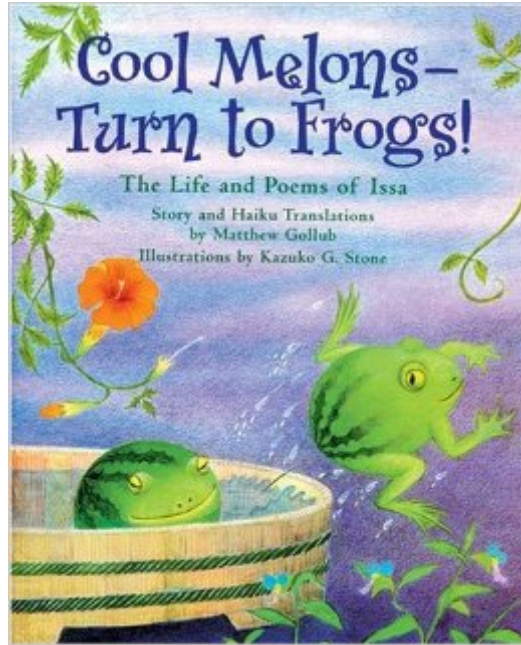


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# Cool Melons - Turn To Frogs!: The Life And Poems Of Issa



## Synopsis

Born in 1763 on a farm in central Japan, Issa began writing haiku as a young child. Matthew Gollub has integrated the story of Issa's life and selections of his best-known work with Kazuko Stone's visual interpretations in the form of whimsical watercolors. Full color.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD800L (What's this?)

Paperback: 40 pages

Publisher: Lee & Low Books; 1 edition (August 31, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1584302410

ISBN-13: 978-1584302414

Product Dimensions: 8.3 x 0.1 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #662,199 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #211 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary](#) #2249 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry](#) #164227 in [Books > Reference](#)

Age Range: 6 - 11 years

Grade Level: 1 - 6

## Customer Reviews

I think this has got to be the best haiku book I've ever read. The illustrations are magnificent, and its power and sensitivity communicate Issa's poems to readers of all ages. The author's translations of the Japanese poems to English capture Issa's timeless charm and the love he felt for all living things--including frogs and crickets! And what makes this book so valuable to me as a teacher is the whopping 3 page author's note. It lends perspective, and plenty of background information, on reading and writing haiku. My 2nd grade class felt so inspired by this book that they've been REQUESTING time to refine their own haiku ever since I read it aloud!

This is an excellent account of Issa's life and poetry. This story goes through important stages of Issa's life and incorporates his poetry into the stages. This unique book explains how Issa succeeds as a poet even though he endures difficulties in his life. Children of all ages will enjoy the story and beautiful illustrations. I think the author and illustrator did a great job of working together to create a

fine story about this Japanese haiku writer. The best part of this book is the poems. The poems are written in English and also in Japanese. This book will capture your interest.

Recommended to me by a school librarian, this book was a sweet delight which I read to my child thinking to encourage her to enjoy poetry. We both enjoyed this book and its wonderful illustrations of Japanese life, learning about the sad life of Issa and what is behind some of his poems, especially as haiku are not as simple as they appear on the surface. While the story may be a bit intense for very young children, the book accomplishes its intention of providing an interesting and eye-catching introduction to haiku and the sensitivity to feeling and experience that helps create the art of poetry. It also carries an underlying message of how one can not only persevere through mistreatment and adversity but keep a caring and uplifted spirit. LOVED the author's informational notes at the end. Also see *Grass Sandals : The Travels of Basho*

This is a beautiful book, even for children who aren't fond of poetry. Matthew Gollub tells the story of the haiku master Issa, interweaving translations of 33 haiku. The narrative creates a framework for understanding, especially the plaintive poems written when Issa keenly felt the loss of his mother. "Motherless sparrow, / come play / with me." Kazuko G. Stone's lovely illustrations complement the haiku but also can stand on their own. I found myself turning back to three illustrations in particular: a kitten playing in bright red autumn leaves, three children catching snowflakes in their mouths, and a beautifully detailed dragonfly. Stone's artwork helps interpret the haiku. For example, the titular poem didn't make much sense to me when I read it years ago, but the illustration of small green melons trembling in a water basin as a sandal-clad foot steps into view makes it clear: If the melons transform, they can escape the fate of being eaten! In addition to the child-friendly main narrative, Gollub includes an author's note section on the selection of the poems, details about particular poems, and explanation of haiku in general. These are very helpful for teachers or parents who would like to have more background to share with children. Between the story-style and the illustrations, this is a wonderful book for storytime. I can see it becoming a favorite that children revisit.

The impressive quality of the illustrations and translations presented in this children's book makes it a cherished Haiku collector's item. What can haiku (or this book) do for our children? If the child is scientist-oriented, he/she will have fun see the world through insects' perspectives and experience the transforming power of imagination turning cool melons into frogs. If the child loves drawing, the

book will enrich their interests with Eastern style paintings where Japanese character itself is a fascinating art. If the child has a writer in them, this book will share the strength of ISSA who first found comfort and hope in writing haiku after losing his mother at a very young age, had then emerged, through persistence and faith, to be the Japanese cultural icon whose name we equates with HAIKU today. *The Spring of My Life: And Selected Haiku*

The best introduction to haiku, by way of the life of Issa, that I have read thus far in my study of haiku. This is an illustrated picture book aimed at children, but it captures the essence of the haiku moment beautifully, and for the beginner, the illustrations open up the words and provide an image -- one way to appreciate the connection between the words and the experiential moment. The translations are fresh and not syllable-bound, thankfully, with an added bonus of the haiku in Japanese cursive along the sides of the pages. This book is a perfect combination of concept, design, and execution, with engaging text and tender, whimsical, and astonishingly apt illustrations. The pictures of the Buddhas at New Years was startling, and the one of the dove and the owl was emotionally piercing. No flaws, nothing could be improved in this fine book.

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