

Best British Columbia Haiku

biopsy . . .
but just for today
cherry blossoms

Laryalee Fraser
Salmon Arm, B.C.

Best Canadian Haiku

holding hands
for the first time
cherry blossoms

DeVar Dahl
Magrath, Alberta

Best United States Haiku

a sudden hush
among the children
cherry blossom rain

Melissa Spurr
Joshua Tree, California

In the Japanese tradition, cherry blossoms are the supreme symbol of life's fleeting, ephemeral nature. In this case, the blossoms offer respite from life's sometimes harsh reality. Despite a biopsy, and whatever unwanted news that procedure might bring, the poet finds relief from her anxiety upon seeing cherry blossoms. Nineteenth-century agriculturalist Donald G. Mitchell has written that "I love better to count time from spring to spring; it seems to me far more cheerful to reckon the year by blossoms than by blight." This poem brims with optimism that we can only hope will spill into the future and not remain for today only.

Romance may well be the impetus for two people in this poem holding hands for the first time, or there may be many situations other than romance. Whatever the case, the magic of the blossoms has inspired two viewers to hold hands, and thus commemorate the moment of enjoying the blossoms as a shared moment. This is a poem of joy, and also a poem of shared joy. Sharing is one of haiku's goals, too, as the poet imparts his or her moments of perception and feeling with the reader.

It is easy to imagine children playing loudly and enthusiastically, no doubt heedless of the beauty of cherry blossoms around them—until a gust of wind, or perhaps just a breeze, causes a shower of blossoms to flutter down among them. The children are momentarily captivated, and thus become quiet. At such moments, too, don't we all become children, reveling in the wondrous beauty of nature? Here, too, we can equate the fleetingness of cherry blossoms with the fleetingness of childhood.

Best International Haiku

cherry trees in bloom—
if only I could stop
the wind

Lucas Garczewski
Poznan, Poland

Cherry blossoms are more beautiful because we know how briefly their beauty survives. Here the poet expresses a desire to sustain their beauty by wishing to stop the wind. And yet, despite this wish, we can see that a wind has swept through the cherry trees, setting blossoms to flutter down to the ground. In this poem we see a clear image and also see through a window into the poet's mind, and his yearning for the beauty of cherry blossoms to linger. Yoshida Kenkō once said that "Blossoms are scattered by the wind and the wind cares nothing, but the blossoms of the heart no wind can touch." This is a poem that speaks of the heart.

Best Youth Haiku

the inspiration
for my wardrobe choice today—
pink cherry blossoms

Rukshila Dufault, age 17
Port Coquitlam, B.C.

This poem salutes the changing of seasons to spring, where vibrant blossoms make the poet aware of the colour pink after a possibly drab winter. She is thus inspired to wear pink herself. The blossoms not only inspire but validate her choice. Perhaps, too, her wardrobe choice validates the cherry blossoms, or we might say that her choice recognizes the cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms may ask no more of us than simply to recognize that they exist, as fleeting as they may be. But this is no small gesture, recognizing not only our relationship with nature, but even, at times, our identification with it.

—*Michael Dylan Welch*
Sammamish, Washington

For further information, and to view additional Sakura Award and Honourable Mention poems, refer to the festival's website at www.vcbf.ca.

Michael Dylan Welch is vice president of the Haiku Society of America, cofounder of the Haiku North America conference and the American Haiku Archives, and founder and first president of the Tanka Society of America. He has published thousands of his haiku and has won or judged many haiku contests. He has been involved with the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival's Haiku Invitational since its inception in 2006, serving as a judge each year except 2009. His website is graceguts.com.

The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival

2010

Haiku Invitational

Winners

Judged

by

Michael Dylan Welch

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