poetry, a spectator who chooses a poem that connects to her, and the mentalist guessing her choice with a drawing. Since then, the format of the book has changed to become a paperback and I have completely modified the method to make it even simpler and more direct for you.