

Brevity

HOSTS:

*Ashleigh A. Allen &
Ben Gallagher*

Workshop description:

This 90-minute creative writing workshop unpacks the creative possibilities of reading and writing through brief poems (some of these poets work within traditionally brief forms like haiku or tanka, but some simply explore what a short form offers). What better time of year to explore brevity than spring, when life reemerges and blooms in the natural world and reminds us that our time here is cyclical in many ways but ultimately brief.

As always, the purposes of this workshop are: to share in the reading of contemporary poetry, experience the act of writing poetry in community, and think about the possibilities for contemporary and modern poetry in our lives and classrooms as writer educators. We aim to consider not only the content but also the sonic and structural choices poets make as a way to consider the possibilities that a creative writing practice has to offer us as writers and educators.

We are grateful to be a part of a community that values engagement with writing and reading.

Workshop outline:

(5 minutes)

Welcome participants & introductions/check-ins

Names, pronouns, a word or two to describe how each person is feeling today

(5 minutes)

Share the purpose of this workshop

(15-20 minutes)

Participants volunteer to read through all the poems at least once (Quaker style)

(30-45 minutes)

Participants free write

POEMS

Joseph Ceravolo short poems: Experience, Hotel, Mistake, Apology, Freedom, Not one, Bad ass, Apocalypse, End of the world, River flooded, Runs me over

James Schuyler short poems: Daylight, Poem, Suddenly, Frock

Jack Spicer short poems: Greece, January, Nikko San, Daily waste washed by the tides..., Shark Island, For B.W., For B. W. II, In a word the body, Barn dance, It is as if/ love had wings, Hokku, A hokku is something..., No one can rescue anyone from hell..., Lamp

“Tanka” by Paul Violi

Three Haiku, Two Tanka by Philip Appleman

“Tanka Diary [Awakened too early on Saturday morning]” by Harryette Mullen

“Poem of First Lines From Jack Spicer Poems” by Hoa Nguyen

“It’s the Big Trip” by Joanne Kyger

“Tutti Frutti” and “Future Tense” by Charles Wright

“The weight of salt” by Souvankam Thammavongsa

Selections from *Modern Japanese Haiku* trans. Makoto Ueda:

**Selections from *The Ink Dark Moon* (poems of Ono No Komachi and Izumi Shikibu)
Trans. Jane Hirshfield with Mariko Aratani**

PROMPTS

- Answer a question recently posed to you.
- Take a title from one of the poems and write your own poem with the same title.
- Use repetition. (Maybe you write three lines then repeat those three lines.)
- Use this structure to write a brief note to someone. (Address them by their initials)
- Contract and/or fracture words.
- Write out some sound effects or music (be bop de beep/ a wop bop a loo lop)
- Extend your poetic lines through indents (as Charles Wright does in his sestets)
- Use the same line to end one stanza and begin another (as in “the weight of salt”)
- Pay attention to an insect
- Describe an invisible colour (as Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu do)