

It's a distinct honour for me to be invited to judge this Adult Haiku section for the 2022 New Zealand Poetry Society's International Competition which garnered 618 entries from various countries around the globe. There were many entries that came very close to being selected for their fine content, but for reasons such as lack of rhythm, run-on thoughts, incorrect structure, no distinct pause, or an unrecognizable "aha" moment, they were not chosen. Some entries were incomplete haiku and others were seemingly padded. It's often the fine-tuning that sets one haiku/senryu apart from all the others. There were old-school 5/7/5 haiku, zen-style haiku plus quite a few senryu as well. For me, a pivot line, juxtaposition, seasonal references (direct or indirect), and uncommon subject matter, were all very important. Looking for those haiku that tweaked my senses, I've selected the following winners which I believe to be outstanding and stellar examples of modern-day English language haiku.— Judge, an'ya

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### **FIRST PLACE**

parish churchyard—  
words for eternity  
lost to a thrush

Scott Mason  
USA

For the First Place, I've chosen this haiku by Scott Mason from the USA which includes everything that makes it a haiku rather than just a short poem. The content includes both a human element and a nature reference, and albeit, (not counting syllables) it has a short, long, short rhythm. The structure begins in line 1 with the "wide setting" of a "parish churchyard". It then carries on in line 2 with the subject "words for eternity" which to me are representative of nature's timeless existence. In the final line of Scott's haiku comes the verb "lost" and the aha of "to a thrush"; now we must contemplate whether the words are lost or have they become eternal in the loud sound of that thrush...well done Scott!

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### **SECOND PLACE**

rain at last  
each tender leaf leaps  
at its touch

Katherine Raine  
New Zealand

In Second Place, this haiku by Katherine Raine of New Zealand immediately caught my attention, having seen this actually happen in my own observances of nature as well. It

constitutes what I call a “statement” haiku. Starting in line 1 is her statement “rain at last”, then in line 2 “each tender leaf leaps” enhances that statement with a subject and an action verb (which is a plus in haiku), and then line 3 shows us the reason. The “l” sounds of “leaf leaps” are also noteworthy, as is her use of “at” in lines one and three. Albeit the pause is in line 1, it can also be read backward “at its touch each tender leaf leaps (pause) rain at last”... Congratulations to Katherine!

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### **THIRD PLACE**

reaching shore  
the mallard's shadow  
regains its feet

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi  
India

In Third Place, is this unusual haiku by Srinivasa from India. I say “unusual” mainly because of the word “shadow” in line 2. This is a strong example of “showing” rather than “telling”. Yes, we see the mallard “reaching shore” but it’s the shadow of the bird that “regains its feet”. This haiku also gives us a good example of how to use a third line pivot, for instance:

reaching shore  
the mallard’s shadow (pivot line)

Can also be read:

the mallard’s shadow (pivot line)  
regains its feet

Nice work by this author!

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### **HIGHLY COMMENDED** (in no particular order)

spring nesting  
a streak of straw  
across the sky

Anne Louise Curran  
New Zealand

What a lovely haiku by Anne Louise Curran from New Zealand. Anne uses a unique perspective in her writing and knows how to “show” rather than “tell”. Here, we don’t actually see the bird, only “a streak of straw” crossing the sky! Congrats Anne!

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## HIGHLY COMMENDED

howl  
lost owner  
again

Marion Moxham  
New Zealand

It seems that New Zealanders are on a winning streak, and this one (a senryu) by Marion Moxham gave me a real chuckle. It's never the dog who is lost, rather it's the owner of course <s>. Thank you Marion for sharing this one!

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## HIGHLY COMMENDED

dying flowers  
spill from cemetery bins  
afternoon sun

Anne Louise Curran  
New Zealand

Again, Anne Curran from NZ is in the limelight. Her juxtaposition of "dying flowers" with those souls buried in a cemetery is excellent. This experienced haiku poet has created a "zoom" effect of small in line 1 to medium in line 2 and opened up to a "wide setting" of "afternoon sun" in line 3. Another fine moment Anne!

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## COMMENDED (in no particular order)

waning moon  
no longer sure where the end  
of my tether is

Sandra Simpson  
New Zealand

Also making New Zealand proud is Sandra Simpson. There's a fine line between haiku and senryu, and I believe this could go either way. A mention of nature with the "waning moon" combined with a human element is what makes it stand apart as a haiku, but the last line tends toward a senryu in my opinion, so you can take your choice. Thanks for both Sandra!

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## COMMENDED

rainstorm  
a widow watches the grass  
turn green

Peter Free  
New Zealand

From a male perspective, this commended haiku about a “widow” was written by Peter Free (also of New Zealand). A matching rhythm in lines 1 and 3, nice “w” sounds in “widow and watches” in line 2, and perhaps an indication of a new beginning in line 3. This haiku goes much deeper if you use your imagination on a second and in-depth read. Congrats Peter!

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## COMMENDED

birdbath  
starlings flip the halo  
ice circle

Marion Moxham  
New Zealand

Another interesting haiku by Marion Moxham, again of New Zealand. It starts with a simple setting in line 1 where we can see a “birdbath”, followed up by a subject of “starlings” and then flowing into her skillful use of a verb with “flip the halo”. Line 3 continues with “ice circle”, and even though it’s similar to the “halo”, in line 2, perhaps part of it has melted which lends a brand new visual perspective to the writing. Congratulations Marion!

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## COMMENDED

backlit moon  
a screech-owl splits  
our silence

Cynthia Rowe  
Australia

Giving New Zealand a run for their money is this haiku by Cynthia Rowe from Australia which in very few words and with a perfect short, long, short rhythm gives us “sight” in

line 1, “sound” in line 2, and “silence” in line 3. Wonderful “s” sounds with “screech-owl, splits and silence”, as well as “o” sounds in “moon, owl, and our”, plus her skillful use of multiple senses. Thank you, for entering this haiku, Cynthia!

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## COMMENDED

autumn crocus  
I'll always regret I was away  
the day you bloomed

Julie Schwerin  
USA

A commended haiku from the USA by Julie Schwerin which makes an uncommon reference to an “autumn crocus”. In case you might wonder about such a flower blooming in fall, the “autumn crocus” (called by that name) is a toxic flower resembling the true crocus but just in a different plant family. Line 2 of Julie’s haiku makes you wonder if it was the crocus that this author missed while she “was away”, or was it perchance referencing a person who bloomed. It’s left up to the reader’s interpretation. Nice write Julie!

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## COMMENDED

bellbird  
the tree lets go  
of a leaf

Sue Courtney  
New Zealand

From Sue Courtney a commended haiku that references the “bellbird”, a passerine species endemic to New Zealand. In this zen-style haiku of 8 simple words and a perfect melody, this one just says all that needs to be said. Some haiku written in this zen style can be incomplete, but Sue has given us a subject, an action verb, and visual closure as the leaf zigzags to wherever it lands. The true simplicity of the haiku genre at its very best. Congratulations Sue!