



## The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa (The Essential Poets, Vol. 20)

By Basho, Buson, Issa

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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.

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## The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa (The Essential Poets, Vol. 20) By Basho, Buson, Issa Bibliography

- Rank: #225889 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Ecco Press
- Published on: 1994-05-21
- Released on: 1994-05-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.50" h x 1.13" w x 5.25" l, 1.13 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 329 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

An exquisite collection of the finest works of three distinct masters of the haiku tradition: Matsuo Basho (the ascetic and seeker), Yosa Buson (the artist), and Kobayashi Issa (the humanist).

The editor, Robert Hass, United States poet laureate, is the author of several books of poetry including *Human Wishes* as well as a book of criticism *Twentieth Century Pleasures*, for which he received The National Book Critics Circle Award. The book is one of the larger series of poetry collections, *Essential Poets Series* published by Ecco Press.

#### From Publishers Weekly

Hass ( *Human Wishes* ) defers to the complex syntactical gaps that separate the Japanese and English languages, calling his translations "versions." Here he presents three masters of the haiku form: Basho (1644-1694), the haiku poet most familiar to English readers; Buson (1716-1783), a visually oriented writer renowned in his time as a painter; and Issa (1763-1827), whose work is most poignant when he utilizes his ironic wit. Hass's obsessions, as evidenced by his other work, can be fitted under two rubrics, grief and pleasure, and he chooses a fair number of haiku to represent these poles. Yet the poems that merely observe nature's cyphers are most absorbing. Hass's signature is apparent in the mixture of sensual and temporal imagery: "The jars of octopus-- / brief dreams / under the summer moon" (Basho). Buson's images settle in the mind for days with their lush, unexpected vistas: "A field of mustard, / no whale in sight, / the sea darkening." Yet, surprisingly, it is Issa's haiku which may appeal most to Western readers. His benignly sardonic grasp of experience resonates with our late 20th-century cynicism: "New Year's Day-- / everything is in blossom! / I feel about average." Or: "I'm going out, / flies, so relax, / make love." Hass also includes samplings of each poet's prose, giving a deeper notion of their individual world views and aesthetics. Richly annotated, with illuminating essays on the poets and Japanese poetics, this anthology significantly broadens the pleasure of haiku for anyone unable to read them in the original.

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#### From Library Journal

Many versions of these simple poems exist in English, yet translators, who are often poets themselves, are led back to them time and time again by the urge somehow to get closer to the mark. This distinguished collection gathers together the three most highly regarded practitioners of haiku from different periods in Japanese history. The translations are presented in a fresh setting that offers a great deal of valuable background on the haiku form, the verse conventions from which it grew, and the difficulties inherent in translating from the Japanese. Examples from the prose works of each poet are included as well. The haiku stand on their own quite nicely in these strong versions, but the accompanying material and comparative context make this an attractive and valuable collection. Highly recommended.

*Mark Woodhouse, Elmira Coll. Lib.,*

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### Users Review

#### From reader reviews:

### **Bernice Fugate:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite reserve and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your trouble; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa (The Essential Poets, Vol. 20). Try to stumble through book The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa (The Essential Poets, Vol. 20) as your friend. It means that it can being your friend when you really feel alone and beside that of course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you considerably more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , we need to make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

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### **Daniel Carter:**

The reason why? Because this The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa (The Essential Poets, Vol. 20) is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap it but latter it will shock you with the secret it inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book possess such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I were being you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

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