

## The Ins and Outs of Family Dynamics: an Analysis of Family Haiku

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We have read countless haiku this semester. From creepy haiku to love haiku, I believe we have seen it all. I have taken time to reflect on the many kinds of haiku we have read, and the topic of family caught my eye. My semester started with a bang: my father died, I moved into the Alpha Chi Omega house, and I was starting a new semester of school. The first half of my semester was rough, to say the least, and during this challenging time, all I could think about was my family. I have heavily relied on my family this semester, and they inspired my topic choice for this reader-response essay. Everyone has a family, and everyone has different opinions and feelings about their family, so there is a large variety of family haiku. Family haiku may cover the lack of family, a chosen family, and even an overbearing family. I thought it would be interesting to compile a variety of haiku about family and see how each one can evoke different emotions.

moonflower  
this daughter  
I'll never have

Lori A Minor, *Frogpond*, 5

Although miscarriages are not commonly talked about, they are prominent in many people's lives. I strongly believe this haiku is about a mother who recently had a miscarriage. I can envision a woman sitting at a grave site, admiring the flowers around it trying to distract herself. She spots a moonflower and smiles. Moonflowers are symbols of the ability to emerge from a dark time, and this woman has just lost her only daughter. The moonflower gives her a bit of hope, but then she remembers the daughter she had for a couple of moments and then had to bury. She will never get to spend time with her daughter she wanted.

This haiku shows the pain of creating a family. Not everyone can create their own family, it is something many people take for granted. This haiku shares the devastating experience of lack of family, specifically losing a little family member. Many people may think that a child that died during birth or shortly after doesn't necessarily "count," but I don't believe that for a second. There is nothing quite like a mother's bond with their children, and that is not any different for a child that has passed or a child that never got to meet their mother.

bedtime  
she kisses a future  
into her daughter's cheek

Lorraine A. Padden, *Frogpond*, 59

A mother-daughter bond is one of the most special bonds in a family. This haiku paints a vivid picture for me. I see a mother sitting on her daughter's bed, finishing up a picture book. Her daughter begs and begs for one more book,

but the mother is not folding this time! She tells her daughter she must go to bed so she can get to school tomorrow. The mother promises she will keep her daughter's night light on and checks the closet for monsters. The mother cherishes this moment and takes a minute to look at her daughter. Her daughter is bubbly (even when she's exhausted), caring, beautiful, and so smart. She takes this moment to envision her daughter's future. The mother breaks from this trance and then gives her daughter a big, wet, and embarrassing kiss because she realizes she won't be able to do this when she grows up.

This haiku shows the mother-daughter relationship of family and how happy it can truly be. Not all mother-daughter relationships are amazing, but this haiku specifically shows the start of a positive bond between mother and daughter. No matter what, the mother-daughter relationship will be special. However, those bonds may crack and change the older the pair gets, dynamics always change, but it is important to cherish the beginning of a good relationship.

distant father  
all the kids pass him  
their artichoke hearts

Caroline Giles Banks, *The Clay Jar*, 38

Distant fathers can be a sore subject for many people, including myself. I had to do a bit of research for this haiku, but I figured out what artichoke hearts symbolize. Having an artichoke heart means you fall in love often and easily, and this knowledge completely changes the meaning of the haiku. All of the distant father's children pass him their artichoke hearts, giving up their ability to fall in love often and easily to their father. These children hope to receive some of the love they gave to their father, yet he stays distant. This haiku showcases the troubles many families can go through. There are always those family members who will always be distant, whether that be emotionally or physically, but it is still hard to deal with. Growing up, I also wanted to give my father my artichoke heart so he wouldn't be so distant. This haiku shows the challenging side of family matters and how it can be hard for many family members.

family recipe  
the permanent stains  
on mom's apron

Mona Bedi, *Mayfly 75*, 8

Family recipes were never prevalent in my family, but I know they can be a staple for many other families. Every time I read this haiku, I smile a little bit. The haiku starts with "family recipe" and then abruptly cuts to the line "the permanent stains." The order of these lines makes me think the ingredients of the family recipe are scattered all across the mother's apron like a road map. This haiku gives me so many emotions, but the biggest emotion I feel is calmness. The imagery in this haiku is why I feel calm and happy when reading it. I can see a mother, dancing around to the radio cooking breakfast for her children who are sitting right in front of her. This haiku beautifully shares the calm and loving side of family dynamics.

two lines in the water . . .  
not a word between  
father and son

Brooks, *School's Out*, 26

This haiku is about an experience I have never been through, but it makes my heart swell. The father-son relationship is one I know the least about, but this haiku gives me a little insight into the relationship. There is a sense of bliss throughout this haiku, there is no big plot twist. This haiku just tells a simple story. The father and son are fishing and enjoying the sound of nature together while waiting to reel in a fish. There is something that feels so special about this moment. The father and son are comfortable enough to sit in silence and simply fish, I know I am never comfortable with silence, so this feels like a comfortable relationship. This is another haiku that showcases a positive family dynamic.

our father  
in the rearview  
mirror

PMF Johnson, *Mayfly* 49, 13

I can completely relate to this haiku. I left my father in the rearview mirror in middle school. I didn't leave him in the rearview mirror on purpose, he actually chose to get out of the car and leave us. My father went to prison around 2017/2018 and had little to no contact up until his death. This haiku perfectly showcases how it feels to have a parent leave. The first line of the haiku gives the reader a sense of hope, maybe the haiku is going to be happy. Readers aren't necessarily expecting the last half of the haiku, it is an abrupt switch from the beginning line.

When I read this haiku, I imagine someone taking a deep breath right after the first line, then progressively losing their breath until the last line comes out as heartbreaking and breathless. I believe this haiku skillfully shows how an absent father can make someone feel. Sometimes I still get a heartbreaking breathless feeling—like how I described reading the haiku feels—when I realize my father existed and just wasn't in my life.

home from the funeral  
hands in the dishwasher suds  
sister-to-sister

Brooks, *School's Out*, 67

This haiku makes me think every time I read it. The feeling I get from this haiku is unlike any other. This haiku makes me imagine two sisters, dressed in all black from a funeral, doing the dishes to forget what just happened. I can feel the mutual feeling between the sisters that are doing the dishes. The sisters feel this sort of emptiness, yet they both express it in different ways. One sister is gabbing to their mother as they wash the dishes, and the other sister is doing the dishes in silence and trying to tune out the other two. Although the two sisters deal with this death differently, they are still giving each other a bit of strength by doing the dishes together. In many situations, when sisters are together, they are stronger. This haiku skillfully sneaks in a beautiful depiction of a good sisterly bond.

Haiku can make people feel so many things, and I find it so interesting how these haiku about family made me feel a wide variety of emotions. From grief to joy, these haiku took me on a journey. I enjoyed thinking about my own family when reading these haiku, it felt very refreshing to think about my family in-depth again. I hope these haiku allowed you to reflect and reminisce about your family, whether good or bad memories arise.

## Work Cited

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