

**The Years Between Us:
Intergenerational Haiku**

by
Amanda Spotts

November 11, 2025

After reading through countless Kukai handouts and haiku anthologies, I noticed that I had a soft spot for any haiku that referenced a connection between generations. My noticing began with grandparent haiku. The soft sentiment written towards grandparents makes me think of my own grandparents and the loving bond I have with them. As I followed this thread of intergenerational haiku, I noticed an influx of mentorship. Many haiku authors use multiple generations to show the passing of wisdom and the trust children have in their elders. I also noticed that many intergenerational haiku feature a conflict. Some haiku writers use multiple generations to express frustration or unease. Often the frustrated party is a younger generation that may lack the wisdom to grasp the older party's demands. Lastly, the image of life being cyclical is often referenced. Older generations seeing themselves in the young ones shows that we are all connected—the circle of life. Life is less linear than it seems. Intergenerational haiku show connection through moments of bonding, mentorship, conflict, and the circle of life.

Intergenerational Bonding Haiku

braided pigtails
she chatters away
in grandpa's hat

Lexi DeSollar, *The Art of Reading and Writing Haiku*, 86

I take a deep breath after I read this haiku because it makes me feel at peace. I imagine golden rays of sunshine washing a grandfather and his young granddaughter in light. She sits on his knee and wears his hat. I imagined a straw hat at first, but it could be any hat that represents the grandfather, a baseball cap, a cowboy hat...There's an adoration in the way the narrator writes this haiku. I pictured the grandfather as the narrator, the one noticing the granddaughter, but it could be a mother or father connecting the two generations. I find adoration in the word choice. "Chatters" is a word that distinctly sticks out to me. It is not used in a negative way, to me it seems fond. The grandfather enjoys listening to all of the dreams and thoughts of his granddaughter. I believe this is because of the final line, "in grandpa's hat." The grandfather has allowed her to wear his hat. Since she's chattering away, she feels comfortable in his hat and may have been chattering for a while. The shared wearing of the hat equates a bond. Grandfather loves his granddaughter, and she loves him as well. That's why she would wear his hat. The passing of the hat is a beautiful yet simple way to show love and connection between generations.

valentine's day
nursing home
dinner with grandma

Darien M. Sloat, *The Art of Reading and Writing Haiku*, 64

In this haiku, I noticed time commitment. There is a lot of care and thought behind the author's intention to visit his grandmother. Firstly, the author does not have to spend their Valentine's Day with Grandma. They do this out of the love in their heart. Grandma is not forcing him too because she stays at the nursing home no matter what. Her power to coerce is limited. The grandson is free to visit whenever he pleases, but he chooses Valentine's Day. This led me to believe that Grandma may be a widow. Dinner on Valentine's Day is typically reserved for significant others. I love this haiku because it is a true act of empathy between generations. The grandson is not in the same stage of life as his Grandma, but he loves her. Therefore, he does not mind sacrificing dinner with a date to keep his grandma company in the nursing home. Sometimes we cannot directly relate to other generations. Instead our love connects us through our observations and actions.

Intergenerational Mentorship Haiku

traffic jam
my small son
asks who made God

Peggy Lyles, *Red Leaves*, 50

When I was a kid, every car ride felt long. Thirty minutes felt like an eternity. My parents would keep us busy with coloring books and I Spy, but, eventually, I would settle into the rhythmic hum of the engine and get lost in my thoughts. In those moments of stillness my Dad would ask, "What's on your mind, kiddo?" And I would tell him. We would talk about all sorts of things in the car. The car is one of the only places where I find myself present with one other person in stillness for an extended period of time. Car ride talks present a uniquely shared solitude. It was just me, my Dad, and the open road. This haiku reminds me of those peaceful moments of connection I have with my father, when all of the noise from the day has time to filter out, and all that is left are my subconscious questions about the world.

Traffic jams are a very specific setting. It denotes a stillness because the car is not moving. The parent and the small son have no other external distractions. That stillness contrasts beautifully with the magnitude of the question, "who made God?" That question shook me initially because it is coming from a child. As a young adult, I have already been taught the creation story. I know that God is the "I am," meaning he just is without an explanation. There is a pure honesty in the child's question. There is no jaded experience attached to it, just a simple, logical question. Who made God?

There is a small versus large comparison between the words "small son" and "God." There is also an old versus young comparison between the parent and child. These comparisons point the reader towards the main themes in the haiku. Old and young people can have similar questions about the world. It does not matter how old or big you are, we all have the same questions.

The author ends the haiku without concluding how the parent responds. Lyles cleverly puts us in the position of the parent. We're focused on traffic until our small curious son pulls us into the topic of God and the creation of the universe. How does one begin to answer this massive question? It takes stillness and connection to discuss the things we do not have clear answers for, and that is what older generations try to give the youth—a safe space to ask questions, benefit from wisdom, and ponder deep questions for themselves. Older generations raise the young. A car in traffic is a beautiful image to show a reader the

importance of being present with people who are younger than you and offering a guiding hand. They notice more than we think.

snowy path
i fit my footprints
inside his

Kristin (Boryca) Kozlowski, *Millikin University Haiku Anthology*, 109

Following in someone's footsteps is an expression that denotes themes of admiration and growing up. In this haiku, I picture a young son bundled up in his snow gear. His stubby legs are shoved into fluffy boots, and he is wearing so many layers that his arms have limited motion, but he still trudges right behind his Dad. Dad is shoveling the snow and little buddy wants to help, so he follows behind him. There is a sense of safety in this haiku. Following in footsteps infers trust in the person who made the footsteps. The child is not forging his own path. He wants to be like his father. This intergenerational haiku highlights children relying on their parents for support and guidance not necessarily because they need to but because they want to. Younger generations often look up to older generations with love, adoration, and respect. The mentorship relationship goes both ways.

Intergenerational Conflict

arguing over the dress
mother and daughter
on the mall escalator

Shannon Kroner, *The Art of Reading and Writing Haiku*, 61

argument in the car
my favorite doughnut
tastes less sweet

Asa Pilger, *Millikin University Haiku*, Kukai 3, Fall 2025

I matched these two haiku because they describe a conflict between a child and a parent. As children grow up into teenagers, they start to discover who they are and detach from their parents. They are growing into an independent person, yet they are still very much dependent as they experiment with life. There can be a lot of guilt in overstepping parent and child relationship boundaries. Teenagers challenge their parents, and parents challenge their kids. Everyone is teaching each other through conflict resolution.

The first haiku carries resentment over a squabble. The mother and daughter have left the dress store. They are on the escalator. The fight lasted outside the store. Learning how to communicate feelings can be difficult for teenagers, and parents often struggle to relate to their kids by failing to explain their reasoning effectively. It takes time for both generations to see each other clearly as they navigate personal and interpersonal change.

The second haiku carries guilt. The child or teenager feels guilty for fighting with their parent after they were given a special treat. This haiku has a bitter and sweet contrast. The bitterness of the argument meets the sweetness of the gift. Parent child relationships are full of moments where two feelings exist at once. You can only hate someone deeply if you love them deeply. Now, I do not think the characters in this haiku hate each other, but there is a duality present. Conflict with someone you love is unavoidable. What is most important is what we learn from those interactions. Conflict resolution allows people in different stages of life to build stronger understandings of each other and deepen their relationship.

sisters bent over
the heating vent . . .
adult talk below

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, 24

indistinguishable
words through the wall
I mute my trumpet

Evan Coram, *Unthrown Stones*, 17

I made this pairing around the conflicts that older generations hide from younger generations. The previous pair featured conflict directly between generations. This pair highlights conflict in one generation that indirectly affects the other generation. In the first haiku, I pictured the daughters overhearing their parents discussing divorce. The ellipsis communicates an unknown quality to the conversation. The sisters are not privy to all of the details, but they know that their lives will be forever changed if their parents split up. In the second haiku, I imagined a son pausing his trumpet practice because his parents' fighting in the next room became too loud to ignore. He is also not a part of the fight, but the problems of his parents affect his quality of life. He cannot focus on his practicing when there is such unrest in his home. Both of these haiku show how interconnected life is, especially when applied to family dynamics. No problem truly only affects one generation. One element or another will trickle down and affect multiple groups.

Circle of Life Intergenerational Haiku

late night rain —
he reads to me from the book
I read to him

Billie Wilson, *Mayfly* 40, 6

This haiku highlights the cyclical nature of life through the use of a story book. The narrator reflects on their current moment by comparing it to the past. The connection drawn between the two time lines is the storybook. The older character used to read to the younger character right before bed, especially when it was dark and stormy. That was the stage of life they used to be in. Now, time has moved forward, and they have swapped positions. The older character may be nearing the end of their life. This physical weakness requires care, similar to the fear a child has of detachment, storms, or the dark. In both scenarios, one character is comforting the other as they embark on an unknown. Each generation supported the other through a shared comfort. People change as life changes. No generation has a stable role in life or a stable responsibility to another generation. Life is a circle, and we take turns caring for each other.

ashes in the lake
my father and I
drift apart

Tyler Lamensky and Garrett Derman, *The Art of Reading and Writing Haiku*, 63

This haiku depicts the separating of a father and son in body but not necessarily in spirit. The cyclical nature in this haiku can be found in the spiritual element of death. The author still references the ashes as their father. That is because the father and son have an irreplaceable bond. They are both affected deeply in their heart and soul. Just because the son will never see his father's physical form again does not mean that he will never see his father again. He will be reminded of his father everyday through his memories. This is

shown through the image of the father's ashes floating across the lake. His father's body is unrecognizable, but since it has returned to ash, it can travel anywhere. The son can be reminded of his Dad anywhere and everywhere. We carry the people we love with us. In this way, we keep them alive. This shows the cyclical nature of life and love.

summer pasture—
a child emerges
in the old man's eyes

Wally Swist, *The Silence Between Us*, 117

This haiku shows nostalgia between generations. The old man is feeling nostalgia for his childhood. The third line shows nostalgia through the phrasing "in the old man's eyes." By saying that the child is "in his eyes," the author shows that the old man is communing with something more personal than vision alone. The child is awakening a memory from the old man's own life. The word "emerge" stuck out to me as well. Emerge has a quality of suddenness just like memories and feelings do. Feelings and memories appear unannounced. One can feel nostalgia from anything, but when it appears, it creates an instant connection. Through his nostalgia, the old man is reconnected to his love for the pasture. Perhaps he played for hours and smiled into the warmth of the sun just like the new child is doing. These shared experiences between generations depict the cyclical nature of life. We change, but the world is the same in many ways. As we age, we know the world better and can recognize it on a deeper level. Our ability to affect one another through unknown shared experiences is another way that we are all connected despite being born in different times.

Haiku is an artform based on the present moment and a shared connection between the reader and the author. Haiku is able to do this by relying on the universal truths of the human experience. Bonding between generations is the same. Even in different stages of life, all people experience certain fundamental feelings and needs. Haiku highlights these shared feelings and needs to show that we are interconnected through love and experience. Authors highlight intergenerational bonds through acts of service and spending time. Generations also care for each other through mentorship. Older generations use their life experience to guide younger generations. Younger generations often look up to older generations with adoration and a goal to be like them one day. This mentorship builds a relationship based on trust and safety. Thirdly, intergenerational haiku highlights conflict between generations by showing how they do not relate. It is difficult for generations to communicate when they are not fully aware of all the emotions and implications of the other generation. But working through conflict has the potential to bring generations closer. Lastly, intergenerational haiku shows the circle of life. We are all interconnected through our shared experiences and our presence on Earth. The bond of humanity runs deeper than an age group. Intergenerational haiku centers around uniting people despite the seemingly separate quality of age. We all have more knowing within us than we think.

• • •

Works Cited

- Boryca Kozlowski, Kristin. *Millikin University Haiku Anthology*, Decatur, Illinois: Bronze Man Books, 2008.
- Brooks, Randy, Editor. *The Art of Reading & Writing Haiku: A Reader Response Approach*. Brooks Books, 2019.
- Brooks, Randy. *School's Out: Selected Haiku*. Foster City, CA: Press Here, 1999.
- Corum, Evan. *Unthrown Stones*. Taylorville, IL: Brooks Books, 2024.
- Lyles, Peggy. *Red Leaves*. Taylorville, IL: Brooks Books, 2023.

Millikin University Haiku, various kukai, Fall 2025. Online. Viewed November 12, 2025.
<<https://www.brooksbookshaiku.com/MillikinHaiku/courses/globalFall2025/>>

Mayfly 40, Brooks Books, Decatur, IL: Brooks Books, 2005.

Swist, Wally. *The Silence Between Us*. Decatur, IL: Brooks Books, 2005.