

Tanka

Like the haiku, the tanka is also a form of Japanese poetry. Coming from the word “short poem,” the tanka is five-lines in length and utilizes strong images to establish a specific mood. Just as with the haiku, the length of a tanka poem focuses on syllables, 31 to be exact. However, unlike the haiku, an author may use the following literary devices in a tanka: simile, metaphor and personification. See below for the complete tanka rules, an example and your own planning chart.

Tanka Rules:

1. The poem uses strong images to establish a mood.
2. The poem includes some type of literary device.
3. The poem has five lines and the total syllable count for the five lines must be 31 and follow these rules:
 - The first line must have five syllables.
 - The second line must have seven syllables.
 - The third line must have five syllables.
 - The fourth line must have seven syllables.
 - The fifth line must have seven syllables.
4. The poem can also be five lines, but the syllable count is: 2-3-2-3-3, focusing on the accented syllables.

Tanka Example:

Waves crashing ashore
An endless blanket of blue
Tides changing often
Just underneath the surface
Vibrant colored reefs and fish.

Tanka Planner:

On the back of this paper, brainstorm some possible subjects for your tanka. You may also want to create a list of words that describe these subjects. Return to the space below and begin writing.

_____ (5 syllables)

_____ (7 syllables)

_____ (5 syllables)

_____ (7 syllables)

_____ (7 syllables)

