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**West Holmes Middle School**

**Millersburg**

**Spring 2007**

## **A Study of Japan with the Haiku of Basho**

### **Purpose**

Students will gain an understanding of the life and work of the noted Japanese poet Basho who lived in the 1600's. Students will write haiku.

The West Holmes district covers the entire western portion of the county. It encompasses Killbuck Creek with the Shreve Swamp and Killbuck wetland, farm fields, and unglaciated wooded areas with rock outcroppings. Our students have ample opportunity to experience the beauty of the natural world, much like the poet Basho did. Students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade also have an extended-day trip in October to Cleveland. Many of the sites they experience on the trip (Lakeview Cemetery, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Lake Erie) will also provide them with subjects for haiku.

### **Grade Level**

Sixth Grade Language Arts

## Materials

- **Grass Sandals – The Travels of Basho** by Dawnine Spivak and illustrated by Demi (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, New York: 1997)
- **Basho and the River Stones** by Tim Myers (Marshall Cavendish, New York: 2004)
- **Basho and the Foxes** by Tim Myers (Marshall Cavendish, New York: 2000)
- Map of Japan
- Japanese music – East Wind Uttara-Kuru (Pacific Moon Records)
- Thesaurus
- Drawing paper and colored pencils
- Optional books of haiku

Stephen Addis with Fumike and Akira Yamamoto, illustrators

- *A Haiku Menagerie (Living Creatures in Poem and Prints)*
- *A Haiku Garden (The Four Seasons in Poems and Prints)*

(Weatherhill, New York: 1992 and 1996)

Jack Prelutsky with Ted Rand, illustrator

- *If Not for the Cat* (Greenwillow, New York: 2004)

## Length of Lesson

3-4 40-minute classes

## Activities

The book, **Grass Sandals – The Travels of Basho** by Dawnine Spivak, will be read aloud to the class. We will discuss Basho's purpose for writing poetry. There are two additional books about Basho that can assist students in understanding him. ***Basho and the Fox*** and ***Basho and the River Stones***, both written by Tim Myers, should be read aloud also to broaden the students' understanding of the poet. The author, Tim Myer, has lived in Japan.

Following the reading of the books about Basho we will review the characteristics of haiku compared to other types of writing, particularly other types of poetry. Haiku has 17 syllables divided among 3 lines of 5, 7, 5 syllables. Reference to at least two senses should be included in each poem. I would expect most students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade would have had some previous experience with haiku. Students will use a thesaurus to assist them with a more interesting choice of words.

Another book that could be of assistance to students at this level is Jack Prelutsky's ***If Not for the Cat***. This book is a delightful collection of haiku to which 6<sup>th</sup> graders can relate.

Two other collections of haiku, ***A Haiku Menagerie (Living Creatures in Poems and Prints)*** and ***A Haiku Garden (The Four Seasons in Poem and Prints)*** include the works of other important Japanese poets.

Upon completion of three or more haiku, students will illustrate at least one of them with an original drawing. Photographs which students have taken on the trip to Cleveland or photos students have taken locally may be used to enrich the other poems.