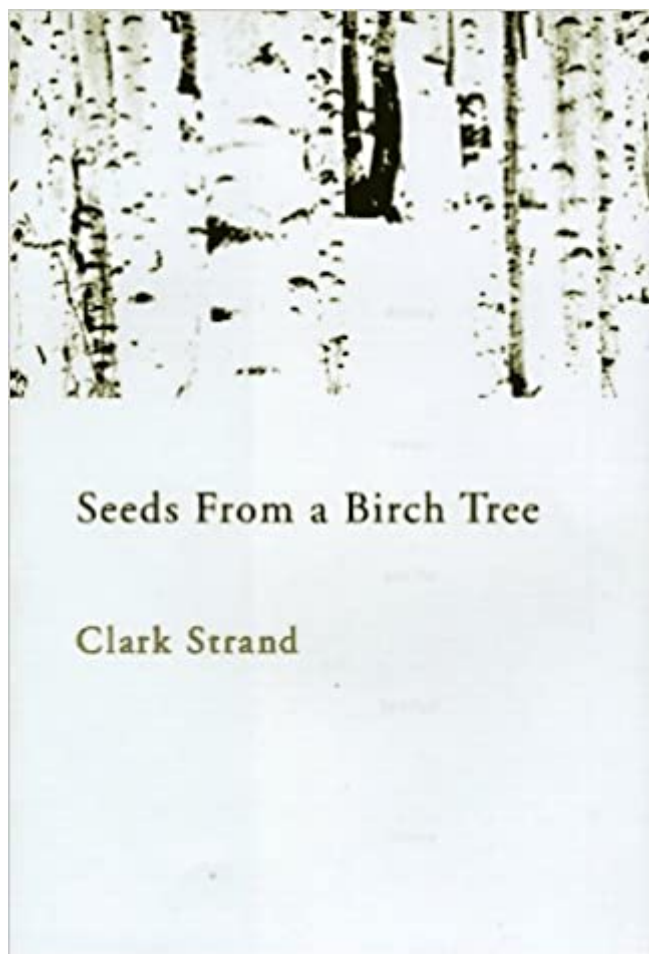


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# Seeds From A Birch Tree: Writing Haiku And The Spiritual Journey



## Synopsis

A Zen Buddhist monk explains the value of haiku, a three-line, seventeen-syllable poem, as a writing meditation and spiritual guide and provides exercises to help readers compose their own haiku.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Infused with hearty Zen wisdom and proceeding at a deliberately unhurried pace, *Seeds from a Birch Tree* attempts to make the poetry of nature into an easily accessible refuge from the fast pace of the technological world. Clark Strand, an English teacher who has lived as a Zen Buddhist monk, has written an engaging book that weaves personal memoir with poetry instruction. The book is well written if unusual, a happily meandering series of lessons that encourage the reader to appreciate how the writing and reading of haiku can become a very practical meditative process.

The subtle simplicity of haiku depends on the complex balance of structure, object, image, and impression. The 17-syllable poem combines two phrases, arranged in three lines; balanced by a pause that presents the picture of a seasonal object as it exists for the poet, the poem demands freshness and a total lack of pretension. To achieve such a response is an ongoing process, suggests Strand, a Zen Buddhist monk, senior editor of *Tricycle*, and founder of New York Haikukai. Writing haiku is a meditation for this process, a spiritual journey toward an understanding of the world and the poet's place in it. Strand maintains that progressing toward spirituality and writing

haiku are interdependent and mutually beneficial. Libraries that need a basic introduction to haiku should turn to *The Essential Haiku* (LJ 6/1/94). Strand's slim volume focuses more on the struggle to maintain spiritual discipline. Denise S. Sticha, Seton Hill Coll. Lib., Greensburg, Pa. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is a lovely, simple, reassuring book about haiku. It doesn't draw parallels between Zen practice and the writing of haiku; instead, it shows how the practice of haiku is the same as the practice of Zen. Although the author's spiritual tradition is Buddhist, by including many haiku by the Episcopal nun Sister Benedicta, Strand illustrates that the haiku path is not exclusively Buddhist. I particularly enjoyed the "Zen Tea" chapter, where author Strand and a friend poke gentle fun at popular notions about Zen. And in the chapter "Deh Chun," the author talks about his first Zen teacher, whose teachings, he realizes finally, "left nothing out." Strand's own book is just like that. He tells us that haiku is, first, the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. Then, it has a seasonal reference. Finally, its proper subject is the natural world. And ultimately, it is about the present moment.

Intriguing inquiry into the artistic expression known as haiku. Presents a strong case for traditional haiku format, while presenting the spiritual essence of an elusive response to the natural world.

Author Clark Strand has skillfully combined his experiences as an English teacher and a Zen Buddhist monk into a book that combines his spiritual journey toward Buddhism with his personal haiku and the haiku of others. The 188-page book is interspersed with lovely black and white photographs. This is another book that I have added to my personal library.

A great guide for the English speaker and writer into the world of haiku.

Today I am writing haiku every day just like the ancients who wrote one to describe the significance of each day that came and left.

Wonderful book. Great service,

Great Haiku

If this book doesn't inspire you to try your own haiku, I don't know what will! Thoughtful, soulful,

inspiring. You will treasure this book.

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