

Matsuo Basho

- poems -

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A bee

A bee
staggers out
of the peony.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

A caterpillar

A caterpillar,
this deep in fall--
still not a butterfly.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

A cicada shell

A cicada shell;
it sang itself
utterly away.

Translated by R.H. Blyth

Matsuo Basho

A cool fall night

At a hermitage:

A cool fall night--
getting dinner, we peeled
eggplants, cucumbers.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

A field of cotton

A field of cotton--
as if the moon
 had flowered.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

A monk sips morning tea

A monk sips morning tea,
it's quiet,
the chrysanthemum's flowering.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

A snowy morning

A snowy morning--
by myself,
chewing on dried salmon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Autumn moonlight

Autumn moonlight--
a worm digs silently
into the chestnut.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Awake at night

Awake at night--
the sound of the water jar
cracking in the cold.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Bitter-tasting ice —

Kori nigaku enso ga nodo o uruoseri

Bitter-tasting ice —
Just enough to wet the throat
Of a sewer rat.

Matsuo Basho

Blowing stones

Blowing stones
along the road on Mount Asama,
the autumn wind.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Bush warbler

Bush warbler:
shits on the rice cakes
on the porch rail.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Cold night: the wild duck

Cold night: the wild duck,
sick, falls from the sky
and sleeps awhile.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Collection of Six Haiku

Waking in the night;
the lamp is low,
the oil freezing.

It has rained enough
to turn the stubble on the field
black.

Winter rain
falls on the cow-shed;
a cock crows.

The leeks
newly washed white,-
how cold it is!

The sea darkens;
the voices of the wild ducks
are faintly white.

Ill on a journey;
my dreams wander
over a withered moor.

Matsuo Basho

Coolness of the melons

Coolness of the melons
flecked with mud
in the morning dew.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Don't imitate me

Don't imitate me;
it's as boring
as the two halves of a melon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

First day of spring

First day of spring--
I keep thinking about
the end of autumn.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

First snow

First snow
falling
on the half-finished bridge.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

First winter rain

First winter rain--
even the monkey
seems to want a raincoat.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Fleas, lice

Fleas, lice,
a horse peeing
near my pillow.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Four Haiku

Spring:
A hill without a name
Veiled in morning mist.

The beginning of autumn:
Sea and emerald paddy
Both the same green.

The winds of autumn
Blow: yet still green
The chestnut husks.

A flash of lightning:
Into the gloom
Goes the heron's cry.

Translated by Geoffrey Bownas And Anthony Thwaite

Matsuo Basho

Heat waves shimmering

Heat waves shimmering
one or two inches
above the dead grass.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

How admirable

How admirable!
to see lightning and not think
life is fleeting.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

In this world of ours,

Yo no naka wa kutte hako shite nete okite
Sate sono ato wa shinuru bakari zo

In this world of ours,
We eat only to cast out,
Sleep only to wake,
And what comes after all that
Is simply to die at last.

Matsuo Basho

Midfield

Midfield,
attached to nothing,
the skylark singing.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Moonlight slanting

Moonlight slanting
through the bamboo grove;
a cuckoo crying.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Spring rain

Spring rain
leaking through the roof
dripping from the wasps' nest.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Staying at an inn

Staying at an inn
where prostitutes are also sleeping--
bush clover and the moon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Stillness

Stillness--
the cicada's cry
 drills into the rocks.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Taking a nap

Taking a nap,
feet planted
 against a cool wall.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Teeth sensitive to the sand

Teeth sensitive to the sand
in salad greens--
I'm getting old.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

The dragonfly

The dragonfly
can't quite land
on that blade of grass.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

The morning glory also

The morning glory also
turns out
not to be my friend.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

The oak tree

The oak tree:
not interested
in cherry blossoms.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

The old pond

Following are several translations
of the 'Old Pond' poem, which may be
the most famous of all haiku:

Furuike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto

-- Basho

Literal Translation

Fu-ru (old) i-ke (pond) ya,
ka-wa-zu (frog) to-bi-ko-mu (jumping into)
mi-zu (water) no o-to (sound)

Translated by Fumiko Saisho

The old pond--
a frog jumps in,
sound of water.

Translated by Robert Hass

Old pond...
a frog jumps in
water's sound.

Translated by William J. Higginson

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

Translated by Harry Behn

There is the old pond!
Lo, into it jumps a frog:

hark, water's music!

Translated by John Bryan

The silent old pond
a mirror of ancient calm,
a frog-leaps-in splash.

Translated by Dion O'Donnol

old pond
frog leaping
splash

Translated by Cid Corman

Antic pond--
frantic frog jumps in--
gigantic sound.

Translated by Bernard Lionel Einbond

MAFIA HIT MAN POET: NOTE FOUND PINNED TO LAPEL
OF DROWNED VICTIM'S DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT!!!

'Dere wasa dis frogg
Gone jumpa offa da logg
Now he inna bogg.'

-- Anonymous

Translated by George M. Young, Jr.

Old pond
leap -- splash
a frog.

Translated by Lucien Stryck

The old pond,
A frog jumps in:.
Plop!

Translated by Allan Watts

The old pond, yes, and
A frog is jumping into
The water, and splash.

Translated by G.S. Fraser

Matsuo Basho

The squid seller's call

The squid seller's call
mingles with the voice
of the cuckoo.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

This old village

This old village--
not a single house
without persimmon trees.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

What fish feel

What fish feel,
birds feel, I don't know--
the year ending.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

When the winter chrysanthemums go

When the winter chrysanthemums go,
there's nothing to write about
but radishes.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Winter garden

Winter garden,
the moon thinned to a thread,
insects singing.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Winter solitude

Winter solitude--
in a world of one color
the sound of wind.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

Wrapping the rice cakes

Wrapping the rice cakes,
with one hand
 she fingers back her hair.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho