

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Matsuo Basho**

**- poems -**

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**A bee**

A bee  
staggers out  
of the peony.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **A caterpillar**

A caterpillar,  
this deep in fall--  
still not a butterfly.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **A cicada shell**

A cicada shell;  
it sang itself  
utterly away.

Translated by R.H. Blyth

Matsuo Basho

## **A cool fall night**

At a hermitage:

A cool fall night--  
getting dinner, we peeled  
eggplants, cucumbers.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**A field of cotton**

A field of cotton--  
as if the moon  
    had flowered.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **A monk sips morning tea**

A monk sips morning tea,  
it's quiet,  
the chrysanthemum's flowering.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **A snowy morning**

A snowy morning--  
by myself,  
    chewing on dried salmon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Autumn moonlight**

Autumn moonlight--  
a worm digs silently  
into the chestnut.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Awake at night**

Awake at night--  
the sound of the water jar  
cracking in the cold.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**Bitter-tasting ice —**

Kori nigaku enso ga nodo o uruoseri

Bitter-tasting ice —  
Just enough to wet the throat  
Of a sewer rat.

Matsuo Basho

## **Blowing stones**

Blowing stones  
along the road on Mount Asama,  
the autumn wind.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Bush warbler**

Bush warbler:  
shits on the rice cakes  
on the porch rail.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**Cold night: the wild duck**

Cold night: the wild duck,  
sick, falls from the sky  
and sleeps awhile.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## Collection of Six Haiku

Waking in the night;  
the lamp is low,  
the oil freezing.

It has rained enough  
to turn the stubble on the field  
black.

Winter rain  
falls on the cow-shed;  
a cock crows.

The leeks  
newly washed white,-  
how cold it is!

The sea darkens;  
the voices of the wild ducks  
are faintly white.

Ill on a journey;  
my dreams wander  
over a withered moor.

Matsuo Basho

## **Coolness of the melons**

Coolness of the melons  
flecked with mud  
in the morning dew.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Don't imitate me**

Don't imitate me;  
it's as boring  
as the two halves of a melon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **First day of spring**

First day of spring--  
I keep thinking about  
the end of autumn.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **First snow**

First snow  
falling  
    on the half-finished bridge.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **First winter rain**

First winter rain--  
even the monkey  
seems to want a raincoat.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**Fleas, lice**

Fleas, lice,  
a horse peeing  
near my pillow.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## Four Haiku

Spring:  
A hill without a name  
Veiled in morning mist.

The beginning of autumn:  
Sea and emerald paddy  
Both the same green.

The winds of autumn  
Blow: yet still green  
The chestnut husks.

A flash of lightning:  
Into the gloom  
Goes the heron's cry.

Translated by Geoffrey Bownas And Anthony Thwaite

Matsuo Basho

## **Heat waves shimmering**

Heat waves shimmering  
one or two inches  
above the dead grass.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **How admirable**

How admirable!  
to see lightning and not think  
life is fleeting.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**In this world of ours,**

Yo no naka wa kutte hako shite nete okite  
Sate sono ato wa shinuru bakari zo

In this world of ours,  
We eat only to cast out,  
Sleep only to wake,  
And what comes after all that  
Is simply to die at last.

Matsuo Basho

## **Midfield**

Midfield,  
attached to nothing,  
the skylark singing.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Moonlight slanting**

Moonlight slanting  
through the bamboo grove;  
a cuckoo crying.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Spring rain**

Spring rain  
leaking through the roof  
dripping from the wasps' nest.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Staying at an inn**

Staying at an inn  
where prostitutes are also sleeping--  
bush clover and the moon.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Stillness**

Stillness--  
the cicada's cry  
    drills into the rocks.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Taking a nap**

Taking a nap,  
feet planted  
    against a cool wall.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Teeth sensitive to the sand**

Teeth sensitive to the sand  
in salad greens--  
I'm getting old.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **The dragonfly**

The dragonfly  
can't quite land  
on that blade of grass.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **The morning glory also**

The morning glory also  
turns out  
not to be my friend.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **The oak tree**

The oak tree:  
not interested  
in cherry blossoms.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## The old pond

Following are several translations  
of the 'Old Pond' poem, which may be  
the most famous of all haiku:

Furuike ya  
kawazu tobikomu  
mizu no oto

-- Basho

### Literal Translation

Fu-ru (old) i-ke (pond) ya,  
ka-wa-zu (frog) to-bi-ko-mu (jumping into)  
mi-zu (water) no o-to (sound)

Translated by Fumiko Saisho

The old pond--  
a frog jumps in,  
sound of water.

Translated by Robert Hass

Old pond...  
a frog jumps in  
water's sound.

Translated by William J. Higginson

An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
splash! Silence again.

Translated by Harry Behn

There is the old pond!  
Lo, into it jumps a frog:

hark, water's music!

Translated by John Bryan

The silent old pond  
a mirror of ancient calm,  
a frog-leaps-in splash.

Translated by Dion O'Donnol

old pond  
frog leaping  
splash

Translated by Cid Corman

Antic pond--  
frantic frog jumps in--  
gigantic sound.

Translated by Bernard Lionel Einbond

MAFIA HIT MAN POET: NOTE FOUND PINNED TO LAPEL  
OF DROWNED VICTIM'S DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT!!!

'Dere wasa dis frogg  
Gone jumpa offa da logg  
Now he inna bogg.'

-- Anonymous

Translated by George M. Young, Jr.

Old pond  
leap -- splash  
a frog.

Translated by Lucien Stryck

The old pond,  
A frog jumps in:.  
Plop!

Translated by Allan Watts

The old pond, yes, and  
A frog is jumping into  
The water, and splash.

Translated by G.S. Fraser

Matsuo Basho

## **The squid seller's call**

The squid seller's call  
mingles with the voice  
of the cuckoo.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **This old village**

This old village--  
not a single house  
without persimmon trees.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **What fish feel**

What fish feel,  
birds feel, I don't know--  
the year ending.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

**When the winter chrysanthemums go**

When the winter chrysanthemums go,  
there's nothing to write about  
but radishes.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Winter garden**

Winter garden,  
the moon thinned to a thread,  
insects singing.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Winter solitude**

Winter solitude--  
in a world of one color  
the sound of wind.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho

## **Wrapping the rice cakes**

Wrapping the rice cakes,  
with one hand  
    she fingers back her hair.

Translated by Robert Hass

Matsuo Basho