

Ath·e·nae·um

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What lies behind us, and what lies
before us are tiny matters compared to
what lies within us.

-Siddhartha Gautama



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Learning How to Listen



If there ever were a discipline that isn't understood properly it would be reading. The interesting thing about reading is that, in a sense, it is an exploration of space. What exactly reading is I am unsure, but I would like to take a moment and reflect upon it. In my house I have a bookshelf, as I am sure almost everyone does. When I go to others houses one of the first things I do, which may be a bit creepy, is see what books are on their bookshelf. Its surprising to me how the majority of people have the same books on their shelves. Generally the popular ones, classics, self-help, and the works of Dave Ramsey.

When we read a book, its really not the book we are reading, it is the person we are reading. The book is just how they wish to communicate with us. We are literally, through a form of osmosis, psychologically absorbing either a story, principle, full of morals, ethics and mystery. It all happens at such a subconscious level that it is esoteric how it exactly happens. We become what we read, or rather who we read.

I read quite a lot and many people are concerned with my mental health because of how much I read. I enter every work objectively, without any critique or judgement as I read, listening for the essence. I allow the work to enter my being and "feel" it. It is quite an intimate process. Reading without judgement, with complete objectivity, does have its limits. There comes a time when the hard drive in my mind cannot store anymore information. It is then when I go sit under my Bodhi tree quantifying, qualifying, and contextualizing. Its a strange, dark process. The mind somehow does the work of its own accord.

We should all read more intimately. We should all listen and maybe that is what reading has taught me the most, how to listen. You see if you are reading there is no option but to listen, otherwise you simply aren't reading. The art of reading is rewarded with a Ph.D. in listening. Listening to another person's understanding of the world we live in. Attempting to make sense of the various symbols, words, and stories that are unique to each one of us. The more we read the more we find common ground. We learn that the myth of the Tower of Babel and the subsequent confusion of tongues was written with intention? The text a living conversation. This myth seems to be a question.

The answer, as I hear it, is omnipresence. When we read we become omnipresent. The more we read the more omnipresent we become. The more omnipresent we become the more compassionate. We can then hear others. Reading would then be defined: (v.) learning how to listen.

Haiku: Juxtaposing Time and Space



Of all poetic forms, haiku stands as one of the most elegant and immediate – a rare combination that creates an aura of mystery and artistry. This creative ambrosia, combined with an exotic history embedded in the courts and hillsides of Japan, has made haiku globally popular for the past century. With the challenge of precisely conveying a natural movement as a universal moment in three lines and 17 or fewer syllables, it is easy to see why Western poets like W.H. Auden, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder, Jorge Luis Borges, Billy Collins, Allen Ginsberg, E.E. Cummings, Ezra Pound, Joanne Kyger, Anne Waldman, Richard Wright, and Sonia Sanchez fell in love with haiku.

Until the 1950s, haiku was virtually unknown in the United States. By that point, haiku as its own specific form had existed for four hundred years, but its roots stretched back nearly another millennium. As early as the 7th century, Japanese narrative poetry that included short lyrical poems called "uta," or songs, were written as part of pre-Buddhist or early Shinto ceremonial rituals. Prayers, celebrations, formal eulogies, courting, planting, and harvesting were among the form's earliest subjects. The most popular of these forms, waka, featured 31 phonetic units, or "on," broken into five lines by a 5-7-5-7-7 count. The waka became the most recognized poetic form of the period, and officials and court nobility gained recognition as word specialists for their ability to write waka.

This year, beginning in October, *Learn: A Project* is again hosting a poetry contest. The hope for this project is both to explore the idea of haiku, as well as take up the challenge and write one of your own. Modern haiku doesn't follow the strict seventeen syllable (5-7-5), though it is still generally three lines. The essence of haiku is "cutting" (kiru). This is often represented by the juxtaposition of two images or ideas and a kireji ("cutting word"). The haiku contest will run from October through December. Submissions can be given to any staff member and they will find there way to me. There will be three chosen winners judged anonymously by staff and patrons.

