

2024 KGU English Haiku Contest comments

1st prize

**Under the soil
bamboo shoots get milestones
independent from parents**

Bamboo itself is a powerful and resilient plant, with its spreading network of underground growth. Here the literal bamboo shoots and the metaphorical bamboo shoots cleverly overlap as the poet points us to a picture of young people thriving—even if still (partly?) “under the soil”—and achieving independence from parents, a situation college students find themselves in. What those milestones obliquely referenced in the poem are, the reader is left to imagine.

2nd prize

**On hot sea sand
something moving near my foot
A translucent crab!**

To her surprise, the fast-moving, hard-to-catch ghost crab pops out of the sand next to the poet’s foot in this charming haiku, with the reader ending up just as startled as the speaker. The poet effectively builds suspense by repeating the sibilant ‘s’ sounds—‘sea,’ ‘sand,’ ‘something,’ ‘translucent’—to make the scene on the sandy beach come to life.

2nd prize

**Warm breeze in the flowers
Butterflies drift lazily, cat meowing somewhere
Whispers of life**

Usually it is ‘less is more’ that makes for a stronger haiku, but in this languorous haiku the poet successfully bucks the trend. With detail after vivid detail, the poet astutely sketches the scene with original word choices, especially with

“butterflies drift lazily” and “cat meowing somewhere”, which are spot on. These “whispers of life” speak loudly in creating a space we can share.

Honorable mention

**I can fly
To a new world
like a dandelion**

The bold assertion of this haiku’s first line-- “I can fly”-- is humbly contrasted with the soft-spoken “like a dandelion” in the third line. The dandelion seed, we assume, reaches the “new world” referred to in the second line, where it will take hold and thrive. Humble seed it may be, but strong as a “lion,” also.

Honorable mention

**There goes rain
Looking like a jewel
Now comes sunlight**

In this dramatically worded haiku, the poet takes a common scene—after the rain, the sun reappears—and offers a twist as the rain is given its due—“looking like a jewel”—before yielding the stage, so to speak, to the sun shining its light. The satisfying ending is, without fanfare, really a beginning.

Honorable mention

**Withered sunflower
The sun sets
Shine again the next day**

In this wise haiku, the sunflower has “withered,” as it must, and the sun has “set,” as it will, but the poet, in a low-key imperative voice speaking to herself as much as to nature, ends on an encouraging note—“Shine again the next day”—as both inspiration from nature and inner confidence from her own being.