

# Haiku /hai'ku/ *noun*

Japanese poem  
of seventeen syllables  
five, seven and five



## Conference Haiku

Kate Cross uses haikus to distil the essence of a talk and then tweets them into the world for everyone to enjoy. We ask her about this creative form of science communication.

BY MARCO SMOLLA AND RACHEL HARRISON

**Cultured Scene: The haikus are a creative way to express thoughts in a very short form. How did you come up with the idea to use haikus to summarise presentations? Is it a way for you to remember the most important details of a talk?**

Catharine Cross: I started tweeting conference haikus at EHBEA (under #ehbea2016 and #ehbea2017). I'd been inspired by Hanna Kokko who has haiku descriptions of her papers online (<http://www.kokkonuts.org>). It definitely helps me to focus and to remember a talk.

**How are you doing it so fast? I think that many people might ponder quite some time about the phrasing.**

I have always loved playing with words. I've been writing poems of various kinds since I was a kid (mostly terrible, lost to posterity, or both), so I've had a lot of practice. Also, sometimes I tweet them before I'm really happy with them, because it's time for the next talk. I think live-tweeting a conference is a brilliant way to practice writing to a schedule!

**Do you use haikus for other things as well? Or is this a conference only thing?**

Sometimes I write them just for fun, or to summarise a paper of my own, or to vent about sexism in academia. It's a very versatile form! There are quite a few people posting #sciencehaiku on twitter and I think it's a great way write about science.

**Is there a haiku you are especially proud of, or one that you've got a lot of responses to? (are they the same?)**

I think my favourite from the last conference is this one, which described Nathan Nunn's plenary on (among other things) the after-effects of slavery on people living in Africa now. I feared that a tweet-haiku might be seen as too glib a response for a talk on something so serious. But I've argued for a long time that we can – and should – use playful formats to talk about serious issues. So I did. □

### SCHULZ

Why am I so WEIRD?  
Is it all the church's fault?  
Yes, because kinship

### KIMBROUGH

Bees make decisions  
As a whole population  
How to model this?

### NUNN

Damn, what went wrong here?  
Oh, colonialism  
(Again, and again)

# Special

Conference Haiku

## HARRISON

Sperber's predictions  
About image transmission  
Ruined by children

## @MASYOUNGBLOOD

Meta-science time!  
This field's becoming bigger  
And has seven chunks

## TO SELF

Well, that was a joy  
Thanks to the organisers  
See you in two years

## GOPNIK

Why's childhood a thing?  
It gives us time to screw up  
It's feature, not bug

## MIU

Recombination:  
More useful than refinement  
When learning is hard

## LUBERTI

You're conservative?  
You might oppose gay marriage  
But why is not clear

## DUNSTONE

Copy me (or don't)  
Oh, and click this button here  
It'll slow you down

## GARLAND

Song revolutions  
Failed in Polynesia whales  
'Cause they move around

## GURRUCHAGA

A state collapses  
Drought, social tensions, or both?  
(A cyclical thing?)

## OLSEN

I'll rely on you  
Because, well, I'm just like that  
(Also 'cause you're smart)

## ROBERTS

Hypotheses, please!  
I'm making a database  
And looking for gaps

## MANNING

Long-term datasets  
Rewrite the Neolithic  
(Carbon-dating helps)

## FERDINAND

Coevolution  
Makes a system go places  
It wouldn't without

## SHTULMAN

Seven-year-old kids  
Can fathom evolution  
(Schemas really help)

## HOUSE

Do norms drive sharing  
Within and between cultures?  
It seems they do, yes

## OPFER

What do students know  
About natural selection?  
EvoGrader knows

## TO SELF

Two cultural groups  
Industry and academe  
Distinguished by dress

## WARING

Food-buying co-ops  
Are real-life public-goods games  
And folk here give lots

## GOLDBERG

How do I fit in?  
Must I adopt your values?  
No - just read the rules

## LEGARE

Unfortunately  
Anthropomorphism sucks  
When teaching science

## RENNER

Kids (and smart monkeys)  
Prefer to copy winners  
(Few monkeys are smart)

## @KRIS\_M\_SMITH

Sorting by kindness  
In hunter-gatherer camps  
Seems not to happen

## LENFESTY

Prestigious agents  
Cause the formation of groups  
In a doughnut world

## WILLARD

Belief in karma  
Might motivate doing good  
(Or at least trying)

**WRIGHT**

Inter-group learning  
Allows trait recovery  
When we're connected

**@BONOBO\_STYLE**

Complexity?  
Bah! Efficiency's where it's at  
For chimp culture

**@DAMIENNEADLE**

Copying others  
Is helpful, but not required  
For culture-y stuff

**@CAMROBJONES**

Will transmission chains  
Accentuate positives?  
No, just negatives

**@LOTTYBRAND22**

Prestigious people  
Are influential and liked  
(Like Mary Berry)

**@SMOLLAMARCO**

Get denser networks  
By selecting for experts  
Not jacks-of-all-trades

**@PSMALDINO**

Our niches vary  
In myriad dimensions  
So we vary, too

**TO SELF**

I'm excited now  
I love a bit of violence  
(Research-wise, of course!)

**CONRAD JACKSON**

Words for emotions  
How do they cluster themselves?  
Depends where you're from

**FERDINAND (FOR ODUNYI)**

Emotion words in  
Chain letters and fairy tales  
Get them transmitted

**LESAGE**

What do kids believe  
About the powers of god(s)  
To make things happen?

**BAUM**

In public-goods games  
When punishment is costly  
'Elders' get jaded

**DAVIS**

Religion's only  
Intrinsic motivation  
Sacred ain't sacred

**BUSS**

Do adaptations  
Get in the way of science?  
(This speaker says 'yes')

**JORDAN**

Medicinal plants:  
We use what's available  
(Ancestry's more... meh)

**GARDINER**

Personality:  
What predicts variation?  
Worldwide dataset

**@LEONIDTIOKHIN**

Pre-registration  
Sure, it'll slow you down, but...  
That's good for science

**@JENNYALLEN13**

Complexity dies  
During a revolution  
(In whale song) - but why?

**MITRA**

Emerging adults:  
How do they make life choices  
In India now?

**UOMINI**

Crows make tools from sticks  
And the action sequences  
Vary between groups

**KUNDT**

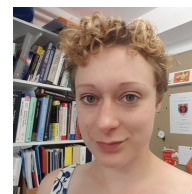
Religious music  
Functions as a moral cue  
If you're religious

**EVANS**

In Austronesia  
Does war lead to cohesion?  
Nah, just politics

**MOYA**

Group identities:  
A meta-analysis  
Of important cues



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