

Analysis of Nature Haiku from *To Hear the Rain: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles*

By Gabriella Barone

Peggy Lyles' and her insightful connection to Nature Haiku

Peggy Lyles' work creates an impression on her readers. The simplicity of her word choice generates haikus that are relatable so that they resonate with the reader. Her time spent in South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Georgia is present in her haikus. Especially the haikus that encapsulate what it feels like to be immersed in nature and observe all species. Whether its flowers, roots, pine trees, mountains, water lilies, trout, snowflakes, the sea, shells, turtles, rocks, or many other organisms found in nature Peggy Lyle describes them organically with an alluring style. Her decades of haiku live on even after she has passed, that is the beauty of the written word. Randy Brooks is quoted commenting on Lyles work stating that "time seems to stand still in a scene that will be as true tomorrow as it was a hundred years ago," (Brooks Books) I believe that this statement is true. Time passes and things change but natural processes and the way that humans peacefully interact with the natural world remain the same and that is exactly what Lyles depicts in her haikus. Lyles haiku will evolve in her readers minds, where they spark a memory or create a moment that will leave a lasting impression for generations to come.

Selected Nature Haiku from Peggy Lyles and interpreted by Gabriella Barone

into the night
we talk of human cloning
snowflakes

Lyles, *THTR*, 67

This haiku creates a juxtaposition between humans and nature. It makes the reader wonder what the conversation about human cloning consisted of. Did the people discussing it think that it was possible or not? I think the third line somewhat nonchalantly answers that question.

"Snowflakes," which are all unique from one another and not one is constructed like another. The same could be said of humans. Yes humans are all made up of similar characteristics like snowflakes are all made up of frozen rain, but humans have different genes from one another, have had different experiences mentally and physically to make them individuals. So I wonder if snowflakes were brought up in this conversation or if snowflakes fell to the sky. Was a human using nature to justify their point or was nature making a point to humans?

through a maze of lilies brushstrokes of the trout

Lyles, *THTR*, 26

Peggy Lyles is able to make such a vivid picture from just one line of text. I imagine a pond filled with lilies that are slightly bobbing in the water. In between the hundreds of lilies there is a

trout weaving around and causing vibrations in the water to move the lilies up and down and side to side ever so lightly. Even though there is a change in the water's frequency, it is welcomed and peaceful. The lilies and the trout are coexisting within this pond and benefiting from one another. This haiku is a beautiful line of text that captures a moment in nature that is vibrant with tranquility.

glide of the kayak
ripples overlapping
water lilies

Lyles, *THTR*, 104

Like the previous haiku, this haiku by Lyles creates an image of a body of water covered in water lilies bobbing on the surface of the water. Unlike the previous haiku, instead of nature interacting with nature it is humans and their outdoor recreation vessel interacting with nature. As the kayak glides through the water it causes a ripple effect in the water. Possibly there is another kayak in the water or maybe air bubbles from aquatic species reaching the water's surface causing ripples to collide and overlap into each other. The lilies seem so delicate compared to the kayak that is made out of a mix of wood, fiberglass, and plastic. Under the water's surface the lilies' roots reach down into the soil below the water. So rather than the lilies being vulnerable to the kayak's large mass and durability, the lilies are resilient like the kayak.

for her mother
bluets
roots and all

Lyles, *THTR*, 19

This haiku by Peggy Lyles is full of imagery. Bluet's normally flower in the spring, so without stating the time of year Lyle's is able to indicate the season. I imagine this beautiful dainty flower that is one of thousands of species of Rubiaceae. What makes a bluet a part of the Rubiaceae family is that on the stem there are leaves opposite of each other with unbroken leaf margins on the leaf. Each stem leads to a single flower that typically has four petals and four anthers. What is unique about this flower is that the anthers are hidden within the corolla tube so that you can not see the anthers that are dusted with pollen unless you take a good look. I like the choice of a bluet because it is so delicate, but is not revealing of its pollen. There is a bit of secrecy to the bluet's anatomy. The image that the haiku makes of the roots, that are not very long, dangling from the delicate plant puts the bluet in a vulnerable space. It is a sweet gesture that these bluets that have been uprooted from the ground are being brought to someone's mother. I hope that these flowers, roots and all, make it to a pot and are cared for.



Image 1 of Bluets from Backyard Ecology's Website.

shimmering pines
a taste of the mountain
from your cupped hands

Lyles, *THTR*, 23

Peggy Lyles does a great job of igniting all five senses in this haiku. The sight of the “shimmering pines,” “the mountain,” and possibly water rushing down the mountain into a lake in the distance along with the image of “cupped hands” right in front of someone's face. The smell of the pines. The taste of the fresh air and the slight flavor and touch of the water that ran down the mountain that is cupped in your hands. The sound of rushing water, animals in harmony, and the crunching of natural debris under your feet. This haiku makes you feel immersed in the setting Lyle has created. For not knowing where these pines or mountains are, the reader can feel as if they know this place so well because of the eloquent use of word choice and personification of nature. Personally, this haiku reminds me of my time spent at Mount Rainier. I felt immersed in nature and all my senses were heightened by the exact things that this haiku describes.



Image 2 and 3 of Mount Rainier National Park. Images shot on my iPhone.

autumn sea
a little girl's love
of small brown shells

Lyles, *THTR*, 112

This haiku reminds me of a specific beach I have been to in Victoria, BC, that was lined with shells where the water met the land. The beach is called Ross Bay Public Pebbles Beach and it looks out into the Salish Sea. When I was visiting the area it was not autumn but it was a bit chilly so I was wearing a sweatshirt as I walked along the water and looked down to see the mix of pebbles and shells. More inland and across a road there is a cemetery. I visited one of my idol's resting places, Emily Carr.

On her grave it read...

“Emily Carr 1871-1945 Artist and Author Lover of Nature,”

... and above the tombstone was written ...

“Dear Mother Earth! I think I have always specially belonged to you. I have loved from babyhood to roll upon you, to lie with my face pressed right down on to you in my sorrows. I love the look of you and the smell of you and the feel of you. When I die I should like to be in you uncoffined, unshrouded, the petals of flowers against my flesh and you covering me up.”

-Emily Carr

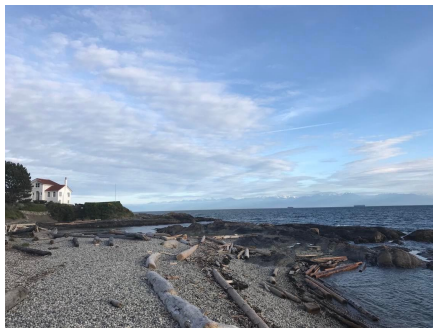


Image 4 of Ross Bay Public Pebbles Beach Image 5 and 6 of Emily Carr's resting place. Images shot on my iPhone

Someday I wish to go back there with my daughter so that she can collect small brown shells on the shore. Not only did this haiku help spark a memory of a specific time and place when I was on a beach, but it also connected to a memory and love I have for another nature influenced author.

Indian summer
a turtle on a turtle
on a rock

Lyles, *THTR*, 115

The word choice and the line breaks stood out to me in this haiku. The first line indicates what time of year it is. It is not autumn but rather Indian summer, this term is used to describe a warm day that typically occurs after the first frost of the year. The second line adds who; a turtle ON a turtle. I imagine the two turtles sunbathing together, one laying on the other, enjoying the few days they have left before going underneath the pond or lake during the colder months. Turtles, unlike a lot of freshwater species, do not hibernate. Instead their metabolism slows down and therefore the turtle's overall activity slows down. The third line adds to where they are laying, on a rock. Above the water as the sun from the Indian summer shines down, beautifully written.

summer night
we turn out all the lights
to hear the rain

Lyles, *THTR*, 45

I feel that this is the perfect haiku to end the analysis of Peggy Lyle's nature haiku. In this analysis I have touched on human interaction or my own personal connections to nature. I feel that this haiku reminds humans to shut off our man made creations such as light and tune into nature at work such as rain. This haiku makes me think of a hot summer day that leads into a hot summer night and exhaustion the heat can bring. Just as you're settling in for the night you hear a pitter patter of rain on the window. Soon it becomes a heavier rain but not too heavy just enough to naturally cool off the house from the heat. As humans we always try to find a quick comfortable fix to things whether it is using electricity for a fan or turning on the air conditioning. If we are patient enough nature will do what it does best and cycle through bringing in the cool. This haiku is about finding patience, trust, and peace in nature.

Questions I wish I could ask Peggy Lyles

Is there a haiku or haiku artist that inspired you to start writing nature haiku?

What was your upbringing like? Did you spend a significant amount of time outdoors in nature during your adolescents?

Do you have a favorite season or time of year that inspires you to write nature haiku?

How do you decide on when to use a line break?

Citations

“Brooks Books Haiku.” *To Hear the Rain: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles*,
<https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/brooksbooks/selectedlyles.html>.

“Common Bluets: Delicate Blue Flowers of Spring.” *Backyard Ecology*, 15 Feb. 2021,
<https://www.backyardecology.net/common-bluets-delicate-blue-flowers-of-spring/>.

Lyles, Peggy Willis. *To Hear the Rain: Selected Haiku of Peggy Lyles*. Edited by Randy Brooks,
Brooks Books, 2002.