

WHAT MAKES FOR A WINNING HAIKU?

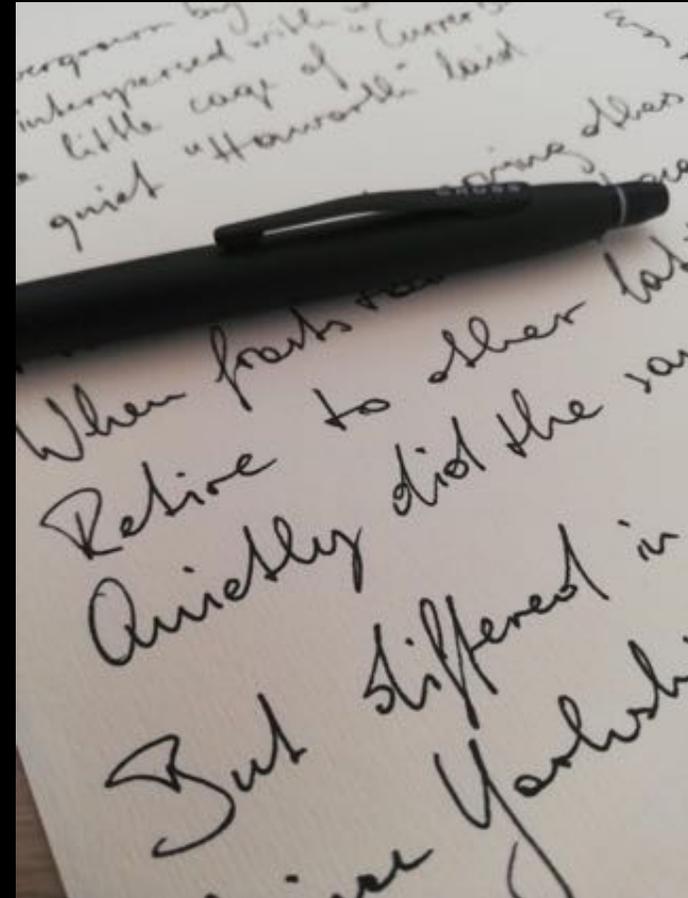
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WHAT FEATURES CHARACTERIZE A GREAT HAIKU?

- This question has in the past been addressed qualitatively in terms of literary critique of structure and content, usually by experts who write up an analysis
- But it has not to my knowledge been addressed sufficiently from a quantitative or statistical point of view



OUTLINE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

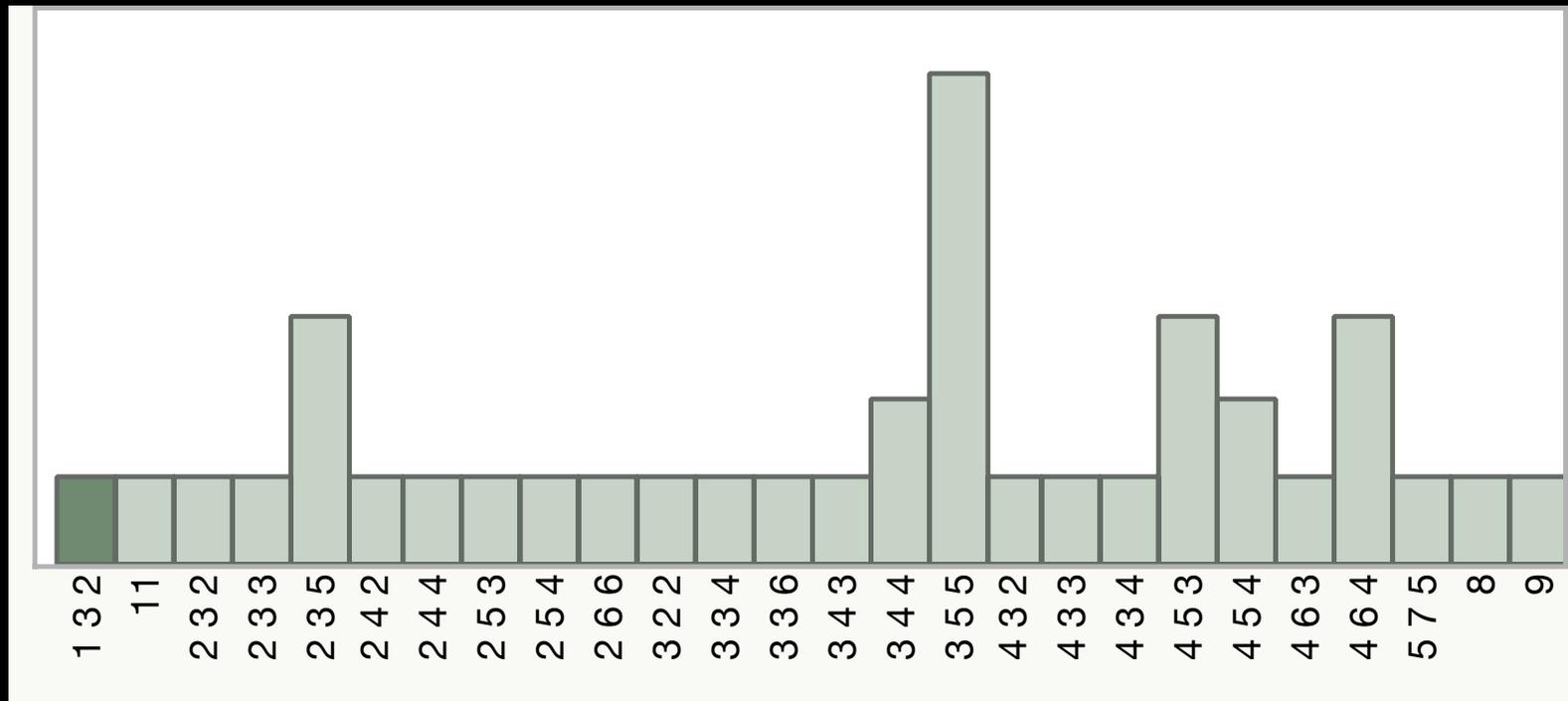


- Data source: Harold G. Henderson contest winners dating from 1996, so a 23 year time span
- Looked at 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places, but those analyses are not presented here, only the aggregate data

VARIABLES MEASURED

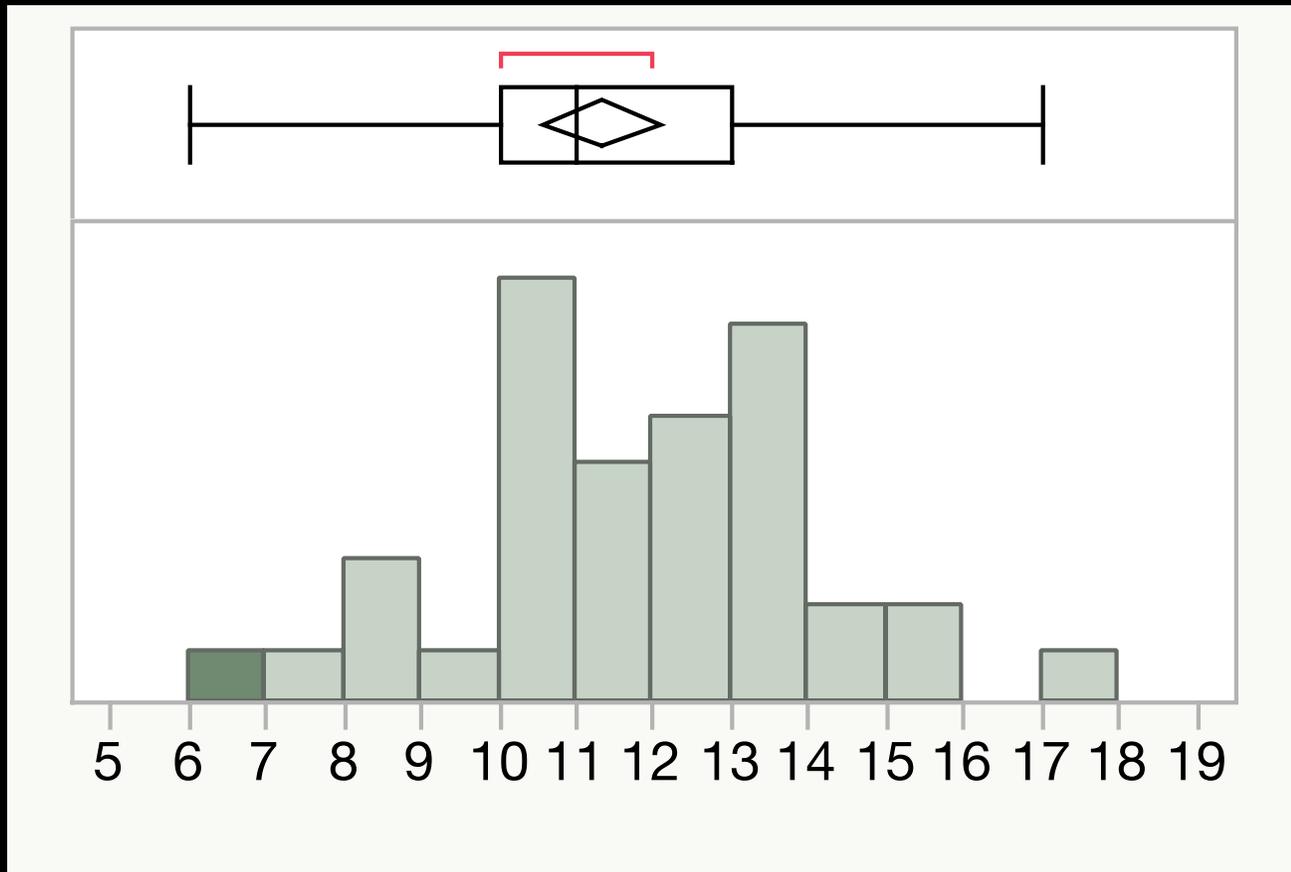
- The surface level (syllabic) dependent measures analyzed were:
- Syllables Per Line
- Total # Syllables
- Total # Lines
- Total # Words
- Number of Syllables in each line
- Line 2/Line 1 Ratio Line 2/Line 3 Ratio Line 1/Line 3 Ratio
- Short-Long-Short-Ratio
- # Syllables in Each Word

SYLLABLES PER LINE



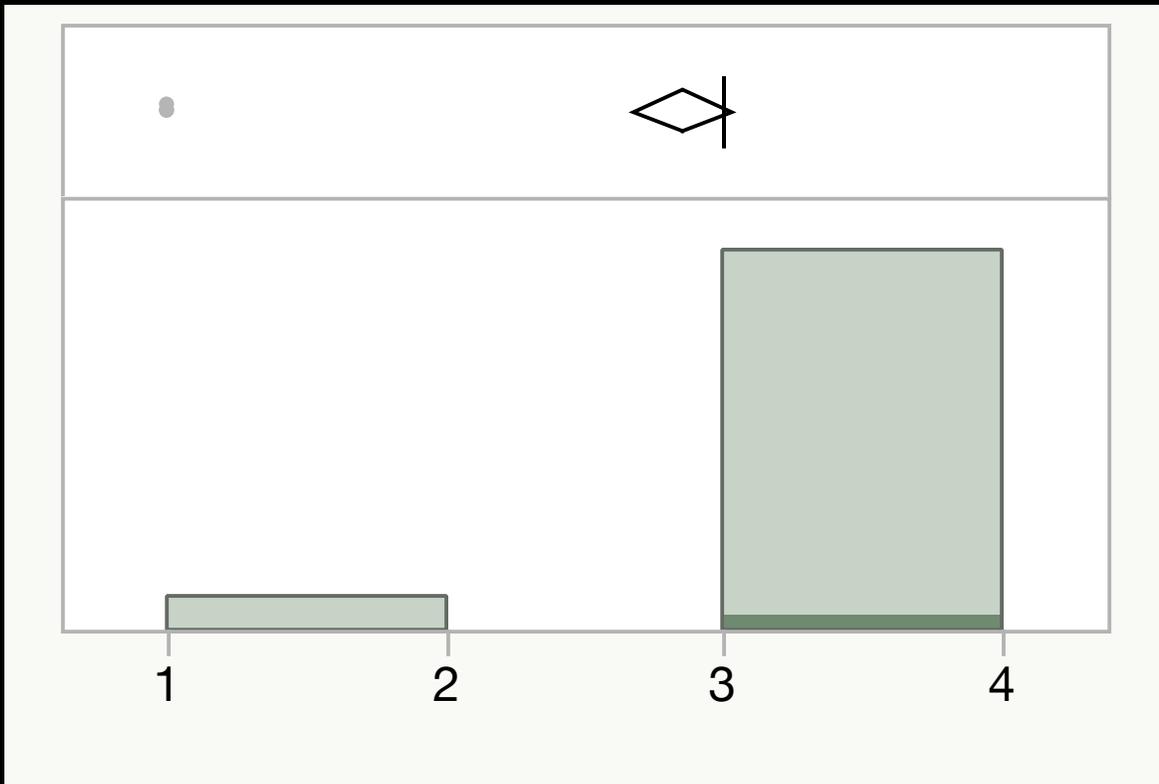
- Max is 6
- Min is 1
- 3 5 5 stood out as the most common

TOTAL NUMBER OF SYLLABLES



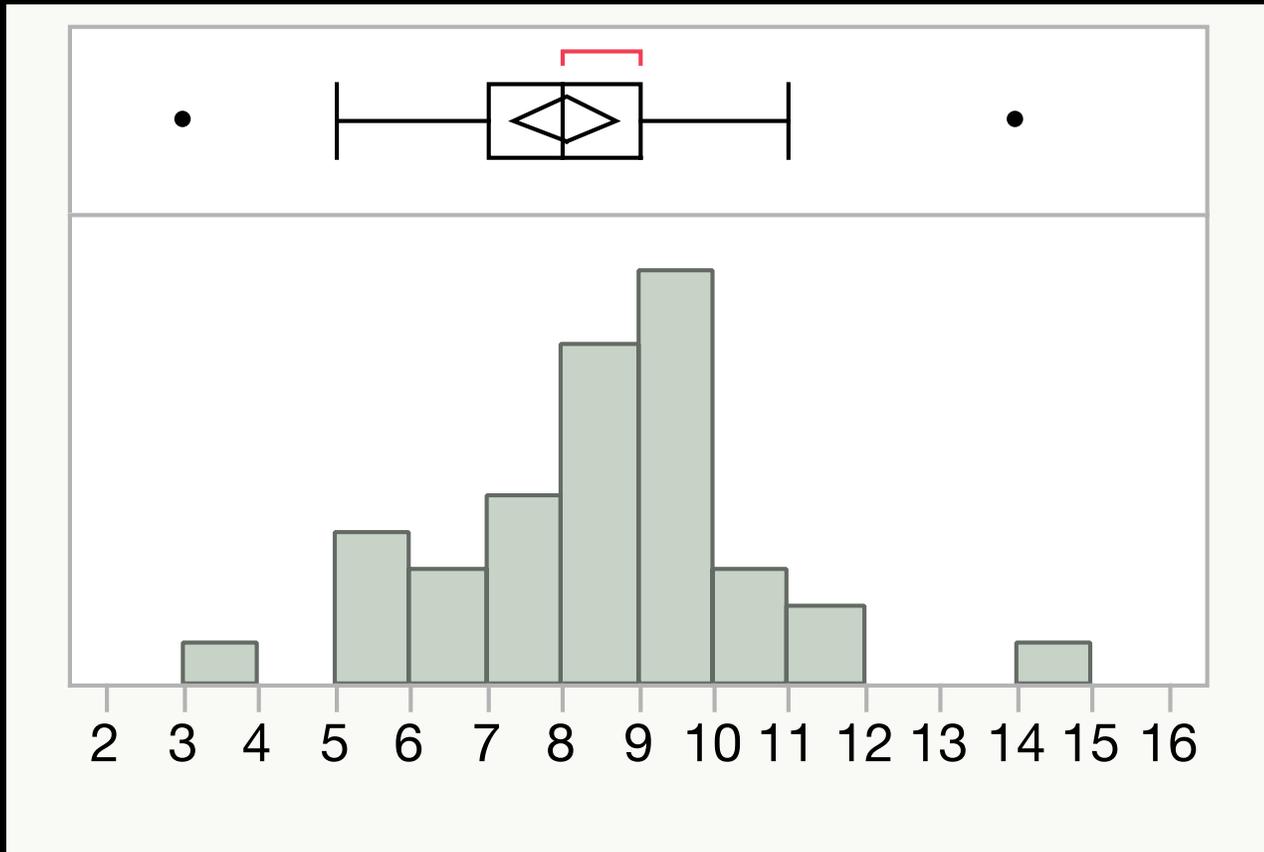
- Most frequent was 10 syllables
- Second-most frequent was 13 syllables
- Box plot shows median, upper and lower quartiles, and the minimum and maximum

TOTAL NUMBER OF LINES



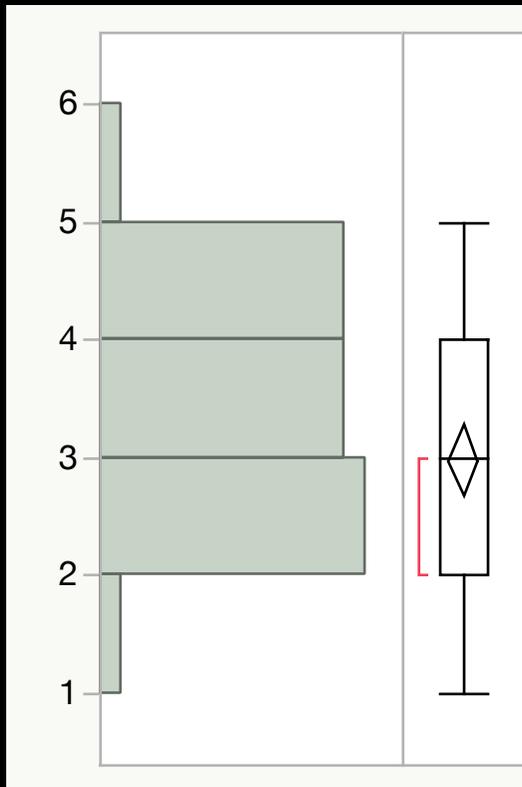
- As you can see the vast majority of poems submitted were three-liners, with a much smaller minority of monoku
- There were no poems submitted that were two-liners or four-liners
- There were no poems conforming to different forms of lineation, such as a vertical orientation

TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS

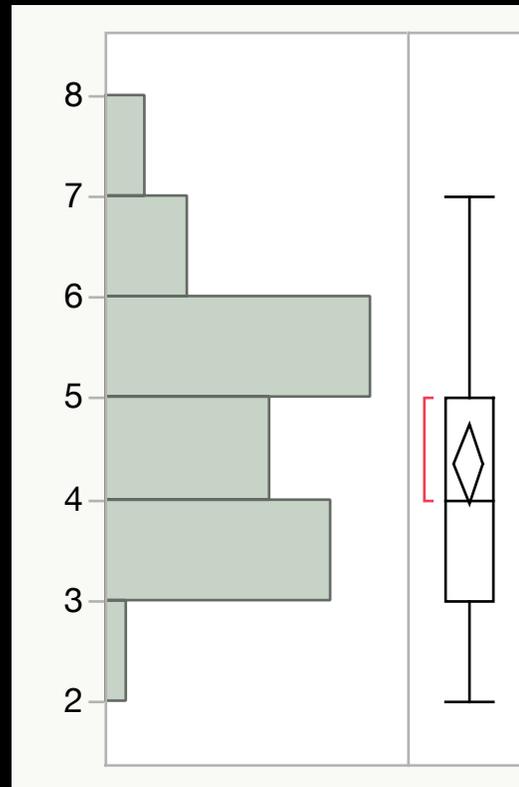


- Most of the haiku have nine words in total
- The fewest number is three, probably a monoku
- The largest number is fourteen

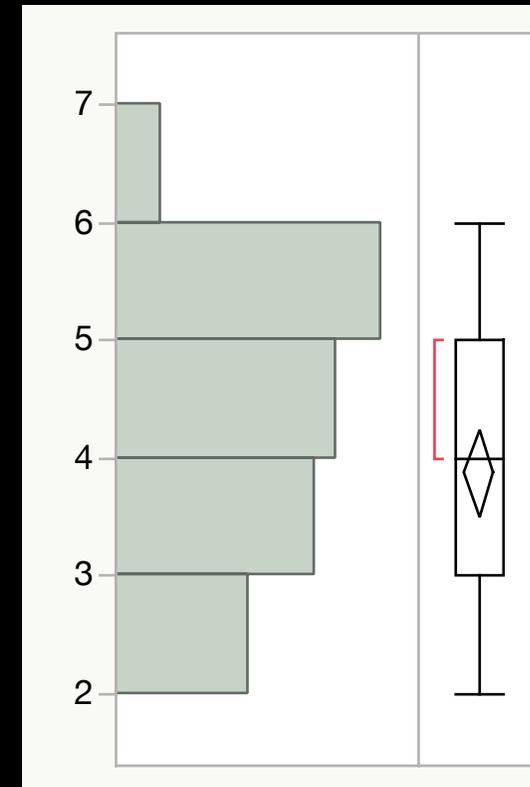
NUMBER OF SYLLABLES IN EACH LINE



First Line

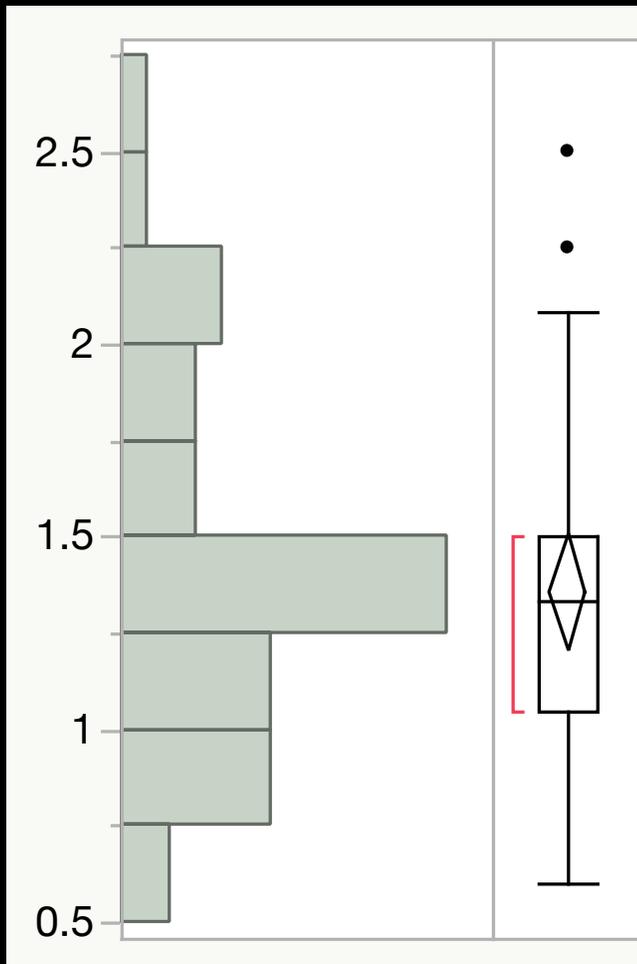


Second Line



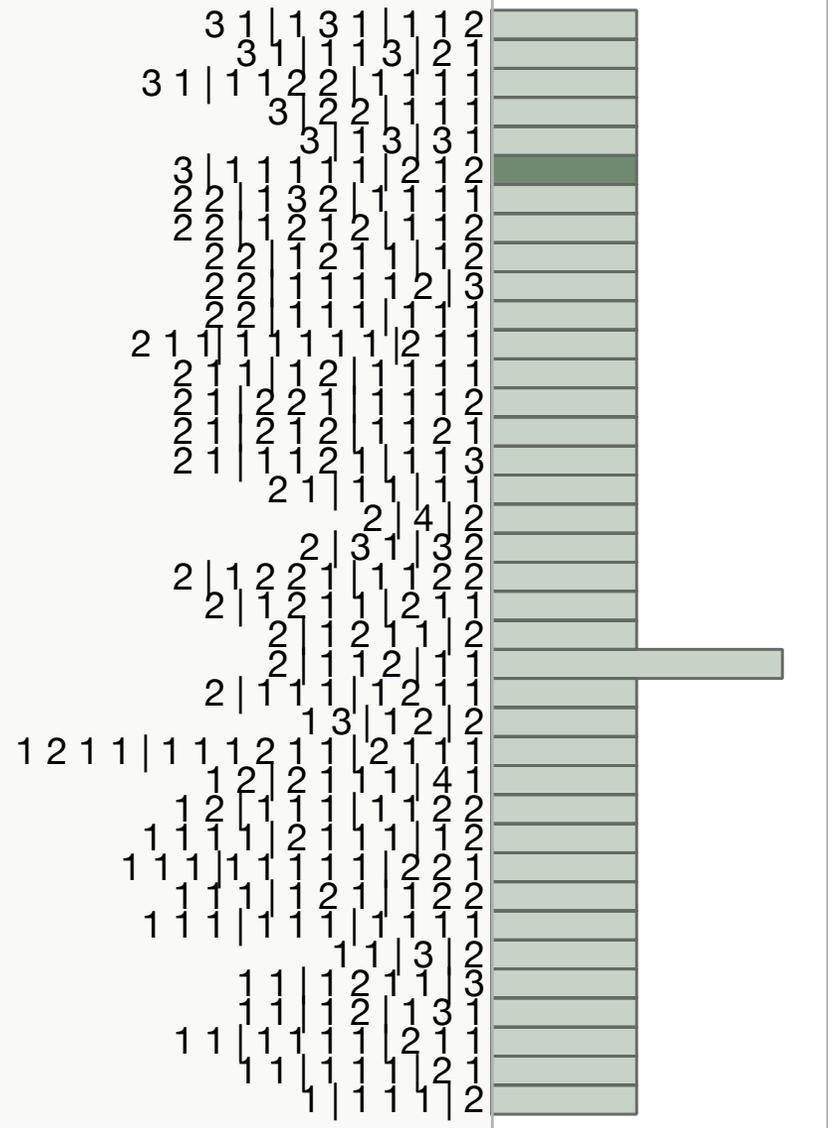
Third Line

SHORT-LONG-SHORT FORMAT



- The data support the fact that these poems conform to the short-long-short format
- The S-L-S format predicts the 2/1 ratio and the 2/3 ratios will be greater than one
- They also predict the 1/3 ratio will be centered on one. Both of these predictions were confirmed
- Further evidence to support this comes when we combine these ratios into a single measure, the S-L-S combined formula that is shown here
- $S-L-S \text{ ratio} = \text{mean}(2/1 + 2/3)/1/3$ where the numerator is expected to be higher than the denominator
- This is borne out. The peak in the distribution is greater than one

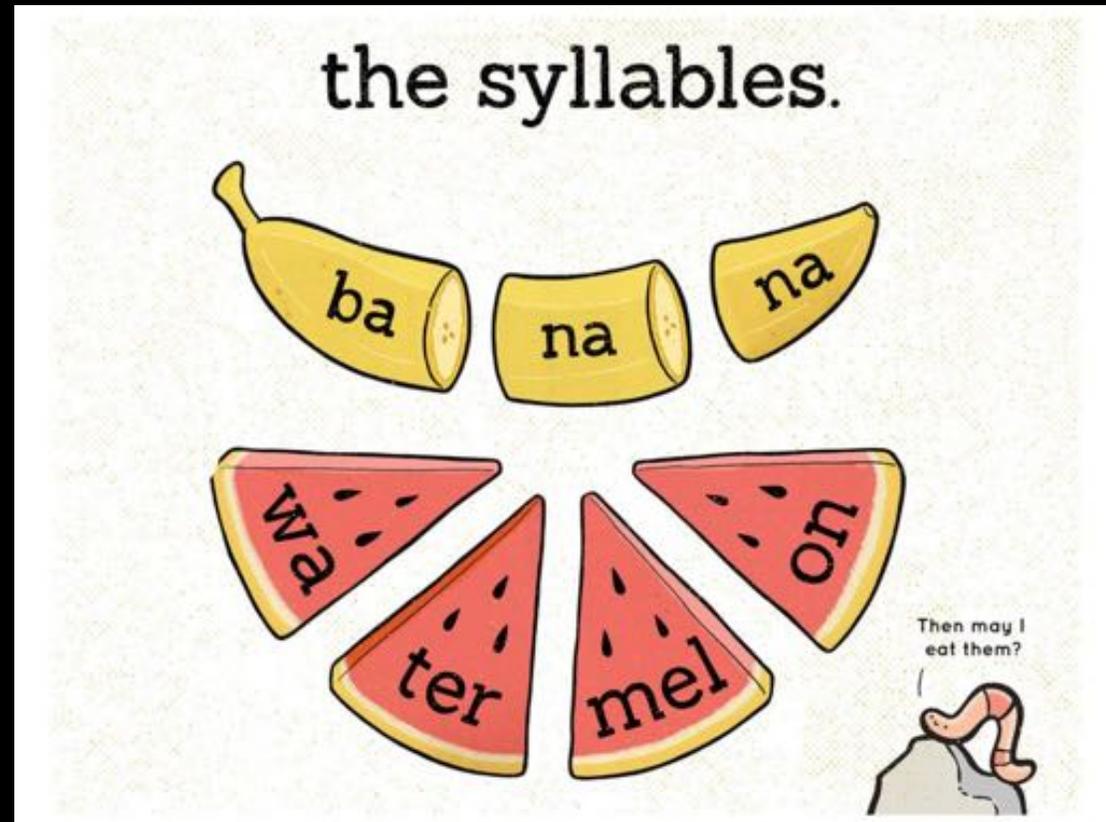
WORD SYLLABLE ORGANIZATION



- This plot shows the number of syllables in each word of the poems
- The most frequent format was 2|112|11 which occurred twice
- All other formats occurred once
- It is difficult to tell from this data if there is a preferred format. One is not significantly greater than two.

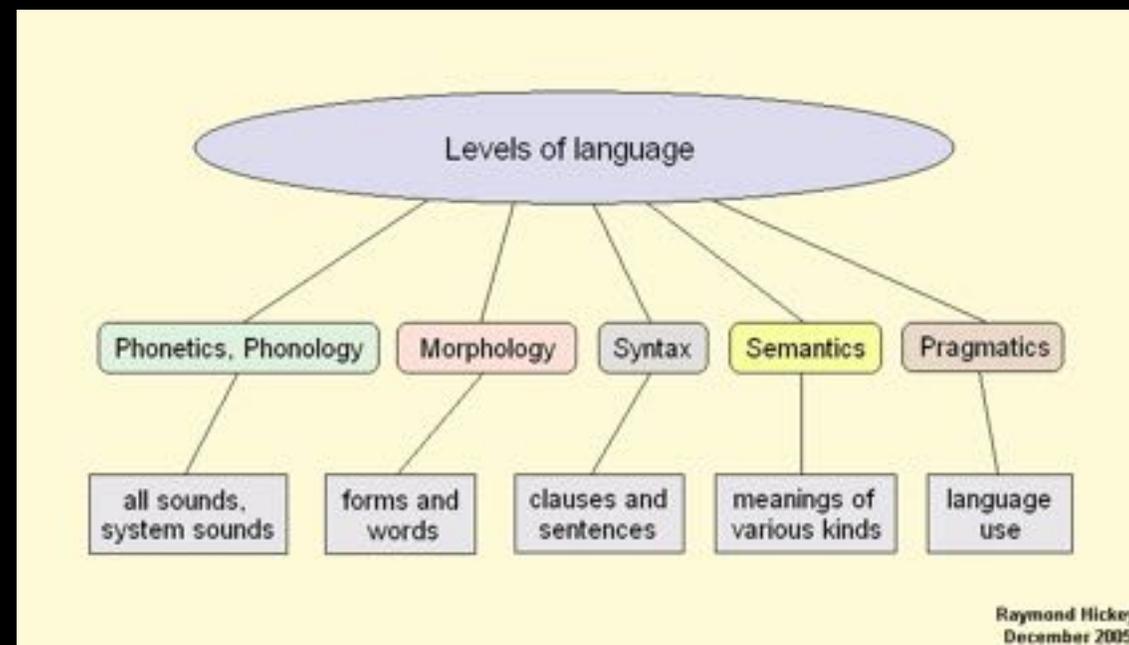
SYLLABLE CODING CONTINUED

- The greatest preference by far was for SSS patterns in which all the lines were symmetric (Frequency of 10)
- There were secondary preferences for SBS (Frequency of 4) and SAS (Frequency of 3) in which the first and last lines were symmetric
- So we see a clear preference for symmetry either across all three lines or in the first and last lines

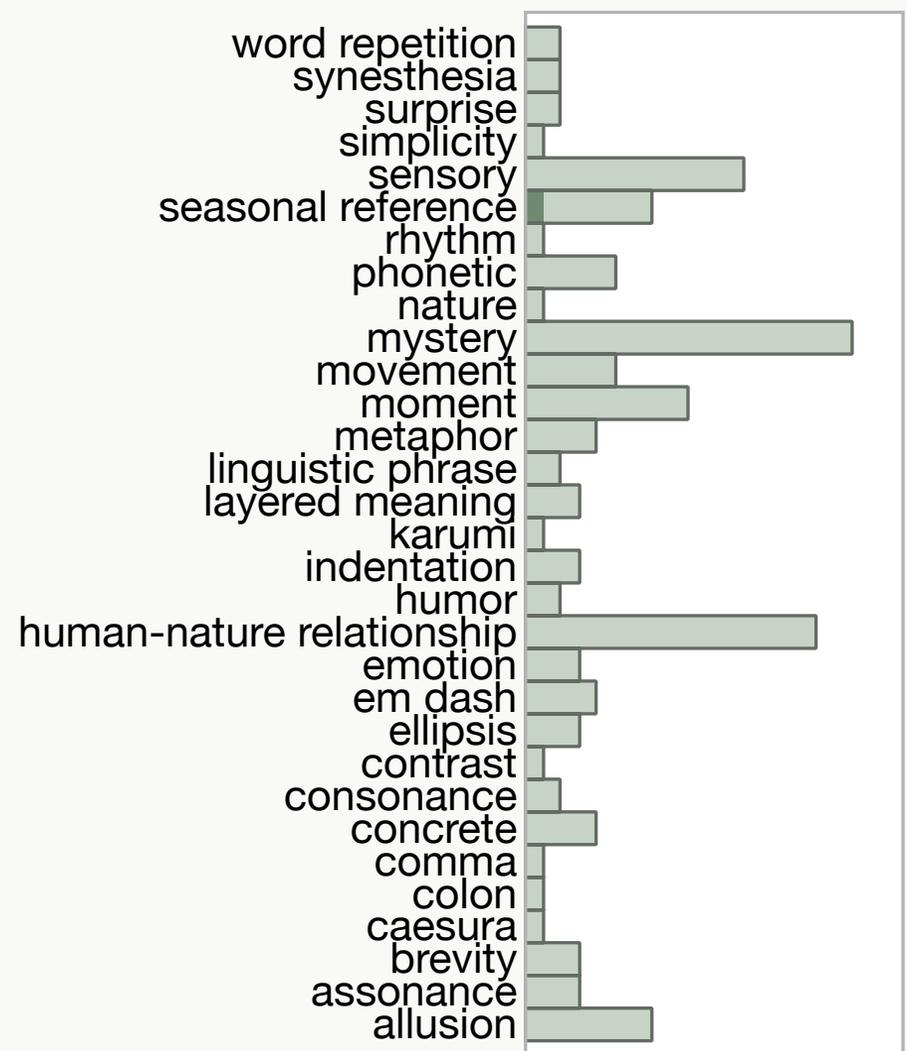


SURFACE AND DEEP STRUCTURE

- The preceding variables were all surface level phonetic aspects of the poem
- But we also obtained a measure of the judge's evaluation of the haiku, since each was accompanied by a paragraph or more of evaluation
- These evaluative texts were analyzed for keywords that summed up or condensed the judge's opinions
- So this amounts to a deeper semantic level of interpretation



KEYWORD ANALYSIS



- They sum up major topics or aspects of the commentary
- Were fairly consistent across judges. Many of them touched on the same topics
- Mystery was the number one feature
- This was followed by human-nature relationships
- In third place was sensory qualities
- And in fourth were seasonal reference and the use of allusion

SUMMARY

- So you want to write a winning haiku? Here is how:
- Use a 3 5 5 syllabic line structure
- Keep the total number of syllables between ten and thirteen
- Use three lines rather than a monoku
- Use eight or nine total words
- Use 2-4 words in the first line, 3-6 words in the second, and 6 words in the third
- Use a short-long-short line format
- Use lines that have symmetric syllabic structuring across all three lines or that have symmetric syllable formatting in the first and last line
- Use mystery or the relationship between humans and nature as themes. Sensory qualities, seasonal references and the use of allusion are also important

STAGES IN WRITING

- Just because these conclusions are mostly about surface structure does not mean that we should start with that as our primary goal
- It is important to approach a poem from a semantic perspective first.
- Focus on the content, then during a secondary stage of editing focus on words, lines, and syllables
- More work is needed to determine which additional semantic properties are considered attractive



STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- **Strengths:**

1. Data collected over a long time span
2. A novel methodological approach to understanding haiku and other forms of poetry
3. Can provide insights into analyzing syntactic and semantic properties of poems

- **Limitations:**

1. Only haiku were analyzed, not senryu or other Japanese poetic forms
2. Based on one contest only
3. Descriptive analyses were performed, not statistical tests for looking at differences, like t-tests, correlation/regression, and ANOVA

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Thanks for your attention!
- Anybody who wants a copy of these slides please email me a request
- I can reply back attaching a copy of the PowerPoint file
- My email is:
jay.friedenberg@gmail.com



WORKSHOP

- Let's take some time to practice what we've learned!
- Try writing one or two haiku that satisfy some of the criteria from the study:
 1. In a first stage focus on content. Attempt to incorporate mystery, human-nature relationships, sensory qualities and allusion
 2. In a second stage review the structural aspects of your poem and try to bring them into alignment with the study findings: use three lines, a short-long-short lineation, and symmetric syllabic sequencing