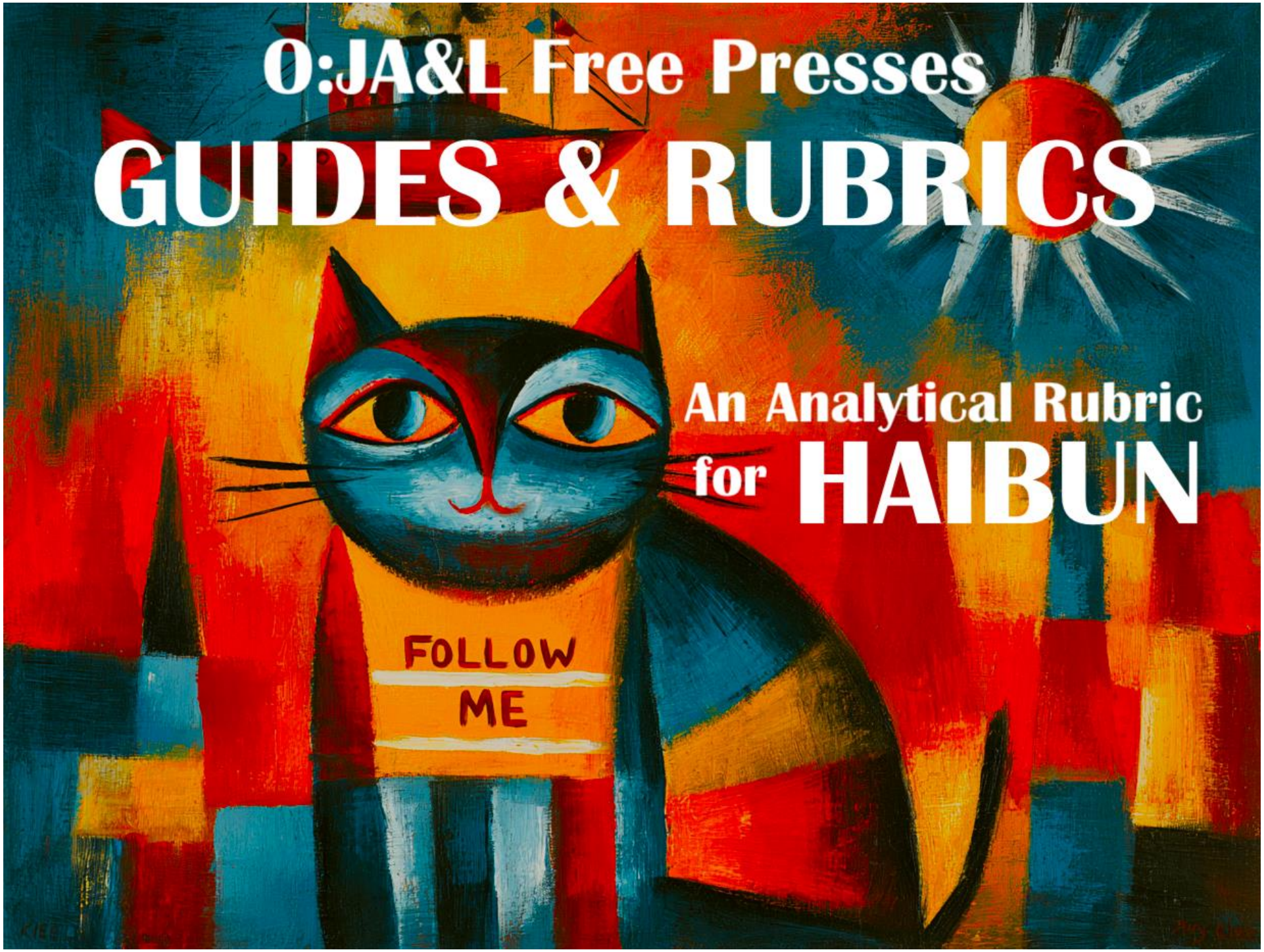
O:JA&L Free Presses
GUIDES & RUBRICS
An Analytical Rubric
for HAIBUN
FOLLOW
ME

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# Haibun Analysis and Evaluation Rubric

This rubric guides the analysis of haibun as an integrated hybrid of prose, haiku, and title. Weighted criteria address each component's craft and their cumulative relationship. Evaluators should reward compression, concreteness, resonance, purposeful arrangement, and generative links or leaps, recognizing that successful haibun may employ traditional, contemporary, or experimental approaches with equal effectiveness.

**Scoring note:** This rubric follows the threshold scale used in all O:JA&L rubrics. A score of 3 represents minimum acceptable performance; 1 falls below minimum expectations; 4 indicates proficiency; and 5 indicates mastery. No score of 2 is used. When evidence falls between two described levels, use half-point increments (for example, 3.5 or 4.5). To calculate weighted points, divide the criterion score by 5 and multiply by that criterion's maximum value. The six weighted values total 100 points.
**Language conventions and intentional usage note:** Evaluate language conventions in relation to the work's purpose, audience, genre, and aesthetic choices. Do not penalize nonstandard grammar, punctuation, spelling, dialect, code-switching, fragmentation, or syntactic disruption when these choices are purposeful, controlled, and effective.
**Evaluator's Use note:** Evaluate each component both on its own terms and as part of the whole. This working draft treats haibun as a flexible hybrid rather than a fixed formula: strong prose, effective haiku, and a generative link or leap among prose, poem, and title are central, while length, subject, paragraphing, and placement may vary.

Form / approach: Travel ☐ Memoir ☐ Lyric ☐ Narrative ☐ Meditative ☐ Experimental / borrowed form ☐ Other: _____

| CRITERION | 1 Point<br>Does not meet minimum expectations | 3 Points<br>Meets minimum expectations | 4 Points<br>Displays proficiency | 5 Points<br>Displays mastery |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HAIBUN PROSE: focus, brevity, concreteness, and movement | The prose is diffuse, overexplained, abstract, or merely anecdotal; unnecessary detail obscures the controlling experience, image, or movement. | The prose establishes a discernible focus and includes concrete detail, but may contain summary, explanation, ornament, or material that weakens immediacy and compression. | The prose is concise, focused, and image-centered. Selective details, precise verbs, and controlled movement engage the reader while leaving meaningful space. | The prose is spare yet richly suggestive: every detail contributes, something consequential shifts or happens, and omission, pacing, and concrete imagery create immediacy, mystery, and resonance. |
| Weight | | | | 20% |
| Maximum points | | | | 20 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |
| HAIKU: integrity, cut, and resonance | The verse functions mainly as caption, summary, aphorism, or lineated prose; it depends on the prose to make sense and lacks a meaningful turn, cut, or juxtaposition. | The verse is recognizable as haiku and offers a concrete perception or juxtaposition, but diction, compression, structure, or the turn remains conventional or underdeveloped. | The haiku stands on its own, uses concise and sensory language, and creates an effective cut or relation of comparison, contrast, or association that enlarges perception. | The haiku is memorable and autonomous; its exact language, internal tension, and resonant cut create a fresh turn of thought or feeling while opening multiple, controlled implications. |
| Weight | | | | 20% |
| Maximum points | | | | 20 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |
| PROSE–HAIKU RELATIONSHIP: link, shift, and leap | Prose and haiku repeat, explain, illustrate, or continue one another without added insight, or their relationship is so obscure that the whole feels arbitrary. | A link between prose and haiku is apparent, but the shift is predictable, overly explicit, slight, or insufficiently integrated. | Prose and haiku are connected yet nonredundant. Their juxtaposition creates a clear shift or leap that deepens tone, theme, perspective, or emotional meaning. | The prose–haiku relationship is subtle, surprising, and inevitable in retrospect. Each component remains autonomous while their charged interval produces meanings unavailable to either alone. |
| Weight | | | | 25% |
| Maximum points | | | | 25 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TITLE, ARCHITECTURE, AND PLACEMENT | The title is absent without purpose, generic, explanatory, or decorative; paragraphing and haiku placement feel accidental or impede comprehension and effect. | The title and arrangement provide basic orientation, but contribute little additional pressure or resonance; transitions or placement may be predictable. | The title functions as an active element, and the arrangement of prose and haiku controls pacing, emphasis, transition, and the reader's discovery. | Title, paragraphing, sequence, white space, and haiku placement form a purposeful architecture; each element acts as another link or shift and transforms the reader's understanding of the whole. |
| Weight | | | | 10% |
| Maximum points | | | | 10 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |
| VOICE, DICTION, AND FLOW OF SENSIBILITY | Voice and register are inconsistent, clichéd, inflated, sentimental, or overly intellectualized; the work lacks a coherent sensibility. | The voice is generally appropriate and understandable, but diction or tone may be uneven, familiar, self-conscious, or insufficiently shaped. | Voice, point of view, tense, and diction are controlled and suited to the subject. A coherent sensibility moves from title through prose and haiku. | The voice is distinctive, exact, and artfully restrained; shifts in tone and perspective are fully controlled, and a continuous yet dynamic sensibility unifies the work without flattening ambiguity. |
| Weight | | | | 10% |
| Maximum points | | | | 10 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |
| OVERALL HYBRID EFFECT: necessity, insight, and unity | The piece does not yet function as haibun: one component overwhelms the others, or the combination produces no coherent or cumulative effect. | The piece combines prose and haiku with a recognizable purpose and basic unity, but the hybrid form or resulting insight remains conventional or only partly realized. | Prose, haiku, and title balance one another and create a unified, engaging experience that makes the hybrid form purposeful. | The hybrid is fully realized and memorable. Its restraint, balance, ambiguity, and interplay invite active reader participation and yield layered intellectual, sensory, and emotional resonance. |
| Weight | | | | 15% |
| Maximum points | | | | 15 |
| HAIBUN: Weighted total | | | | /100 |
| Evaluator's remarks: | | | | |

Diagnostic Questions for Holistic Analysis

- Can the haiku stand independently, and does the prose remain compelling without using the haiku as a conclusion or explanation?
- What does the space between prose and haiku ask the reader to supply?
- Does the relationship depend on repetition, or does it create a productive link, shift, or leap?
- Does the title merely label the piece, or does it add a third field of meaning?
- Are concrete images and significant details doing work that explanation could be removed to reveal?
- Do tense, point of view, sentence movement, paragraphing, and haiku placement serve the subject and intended effect?
- Is ambiguity generative and controlled rather than confusing?
- Does the ending reopen the work and extend resonance rather than close it with a moral or summary?

**Final scoring note:** Use this rubric as a diagnostic guide rather than a fixed formula. Apply the threshold scale, half-point increments, and weighted-point calculation described above, while evaluating each component both on its own terms and as part of the whole. Scores should reflect evidence in the work, the effectiveness of the prose, haiku, title, and their links or leaps, and the degree to which the haibun creates a unified, resonant hybrid effect. Descriptors name common patterns of performance, not exhaustive requirements; traditional, contemporary, experimental, or borrowed-form approaches may earn high marks when their choices are deliberate, legible, controlled, and effective. Evaluate language conventions in relation to the work's purpose, audience, genre, and aesthetic choices, and do not penalize purposeful dialect, code-switching, fragmentation, syntactic disruption, multilingual expression, ambiguity, silence, or other intentional departures from standard usage when they contribute to meaning and effect. Final judgments should remain fair, evidence-based, and open to multiple successful approaches to haibun.

## Summary Scoring Table

| Criterion | Weight | Maximum Points | Criterion Score (1, 3, 4, 5, or half-point) | Weighted Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Haibun prose: focus, brevity, concreteness, and movement | 20% | 20 | _____ | _____ / 20 |
| Haiku: integrity, cut, and resonance | 20% | 20 | _____ | _____ / 20 |
| Prose–haiku relationship: link, shift, and leap | 25% | 25 | _____ | _____ / 25 |
| Title, architecture, and placement | 10% | 10 | _____ | _____ / 10 |
| Voice, diction, and flow of sensibility | 10% | 10 | _____ | _____ / 10 |
| Overall hybrid effect: necessity, insight, and unity | 15% | 15 | _____ | _____ / 15 |
| Weighted Total | | 100 | _____ / 100 | |

### Research Basis and Working Assumptions

This draft synthesizes several recurring principles in the craft literature: Michael Dylan Welch's three-part test of effective poems, strong prose, and effective links or leaps; Lew Watts's emphasis on ambiguity, brevity, concision, details, and the dynamic among prose, haiku, and title; Jane Reichhold's account of fragment-and-phrase structure and techniques of comparison, contrast, and association; and Jeffrey Woodward's discussion of standard and anomalous haibun forms and the interpretive force of title and arrangement.

The criteria also reflect Bruce Ross's concepts of a coherent "flow of sensibility" and a privileged, subtle link; the editorial principle that prose and haiku should avoid repetition or explanation and generate added resonance through juxtaposition; and the broader range of craft topics gathered in the Contemporary Haibun Online resources. The rubric is therefore diagnostic rather than prescriptive: innovation may earn high marks when departures are deliberate, legible, and effective.