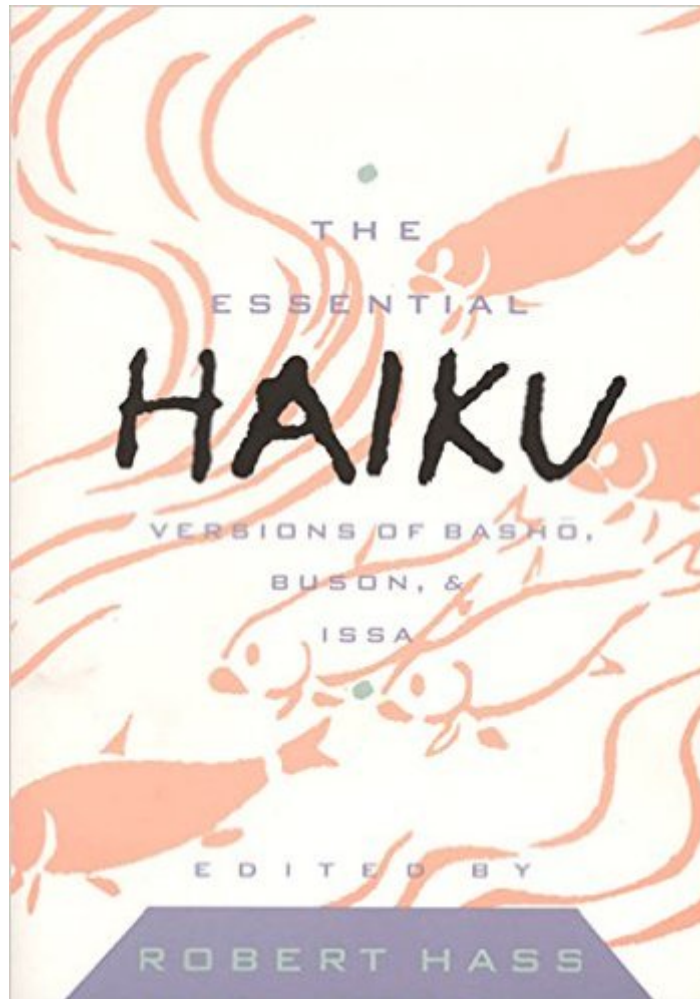


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The Essential Haiku: Versions Of Basho, Buson, & Issa (Essential Poets)



Synopsis

American readers have been fascinated, since their exposure to Japanese culture late in the nineteenth century, with the brief Japanese poem called the hokku or haiku. The seventeen-syllable form is rooted in a Japanese tradition of close observation of nature, of making poetry from subtle suggestion. Infused by its great practitioners with the spirit of Zen Buddhism, the haiku has served as an example of the power of direct observation to the first generation of American modernist poets like Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams and also as an example of spontaneity and Zen alertness to the new poets of the 1950's. This definite collection brings together in fresh translations by an American poet the essential poems of the three greatest masters: Matsuo Basho in the seventeenth century; Yosa Buson in the eighteenth century; and Kobayashi Issa in the early nineteenth century. Robert Haas has written a lively and informed introduction, provided brief examples by each poet of their work in the haibun, or poetic prose form, and included informal notes to the poems. This is a useful and inspiring addition to The Essential Poets series.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hello, lover of Haiku and all things Japanese here. The main reason I reduced this rating to 4 stars is the fact that there are no Romaji translations of the poems in this collection. For example, in the collection, *The Haiku Handbook -25th Anniversary Edition: How to Write, Teach, and Appreciate Haiku*, there Romaji translations for every Haiku. If you do not know what Romaji is, it is the phonetic translation of the actual Japanese into the Western alphabet. For example, the famous frog Haiku from Basho is listed in the aforementioned title: *furuike yakawazu tobikomumizu no otoand*

then translated to the side: old pond... a frog leaps in water's sound I really believe that every true Haiku collection should include the Romaji so that Westerners can say the poem in the native Japanese. Much like Baudelaire collections that include the French and English both (or Pablo Neruda in both English and Spanish). There is something magical about reading aloud Haiku in Japanese, even if you don't understand the words. The only other omission I felt was the exclusion of Masaoka Shiki. There are four great Haiku authors (according to most experts and to the Japanese in general), and Shiki is actually my personal favorite of the great four. Basho is understandably the most prominent, but I have read several other texts on Haiku that list Buson, Issa, and Shiki as the next greatest. This is a thorough and well researched text focused on the three major classical Haiku authors: Basho, Buson, and Issa.

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