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## **The Daily Haiku: The UK**

### ***Elizabeth Tunstall***

Although I pop up on The Daily Haiku as Elizabeth, most people know me as Liz. Even when filling out my Facebook profile, I clearly felt the need to do so "properly" (my mother's voice whispering in my ear), so Elizabeth it had to be. Something to do with this familiar, bounded take on the world might partly explain my recent draw to haiku. I always stick to the 5-7-5 pattern because working within that structure gives me the security to go a bit wild inside its walls.

I am fortunate enough to teach English to young people with varying degrees of neurodiversity. This ability (or superpower) they have, to see the world from a different angle, constantly thinking outside the box, makes creative writing lessons a wonderful place to be. Many are science fiction aficionados and when I teach haiku, I refer to it as the Tardis of poetry. Such intensity of thought and imagery wrapped up in three lines with its own plot twist, if you're lucky enough to hit the jackpot.

The challenge for me with my haiku is writing about a personal thought or experience in such a way that it resonates or ripples out and then others can relate to it too. That is the beauty of being a part of The Daily Haiku community; the wonderful connectivity with others, the feedback, the possibility that someone elsewhere, in another country maybe, has shared your thought.

Your dawn is my dusk.  
We share a sun, a world, a  
breath of memory.



(My brother's Singapore daybreak photo, sent to me at my UK bedtime.)

I have always loved stories; as a child I was often curled up with a book and have been writing my own version of poetry for as long as I can remember. The subject matter ranges from childhood wonder to teenage angst with a sprinkling of middle-aged mellowness. Recent years have unfortunately found me with a diagnosis of trauma following a sequence of incidents beyond my control and for a while I lost my ability to read or write. It was hard to find any colour or beauty in the world.

As part of my recovery, I joined a wonderful local writing group and listened to the work of confident, inspirational writers. In one of our workshops, the idea of a haiku journal was suggested, and it really struck a chord with me; to take one moment each day, to focus on something real, drill down and breathe into that moment and catch it in a haiku.

**23/04/20**

Bluebells to my left.  
Warm sun on my upturned face.  
Cold bench beneath me.

So, I sat in my garden the following morning, looked around, and wrote for the first time in a long time with the safety net of 5-7-5 to catch me. Connecting in writing with an instance in time and place anchored my thoughts. Finding *The Daily Haiku* has brought new and exciting dimensions: haiga, renga, the lively discussion about syllable formation and my own personal quandary as an English teacher – to punctuate or not to punctuate?

I check in with *The Daily Haiku* every day, I don't always feel able to post and sometimes disappear for a while but always read others' haiku and feel lifted. The variety of poetry from the group members is wonderful, from the poignant and the heartfelt to the witty and astute. Linking words to an image often adds an extra dimension for me, as does responding to prompts in the announcements.

Another strategy that serves to connect me to nature in a healing capacity, alongside my writing, is open water swimming and many of my haiku reference lakes, rivers, or the sea. Living in the midlands during lockdown I have sought out inland swimming spots, particularly over winter; the colder the better. The combination of shock and anaesthetic hits a reset button and I find this breath-taking immersion in nature very calming.

The trees hide the sun  
as the water drinks the light.  
Gold to mercury.



(An evening photo taken at Lenches Lake in Worcestershire, post-swim.)

The sea roars quietly,  
calling from steely greyness.  
Seal-like, I slide in.



(My usual sea swim spot in Lincolnshire. I can't wait to get back in there.)

As well as connecting with nature, a very traditional haiku theme, I find that my eyes often wander around my home and settle on objects that spark a memory in response to the daily theme. When a haiku captures the essence of a thought and places it within an image or visual reference point (is

this haiga?) I think it can sometimes make the emotion more transmittable to others. Particular items from my past such as my grandmother's thimbles and milk jug, my parents' wedding photo, my great aunt's vase have all been translated into haiku that I've shared on The Daily Haiku. The responses and comments from other members show how these reference points have often made the content of my haiku more relatable on some level.

I would like to end with a haiku that I haven't posted before, a moment based on a serendipitous find when I was pottering in my garden one day. I have no idea where this broken tile is from, why it was under my rhubarb plant or what the actual purpose of its message might be but at that instant when I found it, I pressed pause on the buzzing in my brain for a wee while, smiled in surprise and followed its instruction.

Red ceramic tile  
Inscribed a message: DREADNOUGHT  
Briefly, the fear fled

