

Korean Sijo

Cathy Hart, Perry Middle School

Purpose:

Big Concept:

Sijo is a sung poetry form that is unique to Korea.

Essential Questions:

1. What is sijo?
2. How does sijo compare to the Japanese tanka and haiku forms?

Rationale:

Exposure of students to the sijo form of poetry

Materials:

1. Posters of Poetry forms (see below)
2. CD of sijo or downloaded sijo from the Internet
3. Script of Moon Hyun's "Getting a Natural Jade at Mt. Hyoung" (see below)
4. Poetry books from the school and public libraries
5. Definition poems of haiku and sijo by Robison (see below)
6. Tanka and Haiku comparison handout (see below)
7. Paper and pen

Activities:

1. Ask students some introductory questions about their knowledge of poetry and various poetic forms. Use the poetry posters to help review those they know.
2. Play some sijo and discuss the music. If possible, share Moon Hyun's "Getting a Natural Jade at Mt. Hyoung". See website number ten below for a download of the performance. The words of "Getting a Natural Jade at Mt. Hyoung" for following along are included below. The poem can be projected for all to see or it can be made into a handout.
3. Discuss the sijo form using the information below and sijo from the websites and books below. A few samples of sijo are included here. Again, handouts can be made of the poems or they can be projected for class viewing.
4. Share the definition poems of haiku and sijo by Robison. These two poems are included below.
5. Hand out the Tanka versus Haiku comparison chart. Using this handout, have the students compare sijo to Tanka and Haiku. Discuss sijo according to the characteristics listed and then add more characteristics as needed. Each student should write on his own handout.
6. Guide students in efforts to create their own sijo poems.
7. If possible, perform the poems aloud with the beat of a drum in a tempo similar to the sijo heard earlier. Show the picture and information about the hourglass drum, Janguu, below.

Assessment:

1. Grade each student's comparison chart for completeness and comprehension.
2. Students' poems will be scored for insight into sijo, completion and effort.
3. If poems are performed aloud, these should be evaluated for adherence to the pace and feel of sung sijo.

4. Students will be assessed on their understanding of various types of poetry, including sijo, at the end of the poetry portfolio unit (see below).

Grade Adaptation:

The target grade of this lesson is the 7th grade.

Scaling Up:

1. Create music in the Korean style to accompany the poems. Download the PDF file of music on website sixteen below as a starting point.
2. Make hourglass drums, janguu or changgo, to accompany the poems. See the picture and description of a janguu below. Also refer to website number twenty-six.

Scaling Down:

1. Instead of creating individual sijo poems, a class poem could be written.

State Standards:

English Language Arts

7th Grade Reading Applications: Literary Text

5. Identify recurring themes, patterns and symbols found in literature from different eras and cultures.
6. Explain the defining characteristics of literary forms and genres, including poetry, drama, myths, biographies, autobiographies, science fictions, fiction and non-fiction.
7. Interpret how mood or meaning is conveyed through word choice, figurative language and syntax.

English Language Arts

7th Grade Writing Process

9. Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, colorful modifiers and style as appropriate to audience and purpose.
17. Prepare for publication (e.g., for display or for sharing with others) writing that follows a format appropriate to the purpose, using such techniques as electronic resources, principles of design (e.g., margins, tabs, spacing and columns) and graphics (e.g., drawings, charts and graphs) to enhance the final product.

English Language Arts

7th Grade Writing Applications

8. Produce informal writings (e.g., journals, notes and poems) for various purposes.

Resources:

Websites

1. <http://thewordshop.tripod.com/Sijo/masters.html> - links to several masters' poetry
2. <http://www.ahapoetry.com/sijo.htm> - examples and overview of the form
3. <http://www.geocities.com/vgendrano/sijo.html> - discussion of sijo as a form of poetry
4. <http://lonestar.texas.net/~robison/sijo.html> - succinct definition of sijo in verse and prose
5. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sijoforum/> - definition and sijo forum email addresses
6. http://www.worldhaikureview.org/1-2/edchoice2_8_01.shtml - a sijo poem and commentary on it

7. 203.252.231.26/kukak_information/KoreanCulture.pdf – PDF file with instruments, poetry, calligraphy, etc.
8. dedhost-sil-026.sil.at/ondemandpart.php?id=10 – downloads of sijo
9. <http://thewordshop.tripod.com/Sijo/sijo-index.htm> - sijo compared with haiku with more links
10. <http://203.252.231.26/> - downloads of shijo including Moon Hyun's Shijo with the poem “Getting a Natural Jade at Mt. Hyoung”
11. <http://www.sogang.ac.kr/~anthony/KorLitOUP.htm> - Korean literature with some history of sijo
12. http://www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng/aboutg/trad_vocal8.html - form and instruments
13. http://www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng/aboutg/trad_vocal3.html - gagok music
14. <http://members.tripod.com/~Startag/IntroSijo.html> - introduction to sijo and its development in North America
15. <http://members.tripod.com/~Startag/AboutSijo.html> - definition and history of sijo
16. http://www.michaelmatthews.net/work_details/sijo/sijo.html - his original music for an old sijo, includes information about the chosen sijo as well as some general information
17. <http://www.answers.com/topic/sijo> - glossary definition and an encyclopedic article
18. <http://www.kimsoft.com/kr-sijo.htm> - several sijo original and translated with more links
19. <http://www.hawaii.edu/korea/bibliography/literature.htm> - an extensive bibliography of Korean literature
20. http://www.digital-daydreams.com/enc/world/show_country.php?id=34 - Korean music article, establishes sijo as court music
21. <http://web.umar.edu/~gdoty/poems/sijo/def-sijo.html> - brief definition
22. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sijo> - encyclopedic article as seen in website 17
23. http://www.koreasociety.org/KS_curriculum/HS/2/2-text/2_141_2.htm - Hwang Chini's sijo
24. <http://naia.ws/sijo.htm> - three examples w art - do not copy or use without permission
25. <http://www.asia.msu.edu/eastasia/SouthKorea/music.html> - South Korean music
26. <http://learningobjects.wesleyan.edu/vim/cgi-bin/instrument.cgi?id=100> - information, audio and video of a changgo (hourglass drum)
27. <http://members.tripod.com/~theWORDshop/Sijo/fishermanscalendar.htm> – Yun Sondo, sijo master, who wrote the Fisherman's calendar
28. <http://members.tripod.com/neca/Tanka%20and%20Sijo.htm#Sijo> - short definition with classical sijo and contemporary sijo

Books

1. Kim, Jaihiun. Classical Korean Poetry. Fremont, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1994.
2. Lee, Don Y. Korean Literature: Sijo. Bloomington, IN: Eastern Press, 1994.
3. Lee, Peter H. Anthology of Korean Literature From Early Times to the Nineteenth Century. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981.
Pgs. 92-100, 177-191, 285-289, 302.
4. Lee, Peter. H. The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Korean Poetry. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
Pgs. 69-160

Poetry Posters

(from Highsmith, Inc.)

1. Couplet

"A billy goat kicked a can of paint and it went all over his head.
He couldn't read, but all the same, he was still considered well "red""

"A couplet seems simple, only two lines that rhyme.
If you think it sounds easy, just try it sometime!"

2. Limerick

"An owl with a question was "shook,
'Cause he didn't know where to look.
Or where he should go,
With his great need to know."
"It's simple – fly straight to a book!"

"All limericks must start with line one,
Which rhymes with line two just for fun.
Line three rhymes with four,
But wait – there is more.
Lone five rhymes with two, then you're done."

3. Acrostic

Because
Only dolls, cars and
Other toys were
Kept upon the shelf, I
Went to the library and checked
Out a book to
Read all by
Myself!"

"**A**crostic poems
Can be fun to
Read 'cause they've got something
Other poems lack. A
Secret word
That runs down one side and
It's cool
"**C**ause it stands in a stack."

4. Haiku

"Flowers spring open
and the bees need to gather
the sweet nourishment."

"Haiku poems have three
lines containing five, seven
then five syllables."

“Getting a Natural Jade at Mt. Hyoung” performed by Moon Hyun

See if you can follow the text below as the sijo is sung.

형산에 Hyungsane	박옥을 pagogul	얻어 odo,	세상사람 sesangsaram	보렸더니 poeryottoni
겉이 Kotchi	돌이어나 torioni	속을 sogeul	알 이 alli	누 있으리 nui-itsseuri
두어라 Tuora	알 이 alli	알지니 alchini	돌인듯이 (있거라) torindeusi (itkora)	

Dr. Chan Park, professor at Ohio State University, translated this sijo orally. She provided the following meaning.

Hyungsane = the name of a place where jade is produced
 pagogul = so-so jade
 odo = acquired
 sesangsaram = to people of the world
 poeryottoni = show to them

Kotchi = the outside of the jade
 torioni = rock
 sogeul = inside
 alli = person who knows of the treasure inside
 nui-itsseuri = who could there be?

Tuora = let it be (don't worry)
 Alli = person who will know
 Alchini = will know
 Torindeusi (itkora) = stay like a rock

Putting it all together, the meaning is that someone with a heart of gold doesn't need to try hard to let people know. The important ones will know.

Notice the musical accompaniment to the song. Can you hear at least one wind instrument and a drum?

A Few Sijo Samples

(Refer to the websites and books for many more)

The most famous example of sijo is possibly this piece by Yun Seondo written in the seventeenth century:

You ask how many friends I have? Water and stone, bamboo and pine.
The moon rising over the eastern hill is a joyful comrade.
Besides these five companions, what other pleasure should I ask?

I'm told clouds are nice, that is, their color; but often they grow dark.
I'm told winds are pleasing, that is, their sound, but they fade to silence;
So I say only water is faithful and never-ending.

Why do flowers fade and die so soon after that glorious bloom?
Why does green grass curl to yellow after sending its spears so high?
Could it be that only stone stands strong against the elements?

(There are three more sijo in this series)

Yun Seondo also wrote a famous collection of forty sijo, titled *The Fisherman's Calendar*, about the changing seasons through the eyes of a fisherman. Following is the first verse from the spring sequence. Notice the added refrains in lines two and four.

Sun lights up the hill behind, mist rises on the channel ahead.
Push the boat, push the boat!
The night tide has gone out, the morning tide is coming in.
Chigukch'ong, chigukch'ong, oshwa!
Untamed flowers along the shore reach out to the far village.

Where pure snowflakes melt
Dark clouds gather threatening
Where art the spring flowers abloom?
A lonely figure lost in the shadow
of sinking sun, I have no place to go.

The earliest poem of the sijo genre from the fourteenth century was created by U T'ak.

The spring breeze melted snow on the hills then quickly disappeared.
I wish I could borrow it briefly to blow over my hair
And melt away the aging frost forming now about my ears.

And finally, here are two contemporary English sijo.

That dark feather which guided the trusting bird on his last flight,
Now drifts in the waning wind, slowly settling on the current,
To lead the poor, unsuspecting creek into the new dam.

Down around my bare toes, those ants move with such grand elan,
Utterly determined, never doubting their choice of direction,
While high above I dwell on my mountain of indecision.

Characteristics of Sijo

(Share as many or as few as you like)

- Most important, a sijo is a short, lyric song, which is sung or chanted with musical accompaniment.
- The word originally referred only to the music, but it has come to be identified with the lyric (the poem) as well.
- The word sijo consists of two Sino-Korean characters meaning “time” or “period” and “rhythm” or “harmony”.
- Sijo are composed in three lines averaging fourteen to sixteen syllables, for a total of forty-four to forty-six syllables.
- A pause occurs in each of the three lines approximately in the middle. Each half-line contains six to nine syllables. The last half of the final line is often shorter than the rest, but should contain no fewer than five syllables.
- A situation, problem or theme is introduced in the first line (chojang).
- The development or “turn” occurs in the second line (jungjang).
- The third line (jongjang) is a resolution or conclusion beginning with a “twist”.
- The “twist” is a surprise of meaning, sound, tone or other technique. It is likely to be more subjective and personal, and it frequently takes a profound, witty or proverbial turn. It resolves the tensions or questions raised by the other lines and provides a memorable ending.
- Some contemporary poets, translators and editors prefer to split the long lines in half at the pause because of printing restrictions, resulting in a 6-line format. That is, each of the three lines is broken in half, with each couplet separated by a blank line to emphasize the distinctiveness of each one.
- Although classic sijo sticks closely to the syllabic pattern, it doesn’t simply count syllables. It is more phrasal (musical) than syllabic.
- Most sijo in the classic tradition, have no titles; however, some contemporary works do have titles. Sometimes part the first line is used as a title.

- Sijo can be traced at least as far back as King Yuri's *Song of Yellow Birds* from 17BCE, the earliest written evidence of Korean poetry. Since it began solely as an oral tradition, sijo is actually much older than that writing.
- Sijo is more ancient than haiku.
- Sijo developed from the old Hyangga songs of the Silla Empire (668-936) and the prose songs of the Koryo kingdom (918-1392).
- By the 13th century, sijo was the predominant lyric poetry of Korea.
- The height of sijo occurred in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially after the introduction of *Hangul*, the Korean alphabet, in 1446.
- Sijo gained popularity in the royal courts, yet it had a parallel appeal to the common people.
- With its slow tempo and calm feeling, it appeals to common people as elegant music that is easy to sing.
- According to Dr. Park, sijo was mainly the poetry of the elite who had the time and intelligence to share it.
- Like haiku and tanka, it developed from more ancient Chinese patterns.
- Like haiku, sijo has a strong basis in nature.
- Sijo cover a wide range of subjects such as politics, love, life, music, nature, loneliness, and even common personal matters like drinking and aging. It expresses the complex and unique concept of sadness and hope called "Han", the very core of Korean life.
- Sijo use more metaphoric language and expression of emotion, especially in their final lines, than haiku or tanka.
- While imagery (metaphor, simile, pun, etc.) is used in many sijo, it is not mandatory.
- Sijo is more lyrical, subjective and personal than haiku.

- Like haiku and tanka, it is an unrhymed poetry.
- Sijo are sung solo to a small number of standard melodies, with the accompaniment of the hourglass drum (changgu), small bamboo oboe (piri), long transverse flute (taegum), short vertical flute (tanso) and the two-fiddle zither (haegum). Not all of the instruments need to be used.
- In fact, accompaniment is often very informal music that can be performed with the janggu (hourglass-shaped drum) or hitting one's lap, without using any melodic instruments.
- The sijo music begins with a note in the middle musical range and stays around there. In the Seoul style (as opposed to the country style), high pitch notes appear in certain places.
- There are actually three sijo forms: Chungsjijo, Changsjijo and Pyongsjijo. The more melodic Pyongsjijo has been the preferred choice among Koreans and is now identified simply as sijo.
- Three characteristics that make sijo unique are its basic structure, musical/rhythmic elements, and the 'twist'.

Sijo

An unrhymed Korean verse,
Intended for sound and not sight,

Plays out its tune in three lines,
A measure of just fifteen beats.

True measure of this sijo,
Though, lies in the truth that it speaks.

Haiku

Japanese verse form
A pairing of images
Man heeding Nature

These poems are from <http://lonestar.texas.net/~robison/sijo.html> and
<http://lonestar.texas.net/~robison/haiku.html>

How do TANKA and HAIKU compare?

The Japanese poetry forms of haiku and tanka are alike in these ways:

- simplicity
- brief and clear
- contemplates nature
- traditionally no violence

They are dissimilar in the following ways:

- tanka is 13 centuries old, haiku is only 3 centuries old
- tanka's length is 31 onji/syllables and haiku's is 17 onji/syllables
- tanka has five parts/five images while haiku has at the most three images
- tanka's aim is beauty, whereas haiku's aim is "is-ness"
- tanka uses imagination and is written about given themes; however, haiku uses real images and is based on an experience
- tanka is meant to delight in beauty, encourage reflection, and stir up emotions; on the other hand, haiku is meant to open the heart, be quick and direct, and be emotionless.
- tanka is courtly and literary while haiku is of the merchants and lower class
- tanka traditionally uses elegant images, yet haiku speaks of common things with common language to reveal uncommon ideas
- tanka is written to be a chanted song, but haiku is to be spoken crisply

Janguu or Changgo

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

The hourglass drum, janguu or changoo, is played in two ways. It is struck on the drumhead with a thinly cut bamboo stick. The sound created is high pitched, like "ttaeng-ttaeng" and it sounds neat. The other way is to strike the drum with the palm of the hand. This sound is low and loud like "kung-kung" and is a thick tone. Using the two sides, the janguu makes contrasting tones that can be produced alternatively or simultaneously.

The janguu can achieve a great variety of Korean rhythms with great effect and harmony.

The drum is constructed of three different parts. The parts and the materials used are:

1. The "Buk-pyon" drumhead on the left side creating the low sound and "chae-pyon" drumhead on the right side creating the high sound are made of two different leathers
2. The resonator box is traditionally made of paulownia tree
3. The "choimjul", whose cords are stretched to the both drumheads, are made of the cotton.

Adapted from 203.252.231.26/kukak_information/KoreanCulture.pdf

Poetry Portfolio

(Cindy Moore, Perry Middle School)

We will be working on poetry during the 3rd quarter. "Poetry Fridays" begin today and will last every Friday throughout the quarter. Each Friday we will spend time on our Poetry Portfolios. You will be exposed to a variety of poetry forms.

- Things I Learned (modeling after William Stafford)
- Acrostic
- Diamante
- Haiku
- Tanka

Details

- You will be required to include one final draft of each form of poetry and one final draft of your choice – **6 total poems**
- Each poem should include an illustration. Illustrations can be directly on the poem or on a separate sheet. – **6 total illustrations**
- You will need a cover sheet including the title – **Poetry Portfolio, your name, date and English.**
- Each poem needs to be labeled with the **form of poetry** and a **title**.

Final Due Date – Friday, March 24, 2006

**You will have some class time to prepare. But you will need to spend some time out of class to produce a quality portfolio. Last class workday will be Friday, March 17th. Be prepared to share one poem in class on Friday, the 24th.

N.B. Tanka was added to Miss Moore's unit plan in 2005-6.
Sijo will be added in 2006-2007.