

Stories With Art: **Poetry & Photography**



How are poetry and photography alike?

An ancient Roman poet, Quintus Horatius Flaccus (known popularly and primarily as Horace) is believed to have said “a picture is a poem without words”. Although the camera was developed much after his time, this saying may be said to be true of photographs as well.

At first glance, poetry and photography seem to have little in common. One deals with words, and the other with images. As artistic forms of expression though, they have more in common than you may think. They both deal with composition and framing, and attempt to show us a reality beyond simple description. The pairing of photography and poetry actually has its own history, and has been around for a long time.

About the India Poems

Another interestingly named person, the artist Waswo X Waswo took a lot of photographs of the people and places he saw in his early trips to India. He decided to call this series *India Poems* because he felt each image was like a poem in itself: a wordless, lyrical, visual poem.

So, how about we create some word poems for his visuals?

About Haikus

A haiku is a type of Japanese poem that consists of short, unrhymed lines that often describes an image or a pair of images to depict a specific moment. It is basically visualising something using only words, helping the reader to imagine the moment by evoking the senses of sight, smell, sound and even touch! The most common kind is a three-line Haiku poem with a 5-7-5 **syllable** pattern.

Here is an example:
An old silent pond,
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.

What is a syllable?

A syllable is a part of a word pronounced as a unit, or a single unbroken sound. Syllables usually contain a vowel and accompanying consonants. Since you can sound it out, syllables are sometimes referred to as the 'beats' of spoken language. The word poem has two syllables: po-em. Whereas, photography is a four-syllable word: pho-to-gra-phy. Can you count the beats in the word 'syllable'? If you counted three syllables, you got it right!

Take up the challenge & write your own haiku

Below are some of Waswo's photographs from his book and exhibition *India Poems*. Try your hand at writing a haiku for each of them.

Here's a haiku we wrote to get you started. Can you guess which photograph inspired it?

The whistling wind
as the fishermen return –
dancing by the sea.



Don't forget to take photographs of your creations and DM it to us on Instagram @mapbangalore. You can also email them to us at education@map-india.org



