

TRANSLATOR ANDREW CAMPANA'S NOTE: In Japanese, both tanka and haiku are usually written in just one line. In English translation, the norm is five lines for tanka like these (5-7-5-7-7), though this is arbitrary and sometimes forces divisions where there weren't any in the original. Hokuto Iboshi played around with syllable counts and form too. You should feel free to use as many or as few lines as you need in your translation. Also worth noting: there are no plurals in Japanese (usually), so almost every noun can be translated as singular or plural, depending on what makes sense.

TANKA TRANSLATION #1: APPLE

ORIGINAL TANKA: カムチャッカの話しながら林檎一つを二つに割りて仲よく食うた

TRANSLITERATION (JAPANESE)

Kamuchakka
no hanashi nagara
ringo hitotsu
o futatsu ni warite
nakayoku kuuta

GLOSSARY:

Kamuchakka (noun): Kamchatka (peninsula in Russia, traditional Ainu homeland)

no: possessive ('s or about)

hanashi (v): talking, discussing, telling stories, chatting

nagara: while, during, as

ringo (n): apple

hitotsu (adj): one (in this case, one apple)

o: indicates the direct object (in this case apple)

futatsu (adj): two

ni: indicates the object of the following verb (in this case, *warite*, divide)

warite (v): we divide, split, cut, halve, separate

nakayoku (adv): on good (friendly) terms with; getting along well; in harmony; happily; peacefully

kuuta (v, past tense): ate, consumed (but in a rough/masculine way)

Step 1: Replace Japanese words with your choice of English words from the GLOSSARY.

Kamuchakka
no hanashi nagara
ringo hitotsu
o futatsu ni warite
nakayoku kuuta

Kamchatka
about talking while
apple one
Into two we divided
in harmony ate it

Step 2: Reorder the sentence and rearrange words to make syntactical sense.

Option 1:

While telling stories about Kamchatka
we divide one apple in two
on good terms, we ate it together

Option 2

While discussing Kamchatka
we divided one apple and
chewed it happily.

Step 3: Refine your word choice and choose your line breaks, weighing connotations and considering the mood of the poem.

Option 1

Telling stories about Kamchatka
we divide one apple in two
on good terms, we ate it together

Option 2

While discussing Kamchatka
we divided one apple and
happily chewed our halves.

Step 4: Share translations and discuss your choices. Enjoy the variety!

TANKA TRANSLATION #2: SALMON SOUP**ORIGINAL TANKA:** 働いて空腹に食う飯の味ほんとうにうまい三平汁吸う**TRANSLITERATION (JAPANESE)**

Hataraitte
 kūfuku ni kuu
 meshi no aji
 hontoni umai
 sanpei-jiru suu

GLOSSARY:**hataraitte** (verb): working, laboring**kūfuku ni** (adverb): on an empty stomach, while hungry**kuu** (verb): eat, consume**meshi** (noun): cooked/steamed rice, or more generally, meal, food**no** possessive ('s or about)**aji**: flavor, taste**hontoni** (adverb/intensifier): really, truly, very (kind of casual)**umai** (adjective): delicious, tasty, good, great**sanpei-jiru**: a kind of soup that's a local specialty in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan; the origin of the name is unclear but might have been named after a fisherman named Sanpei Saito. Consists of salted or pickled fish (usually salmon, or sometimes cod or herring), vegetables (especially potatoes and/or daikon radishes), and sometimes sake.**suu**: to eat/suck/sip/slurp (soup)**Step 1: Replace Japanese words with English words from the GLOSSARY.**

Hataraitte
 kūfuku ni kuu
 meshi no aji
 hontoni umai
 sanpei-jiru suu

Step 2: Reorder the sentence and rearrange words to make syntactical sense.**Step 3: Refine your word choice and choose your line breaks, weighing connotations and considering the mood of the poem.****Step 4: Share translations and discuss your choices. Enjoy the variety!**

TANKA TRANSLATION #3: BEAR

ORIGINAL TANKA: 久々て “熊か” とれたか “其の肉を 何年ふ” りて “食うたうまさよ

TRANSLITERATION (JAPANESE)

*Hisabisa de
kuma ga toreta ga
sono niku o
nan-nenburi de
kuuta umasa yo*

GLOSSARY:

hisabisa de: After a long time/while, for the first time in a while, it's been ages

kuma: bear (noun)

ga: particle, in this case marking the subject

toreta: to have been harvested/picked/produced/caught/ hunted

ga: but, however, still, and

sono: that (preposition)

niku: meat, flesh (noun)

o: particle marking “niku” as direct object of “kuuta”

nan-nenburi de: the first time in years, after how many/all these/so many years

kuuta: the past tense of the verb kuu, meaning to eat, consume

umasa: tastiness, deliciousness; the adjective “*umai*” (delicious, tasty, good, nice) made into a noun. Similar to Japanese word “umami.”

yo: a sentence/phrase ending particle that emphasizes what came before; often translated as an exclamation point

Step 1: Replace Japanese words with English words from the GLOSSARY.

*Hisabisa de
kuma ga toreta ga
sono niku o
nan-nenburi de
kuuta umasa yo*

Step 2: Reorder the sentence and rearrange words to make syntactical sense.

Step 3: Refine your word choice and choose your line breaks, weighing connotations and considering the mood of the poem.

Step 4: Share translations and discuss your choices. Enjoy the variety!

TANKA TRANSLATION #4: POT OF RICE

ORIGINAL TANKA: 一升飯食える男になったよと漁場の便り友に知らせる

TRANSLITERATION (JAPANESE)

*Isshō meshi
kueru otoko ni
natta yo to
gyojō no tayori
tomo ni shiraseru*

GLOSSARY:

isshō: one shō (a measuring container, traditional measurement / 2 quarts)
meshi: cooked/steamed rice, or more generally, meal, or food
kueru (verb in potential form): to be able to eat, consume
otoko (noun): man, male, fellow, guy, chap, bloke, dude
ni natta (past tense): have become, became
yo (particle): emphasizes what came before; often translated as an exclamation point

to (particle): indicates that all that came before is a quote, something that someone said
gyojō (noun): fishing grounds; fishing zone
no (particle): possessive ('s) or about [the noun before no] = fishing grounds
tayori (noun): news; tidings; information; correspondence; letter, announcement
tomo (noun): friend; companion; comrade; pal
ni shiraseru (verb): to notify, tell, announce, advise, inform

Step 1: Replace Japanese words with English words from the GLOSSARY. There is no right answer.

*Isshō meshi
kueru otoko ni
natta yo to
gyojō no tayori
tomo ni shiraseru*

Step 2: Reorder the sentence and rearrange words to make syntactical sense.

Step 3: Refine your word choice and choose your line breaks, weighing connotations and considering the mood of the poem.

Step 4: Share translations and discuss your choices. Enjoy the variety!