



who is currently a regional coordinator for the Haiku Society of America. She gives workshops and readings, and has appeared on the radio to promote the genre. All haikuists should be grateful for her missionary work on behalf of haiku.

The book is divided into seven sections: “Haiku Basics,” “The Spirit and Delight of Senryu,” “Voices of American Haiku and Senryu,” “Nature and the Seasons in Haiku,” “Haiku and Senryu Sequences,” “Teaching Haiku and Senryu,” and “Getting Published and Expanding Skills.” The chapter on teaching haiku seems out of place in a survey book—one targeted for beginners—yet it does reinforce some basic ideas presented elsewhere. The above chapters are followed by an extensive selection of Digregorio’s own haiku and senryu as examples and a large reference bibliography of educational books, anthologies, collections, journals, and websites. The reference sections will be of great value to beginning readers.

As for her style, throughout the book Digregorio writes in a breezy, confident, and welcoming tone that does a nice job demystifying the genre, and gives the reader the impression that they too can write haiku.

Despite the book’s references to Haiku and Senryu as a “how to” book, the “Introduction” explains that the book “isn’t intended as a scholarly guide, but as a very practical and simple introduction to haiku and senryu...” This is an important distinction that sometimes gets lost in a book that seems to want to be many things at once. I suspect Digregorio had a lot to say about the genre and erred on the side of too much information. Each reader of *Haiku and Senryu* will have to sort through the book themselves to decide what exactly this book is supposed to be—for them.

A reader educated in haiku will have some quibbles. For example, while Digregorio correctly recognizes that the word haiku is both singular and plural, a number of sentences in which she is talking about haiku in general, such as “Haiku often reveals...” and “not all haiku that has been...” seem to confuse the idea. A good editor should have caught this.

Additionally, the survey or introductory nature of the book necessarily means that some ideas are covered too quickly. For example, when she writes “When we write haiku, we often end up with a longer second line...” she should explain the reasoning behind the statement. A look at her own work in the back section of the book seems to refute the “often” nature of this claim.

And while she does briefly address the idea of a kigo or season word in the chapter “Nature and the Seasons in Haiku,” she doesn’t mention it again in the number of examples of nature haiku that she provides in that chapter. This is surprising since the kigo (along with the form and the cut) is such an integral part of the Japanese haiku. The importance of the cut isn’t explicitly mentioned at all.

However, for a beginning reader or writer of haiku, these and other quibbles disappear. A beginner will only see an author who is excited about the genre and wants to share that enthusiasm. They will visit a number of haiku that are accessible—and perhaps more importantly: do-able. I particularly liked the section in which Digregorio quoted from a number of well-known haikuists on why haiku was important to them. That sense of the larger haiku community is often missing in books.

For a slightly more experienced reader, the “Getting Published and Expanding Skills” section offers some good tips on tracking haiku and on submitting to and building a relationship with editors.

One final thing that I can’t help but mention: while Digregorio does include a large sampling of successful haiku and senryu by a number of strong poets, the over-weighting of her own work—especially the over-long “Who the Author Is” section and fifty pages of her selected haiku—feels a bit overly self-promotional, despite the fact that the poems are successful in most cases. And I can’t help but question the laudatory quote from Robert Spiess who died in 2002 on the “About this Book” page.

That aside, *Haiku and Senryu: A Simple Guide for All* is a nice introduction that should hook the beginning reader and leave them wanting more.