

Haiku Hunt

Engaging the public with
creative curiosity at the
Riverside Festival, Leicester
6 Saturday 6 June 2026

Empathy, Difficulty, Difference:
Creative Curiosity in Practice



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



1

START HERE

Look closely.
Listen carefully.
Sniff the air.
Touch bark, grass, petals.
Your mission:
find words that help
capture a moment
in nature.
You only need curiosity.



HAÏKU HUNT

Welcome,
word-foragers!
Wander through the
park and collect tiny
treasures, not
objects – but words.

2

FIND A TREE

Look carefully at
the leaves.
What colours can
you find besides
green?

Mossy Lime Golden
Dusty Speckled Silver
Shadowy Amber
Freckled Sunlit



3

CAN YOU COME UP WITH YOUR OWN WORDS?



5

COME UP WITH YOUR OWN WORDS



4

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LISTEN

What sounds can you
hear?

Rustling Crunching
Chirping Buzzing
Whispering Crackling
Fluttering Breeze
Distant laughter

6

FOLLOW A SMELL

Can you smell
flowers, grass, rain,
food, mud, trees?

Describe the smell
without naming it
directly.



7

Sweet Sharp
Peppery Earthy
Smoky Rain-soaked
Fresh-cut

WHAT WORDS CAN YOU THINK OF?

Turn over
the page



8

FIND SOMETHING TINY

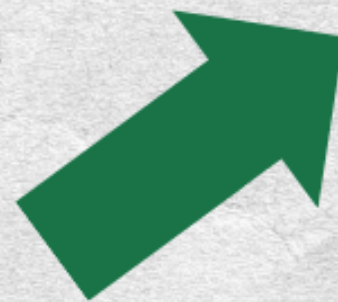
A feather.
A curled leaf.
A crack in the
pavement or a bench.



9

DESCRIBE IT
AS IF IT WERE
MAGICAL.

WRITE DOWN
SOME OF THE
WORDS YOU
THINK OF.



11

You can use this
simple pattern:

Line 1

What did you notice?

Line 2

What did it
feel/sound/smell like?

Line 3

What moment stayed
with you?

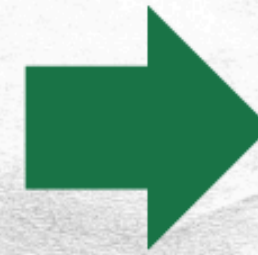


10

Use some of the words
you have collected to

BUILD YOUR HAÏKU

A haiku is a very small
poem that captures a
moment.



12

EXAMPLE HAÏKU

Golden leaves whisper

Rain smell hiding in
tree bark

A crow hops sideways



13

SYLLABLES

Haikus have a special
rhythm:

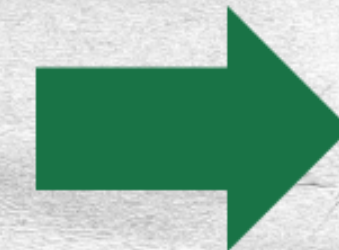
Line 1 = 5 beats

Line 2 = 7 beats

Line 3 = 5 beats

Can you make your
haiku follow this
pattern?

Try clapping each
word as you say it.



15

MORE CURIOSITY CHALLENGES

Find something moving
slowly / Find three different
shades of green / Discover
a shape in the clouds /
Listen for the quietest
sound / Find something
beginning with the same
letter as your name



14

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've finished the
Haiku Hunt. Bring
your collected words
back to the
Haiku Hunt tent
and share them if
you would like to.
Well done on finding
a hidden poem at the
Riverside Festival
today!



As part of the Creative Health Space at the Riverside Festival in Leicester, The project facilitated a participatory creative activity designed to encourage people of all ages to pause, observe and engage mindfully with their surroundings.

The activity centred on a *Haiku Hunt* – an invitation for participants to slow down and tune into the present moment through observation and sensory awareness - the haiku, a short form of poetry, traditionally captures a fleeting moment, image or experience.

Participants were encouraged to explore the parkland area surrounding the festival and seek out small details that might otherwise go unnoticed. The trail prompted visitors to pay attention to colours, textures, sounds, smells and emotional responses. Rather than focusing on the spectacular, participants were invited to notice the everyday and overlooked: a pattern on a leaf, the rain, the feel of tree bark or the sound of birdsong. The aim was to create a moment of connection with place, encouraging curiosity, reflection and wellbeing through creative engagement.

Participants then returned to the stand to transform their observations into haiku poems. To ensure the activity remained accessible regardless of the weather, a collection of natural and sensory objects was also available for exploration at the stand, including stones, driftwood, feathers, textured fabrics, herbs and spices, providing tactile and sensory inspiration for poetry writing.

New amber green leaf
Honeysuckle damp
Sweet falling plover
with rain

Smoky B.B.Q
Fuelling Conversations that
make people happy!

Examples of some of the haikus from the day.

The activity attracted a steady flow of participants throughout the day. It proved particularly popular with children, who enthusiastically embraced the challenge of exploring and discovering details within the environment. Adults also engaged positively, often commenting on the value of taking a moment to slow down amidst the busyness of the festival. For some, it provided an opportunity to reconnect with a form of creativity they had not engaged with for many years.

Many participants responded to the idea of haiku as a way of capturing a snapshot of a moment – almost like taking a photograph with words. The activity encouraged mindfulness, observation, creativity, and self-expression, while creating opportunities for intergenerational participation and conversation.

Proud tall trees Standing
Not letting man destroy it
Earth will always be

A faint sweet scented smell
Lilac pink raspberry joy
Lot
A sweet lollipop.

Dr Helen Foster, Research & Innovation Associate
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