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HN 202: Global Haiku
Dr. Brooks
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Coming of Age in Haiku

Coming of age and puberty is an awkward experience for nearly everyone, so trying to describe the confusion within 3 short and sweet lines can be both challenging and rewarding. For the reader these haiku's can evoke their emotions they had not felt in years because puberty is a time many repress or try not to think about. Coming of Age haiku is a topic nearly everyone can relate to but are all created so separately. Some use humour to describe that transitional period and others use nostalgia and sadness. Throughout this essay we will examine how haiku can show transitional periods in our lives ranging from new curiosities to saying goodbye to your childhood.

The first two haiku I would like to examine are the beginnings of curiosity and bigger thoughts than playing. The first was written by a Millikin student, Ryan Michael Jones, and the second was written by a famous author, Peggy Lyles in "To Hear the Rain". They both show the curiosity arising within young children about big questions that can ultimately shape their futures.

fragrant irises
the boy asks
where babies come from

Ryan Michael Jones, Millikin, 156

traffic jam
my small son asks
who made god

Lyles, THTR, 57

Both haiku, although written by two very different people, are not only similar in content but in how they are written. They both start with a simple scene or sensory detail. The second line paints who is apart of it and is about to ask the big question which are then on the third line. Both last lines are huge questions that make adults uncomfortable to answer because their minds are pure and impressionable, but it is inevitable for them to begin to wonder and they will soon find out the answer.

Joanne Weise and Logan Bader, both Millikin students, wrote separate haiku's that represent the before and during the inbetween stage where the mind begins to wander about different problems that are now occurring in your life. Joanne's haiku describes the main focus as playing with hot wheels and armpit farts and the Logan reflects, just a few years later, he may start to become curious about girls and how to kiss them.

hot wheels
and armpit farts
no girls allowed

Joanne Weise, Millikin, 82

in class notes
his mind wanders
how do you kiss a girl?

Logan Bader, Kukai 4

This matched pair shows the innocence that accompanies coming with age and the curiosity. Weise's last line "no girls allowed" contrast's with Bader's new found interest as to how you might kiss a girl. Although they both show the purity of the prepubescent age through wandering minds and armpit farts, they are an accurate contrast between before these curiosities and during

Jenesi Moore, a Millikin student, writes many haiku about her observations and personal experiences. The haiku below was apart of Kukai 3 in the Global Haiku class of Fall 2018. The first two lines represent innocence because its her birthday party and she is squealing over opening present and the last line shows her maturing because it is not a toy or something a child would wear: it is a miniskirt.

12th birthday party
squeals as she opens
her first miniskirt

Jenesi Moore, Kukai 3

The miniskirt is a sign of coming of age for many people along with the ability to wear makeup and go on dates. Most parents do not allow their children to wear or do many of these things until they are coming of age so the 12 year old is a benchmark in the haiku and is a representation of freedom.

Ai Li is a haiku writer from England and this haiku below shows the stark contrast between a boy and girl hitting puberty and how they look forward to completely different aspects of puberty. This haiku contrast's Moore's haiku by describing the physical changes a teenager goes through versus the emotional.

a gift
on his 13th birthday
new voice

Ai Li, The Red Moon Anthology, 69

Ai Li trick's the reader when they are expecting a physical gift for his 13th birthday, but then surprises them by describing the common occurrence when boys turn this age. His "new voice" is a shocker on the 13th line and allows the reader to interpret that this newfound voice is a positive gift. This positive milestone accompanies the positiveness of the idea that it is his 13th

birthday-- the year he actually becomes a teenager and is no longer a “tween”. This represents one of the largest coming of age milestones in a boy’s life, in comparison to the mental milestones of the importance of receiving a first mini skirt.

homecoming
going solo
... once again

Emily Sullins, Kukai 4

slow dance
back of his shirt
damp with sweat

Alyson Ludek, Millikin, 17

I chose these two together because one of the big awkward experiences almost everyone goes through is dances. Emily Sullin’s haiku describes more of an internal awkwardness than the external awkwardness that accompanies dances. Sullin’s haiku describes the disappointment that teenagers feel when they are going alone. This disdain and consciousness of going to the dance alone is shown through her use of ellipses. The reader would expect that the author would be excited about the dance, but it is clear that they are not excited to go at all. Similarly, Ludek’s haiku matches this lack of excitement when all they can describe about the slow dance is that their partner’s back is sweaty. This is also a very awkward experience and the reader can feel the author’s disdain for the slow dance through her lack of excitement of the sweaty back shirt.

Hannah Ottenfeld, another Millikin student, describes the moving on that accompanies coming of age and puberty.

Graduation day
i sent
a breakup text

Hannah Ottenfeld, Kukai 4

Ottenfeld’s haiku emphasizes that she is breaking up with her partner; however, the emphasis is that she is graduating and moving on. This is just one example of how she is growing up and moving on to her high school problems. The author knows that she will be moving on to bigger and better opportunities, hence the breakup. She understands she does not want to be held back and is growing up. This coming of age haiku shows the pain that accompanies growing up and the sacrifices that come along with it.

buried in the closet
an old Barbie
with both shoes on

Melanie Melay, Millikin, 132

Leaf I leave
on the floor of
my childhood

Philip Rowland, Before Music

Melanie Mclay, a Millikin graduate, and Philip Rowland, a professional haiku author, both have written haiku about leaving their childhood room. Mclay describes it by using a toy from her childhood that is now buried in the closet. Her use of the Barbie makes the reader nostalgic and filled with the bittersweet sentiment that she is burying not just her Barbie but her childhood along with it. This nicely matches with Rowland's haiku. It has a very similar sentiment as he is leaving his childhood. His first line "the leaf I leave" represents the now bareness of the room. It has become empty in both furniture but memories. The concept of him leaving it on the floor is him leaving his memory with the room of his childhood. These two haiku represent the full leaving of childhood and the memories they have left with them and are moving on to more opportunities. It is a bittersweet pairing of the haiku that represent the growing out of the childhood that built them.

Jessica May, a Millikin graduate, wrote a haiku about moving on to college. This phase of life is one of the most monumental moments in coming of age. The going to college and attendance. Jessica May is an author who has had first hand experience with this, as she, was a college student when she wrote this lovely haiku about college life.

spring break's end
I catch myself calling
campus home

Jessica May, Millikin, 78

Jessica May's haiku has a sense of bittersweet nostalgia and describes the guilt she feels for calling campus home. Her use of "catch myself" meaning that it was an accident but also instinctual. Although most college students recognize that the house that raised them should be considered home, the longing to go back to school and be comfortable with freedom makes it feel more like a home than the house you grew up in does. Jessica May's haiku cleverly describes the coming of age milestone of moving away from home and becoming your own person.

Scott Metz, a Haiku artist that hope for haiku techniques and traditions to become flourished with modern flair, incorporates a surprising twist in his haiku about never truly growing up.

children outdoors
I finish the roof
of their Lego house

Scott Metz, Frog Pond Vol. XXVIII No. 3, 8

His opening line “children outdoors” makes the reader believe that the poem will continue to discuss children playing. Then the second line “I finish the roof” allows the reader to imagine a father working on the roof of their house while the children are outside playing. However, the third line transports the reader to a different scenario when it is revealed that he is playing with Legos and not working on an actual roof. This haiku represents the child like tendencies and need to play that is instilled within all of us. No matter how old you get or how you think you should act, there is always time for whimsy and playfulness. This haiku neatly wraps up the coming of age topic because it is clear that he has reached one of the final life milestones of having children. However, despite his age he still has some youth in him. No matter how many milestones someone may accomplish, they are never too old to imagine and be youthful.

The topic of coming of age milestones in haiku are all very similar for many people, because, although we experience them all separately, they are all similar in content. For example, my first dance will obviously vary from Emily Sullin’s first dance, but, since they are both a first dance, they are inherently awkward. These awkward feelings of growing up and reminiscing on the past are well reflected in haiku. Haiku is supposed to make the reader feel and imagine what the author is writing about whether or not they have experienced it in real life; therefore, coming of age is something everyone has actually experienced so whether or not the reader has actually experienced the scene described only plays a small role since the reader can at least identify with the awkwardness and bittersweet moments that accompany coming of age.

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