

School's Out: Selected Haiku of Randy Brooks, (Foster City, CA: Press Here), 1999.

The following are selected favorites and reader responses by students in Global Haiku Traditions, Spring 2012 at Millikin University.

flag on the coffin...
her gloves off to hold
the child's hand tight

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, 19

When I read this haiku, I get the image of people walking out of the church after a funeral, watching the casket being moved. The wife of this dead soldier is still absolutely devastated, but she is doing what she can to hold her emotions together. Her child is balling and wishing for his daddy back. She grabs his hand tight and tells him everything will be okay, but she is just as unsure, scared, and sad as her child. I'm sure many families all over the world have had to go through this kind of situation with all of the wars, terrorist acts, and whatnot. It's one I hope I never have to deal with on a personal level. Adam

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

Randy Brooks *School's Out*, 24

This haiku reminds me of when my brother and I would crowd over the heat vent to listen to our parents talk! We would love to hover over it and first, feel the hot air blowing out; and two, try to spy on our parents and find out if we were in trouble or getting presents for an unexpected reason or something. We just liked to spy on them because we wanted to find out information that they wouldn't tell us normally. I personally liked to also spy on my mom when she was on her cell phone and try to listen to her conversations with her adult friends. We were sneaky... heat vents. Katie

snowblind on the range:
homesteader feels
the barbwire home

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, page 25

This haiku reminds me of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books. There are a few separate occasions in the series where Pa, Laura's husband Almanzo, and even Laura are lost on the prairie in blizzards. Each time it was by a stroke of luck that they brushed into an object that led them home. This haiku is interesting because of the emotion that barbwire home creates. Perhaps there is a barbwire fence around the house and he has to follow it home. But barbwire is so painful so perhaps the fence isn't actually made of barbwire but his hands are so cold that the material is painful to his hands. This haiku shows the desperation and the insignificance we feel in these situations. When lost in a blizzard you realize how alone you really are and you feel a drive to keep going in order to survive. So many emotions are evoked in this haiku if you only look for them. Stef

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

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 26

I like this haiku because it reminds me of fishing with my dad and mom. When you're fishing you really can't say much because the fish can hear you talking and it scares them away. Despite the lack of conversation, it is nice to just sit in silence with the shared company and the warm sun, relaxing for a few moments. It isn't an awkward silence or even a tense silence, it is just silence because there is no need for words. Hailee Peck

swimming pool...
a farm kid's arms pale
from the elbows up

Randy Brooks, SO, 29

This haiku made me smile as soon as I first read it. Being the daughter of a farmer, I understand the things that go along with living a farming lifestyle. While I lost a lot of interest in hanging around the farm everyday while I was younger, my brother Luke (who is 16 now) is trying his best to follow in my dad's footsteps. This haiku makes me think of him, who—unlike me—tans very easily, and has had a "farmer's tan" every summer since he was a very small child. He's got skinny, lanky limbs, so my mother and I would also poke fun at how silly his half-tan, half-white arms looked. Kendall

This is definitely the perfect haiku for the family of one of my closest friends. They have a cattle farm with over 5,000 Angus cattle. During the summer, all four kids and their dad work all day on the farm. They get the worst farmers' tans. I go out there and help them sometimes when I am done with work. It's funny to see the boys take off their shirts to mow because it looks like they never removed it. My friend is always self-conscious when we play basketball because of it. Everyone knows she's a farmer's daughter. Moli

first kiss
deep in the woods . . .
sunbeams filter down

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 33

The idea of a "first kiss" is something that many of us idealize before it happens—usually it's not the most perfect kiss, but there's still something magical about it. This haiku paints a beautiful scene, of a first kiss in the woods, with light coming through the trees.

toes dangle in the lake . . .
watermelon juice
drips off his chin

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 37

I like this haiku because it triggers the memory of me on the dock at my father's lake house in Michigan. Every year, for one week in the summer, my father takes the whole family to the lake, and we spend all our time outside, on the boat, on the dock, in the yard. The snack of choice is almost always watermelon. Juicy, succulent, oh-so-reminiscent. Watermelon is the ultimate summer food, and my ultimate summer is spent at that lake house, just relaxing, eating some watermelon, and enjoying the breeze. Conner

the bride's mouth
stuffed with cake...the groom
answers for her

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 39

I genuinely enjoyed this haiku because it made me think of many different, rather humorous things at once. First, I imagined that the bride had been really watching what she ate before the day of her wedding so she could look just amazing in her dress. Then, when the ceremony was over, she was finally able to just let go and have fun. She has her man, so no need to worry! Second, I imagined that the couple was so in sync that if one person was unable to form his/her thoughts, the other person could just step in and help out. Finally, I enjoyed imagining this beautiful wedding reception, something very classy, with a bride in a lovely white gown and cake frosting on her lips. I found the juxtaposition of the beautiful elegance of the wedding reception and the silly freedom of devouring cake very amusing and enjoyable. Catherine

all three pregnant around
the kitchen table
slicing cantaloupe

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 42

I like this haiku, but the memory that it brings up makes me kind of sad. This haiku makes me think of my cousin Lyssie. She is the oldest daughter in a family of ten, and she basically raised her brothers and sisters alongside her mother. The whole family is very conservative and homeschooled. Because of these ideals and because no one ever really expected her to further her education, she married as soon as she turned eighteen and now at age 23 has two sons and is pregnant again. Her father's side of the family is like this as well, and her cousins on that side of the family followed in her footsteps when they turned eighteen. It seems like anytime our families get together for holidays the same group of three or four girls are always pregnant; sitting together talking about mothering, trading recipes, and swapping baby clothes. Although she says she is happy and that is really all that matters, this whole predicament saddens me because if her husband ever decides to leave her she will be stranded with many children and no education, not even a high school diploma. Megan

high as my arms
can lift him...
the moon still out of reach

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 47

The visual that immediately came to me when reading this haiku was absolutely adorable and beautiful. I can just picture a mother or father holding up their little boy as he reaches out to the moon. You can see how the moon illuminates the boy's smiling face and you can almost hear the giggle filling the empty silence of night. Haiku that can strike a visual that quickly with me are my favorite because I usually have to sit and think and imagine before anything really comes to me—with this haiku it was pretty much instant. Elise

Gosh! This haiku is simply awesome! I love it because it has so much meaning and truthfulness to it. This is exactly how I see parenting in general. You want the best of the best for them, and you just want to create so much potential for them, but yet, somehow....it is not YOU, the parent, who has to do it...it is them, the child, who is the one to take matters into their own hands, and make their decisions, and hopefully, then...that moon will be in reach. Sendin

I can see this haiku going a couple ways, going into some deep meaning of how you can only push someone so far to their dreams, but I like the other image that I got. I see these two brothers standing out on their deck or porch and looking up at the sky. They're young and they haven't completely grasped the concept of how far away the moon actually is. Seemingly out of nowhere, the older brother suggests they try to touch the moon. So the younger one climbs up on the older brother's shoulders and reaches for the moon. He tries his hardest to grab the seemingly close moon, but they were not able to reach it, no matter their effort. Meanwhile, their mother was standing in the window, sipping her hot tea and can't do anything but smile at her boys. I just really like that scene. Adam

face
in the window—
no moon

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, 51

This haiku is alone and solitary. One peeks out the window in the night, seeing an empty sky, and seeing his empty self. No moon peeks through and greets him, he reaches into the dark. And maybe he wonders if who he sees in the window is really him. Sometimes we have to do things on our own with no light to guide us. These are some of the feelings I take from this haiku. Eric

pair of robins
in the tall grass . . .
my daughter's swing slows

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, page 55

I imagine a good-sized back yard just at the beginning of Spring. It's still cold outside, but there's enough warmth to spend more than a few moments outside. I imagine a father with his young daughter, who has been yearning to go outside and swing all winter long. The grass is long, because it hasn't been warm enough to mow. The robins signify that spring is arriving on this afternoon. I like this haiku because of the warm setting it gives, even though it still implies a slight chill in the air. It's a heart-warming haiku that inspires a smile across my face. Lexie

one pawn missing . . .
sunburst through an opening
in the thunderhead

Randy Brooks, *School's Out*, 56

The one pawn missing is like an opening in an army's wall. A chance. A weakness in the enemy, and the hostile threat. Then when you see the sun peek through the clouds, it's like the sun is trying to tell us that he's there, that even though the storm is bad, he won't give up. After the storm the sun will always come back. I love the images in this one. I couldn't help but freely illustrate what it made me think. Eric

each stroke of the crayon
his tongue
cross his lips

Brooks, 63

I love this haiku because it portrays one of the funny traits of children. They usually color pictures for fun and end up giving them to other people as a gift. But once they decide whom they want to color a picture for, all of a sudden the task becomes a project. I can picture this little kid focusing and concentrated so hard. He is probably trying hard to keep it in between the lines. It is funny how something so minuscule to adults holds a lot of importance in the mind of a child. Courtney Gerk

I really like this haiku because it gives me the image of my little cousin. She is about ten years old with long, curly brown hair, and glasses. She loves to make crafts. Whenever we are at a family get-together she will draw me a picture. I love to sit and watch her concentrate because she focuses really hard and sticks her tongue out when she draws. This haiku captures the moment perfectly. It's so simple and cute; can make you picture almost any child. Merissa

Spring afternoon...
I try another combination
on the shed lock

Schools Out, 74, Randy Brooks

I chose this haiku because I can totally relate. We have a shed and after we close it up for the winter and then want to get in it the following spring, the key is nowhere to be found. I don't know how many times we have either had to break the lock or use some sort of tool to open in it. From this moment and haiku I get the feeling of disappointment. It is finally nice enough outside and all you want to do is get some summer stuff out of the shed, but now you can't because you can't get the lock open. It is always funny to watch my dad and brother trying to figure out who had the key last and where they might have put it. This event usually turns into a full out hunt to find the key to the shed. By the time it does turn up everyone is so tired that they no longer want to get anything out of it anyway. Lindsay

I enjoy this haiku because it carries that new feeling that only spring has, and it reminds me of my dad. Everything gets locked away for the winter and almost forgotten about—like the lawn mower, rakes and shovels, the boat. These things are never something that you think about when it's cold out, because you don't need any of them. Eventually, so much time passes once you lock everything away that you end up forgetting the combination. This reminds me of my dad because every spring, like clockwork, he's looking everywhere in the house for the key to the shed. He always puts it away in the fall in a "safe place" where it won't get lost... then he can't figure out what that spot was. I enjoy that this haiku is a reminder of those quirky moments in life that aren't a big deal, but seem to be at the time. Courtney Gallup

one leg over the oar,
the college graduate
drifts

Randy Brooks, School's Out, 76

When I read this haiku, I have the feeling this is going to be me. Now, I don't think I'll be rowing down a river and decide to stop and drift, but I feel like this shadows at how college students are after college. As a saxophone performance major, I know there will not be a 'job' for me, but I'm not regretting completing the degree. I'm learning a lot of life skills and I've learned the importance of being a well-rounded human being. However, I feel like there will be a certain amount of drifting once I complete my time here at

Millikin. It's impossible to plan for what opportunities might come years down the line, but I don't mind. Drifting along can't be too bad as long as you keep growing as a person. Adam