

# Sijo Makes You Smarter

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Elizabeth Jorgensen

*Sijo expands your consciousness, sparks new possibilities, opens new horizons in your own writing. Rich in Korean history, sijo is a lyrical form of poetry divided thematically and structurally by line and syllable count. Because sijo is a form most Americans know nothing about, this presentation will introduce the structure and form of sijo, sharing the best. And then, we'll write a few of our own.*

**TO VIEW THIS PRESENTATION: <https://cutt.ly/1etwU61>**

Teacher & Writer

<https://lizjorgensen.weebly.com/>

ELIZABETH JORGENSEN

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LIZ JORGENSEN



\*\*APPEARANCES\*\*



Elizabeth Jorgensen | Nancy Jorgensen

# Go, Gwen, Go



A Family's Journey to Olympic Gold

*Foreword by Bob Babbitt*

MEYER & MEYER SPORT

# Sejong Cultural Society

[www.sejongculturalsociety.org](http://www.sejongculturalsociety.org)

- ★ Sijo competition
- ★ Past competition results
- ★ How to write sijo

## Sijo Competition Rules and Information

in collaboration with the Korea Institute, Harvard University

Deadline: March 31, 2019 (11:59pm CDT)

[how to write sijo](#) | [sijo samples](#) | [sijo references \(links\)](#)

**Divisions:** **adult division** (age 19 and older) and **pre-college division** (age 18 and younger\*)

\* College students who are eighteen at the time of the competition deadline are asked to participate in the adult division.

### Guidelines:

- Write **one** sijo in English on a topic of your choice. A title for the sijo is not required.  
**More information on writing sijo can be found here.**
- Participants **must** participate in their age-appropriate division. Younger participants may not apply to the adult division.
- Entries must be submitted through our **website**.
- One entry per category per contestant is permitted. (Contestants are permitted one essay and one sijo entry.)
- All entries must be written in English.
- **Contestants' names cannot be written in their entries.**
- Essay division age limits do not have a lower limit, but the sijo adult division is limited to age 19 and older. If a pre-college student would like to compete in the adult essay division **and** pre-college sijo division, s/he must create two separate application accounts.
- We reserve the right to use all submitted pieces in future publications of the Sejong Cultural Society with no compensation to the authors.
- We reserve the right to not award any prizes.
- **Winners are generally announced by early May.** This estimate is subject to change depending on the number of total entries received; a more accurate estimate will be posted on our website soon after the competition deadline.

**Prizes** (funded by the Korea Institute at Harvard University):

- Adult division: First (\$1,000), Second (\$750), Third (\$500)
- Pre-college division: First (\$500), Second (\$400), Third (\$300)
- Honorable mention (for both divisions listed above): Friends of Pacific Rim Awards (\$50 each)
- Competition winners will be announced in *AZALEA: Journal of Korean Literature and Culture*, published by the Korea Institute at Harvard University.



Sijo (shee-jo)

Like haiku.

Korean form of poetry.

Meant to be a song.

Divided by thematically and structurally by line and syllable count.

Traditionally three lines (but because the lines can be quite long on the page) sijo in English are sometimes divided into six lines.

# Sijo

Line one: Introduces. Uses a 3-4-4-4 syllable groupings.

Line two: Develops. Uses a 3-4-4-4 syllable groupings.

Line three: Twists and concludes. Uses a 3-5-4-3 syllable groupings.

*This is an art. Be flexible.*

*Focus on 14-16 syllables in each line, for a total of 44-46 in the poem.*

# Sijo

Sijo are traditionally not titled, but modern poets often title their poems.

Sijo can rhyme or not.

**Line 1:** Start with a single image. Make it a complete unit of thought. Think of one sentence.

**Line 2:** Add description, detail, examples. Again, think of one sentence.

**Line 3:** The last line, go in the opposite direction or turn a corner (humor, irony, unexpected image, a pun, play on words).

Mark Peterson (Professor, Emeritus, Korean Studies, Brigham Young University)

“The structure is important, but I always **allow for poetic license** meaning that sometimes **the message is more important than the structure**. But a poem can be eliminated if the structure is too far off base...I really like the three-beat start to the third line.

**Word choice** is important. Some poems used a word that seemed beyond the argot of the writer and was not quite the right word in nuance, if not in actual definition. Sometimes the right word in the right place is a zinger, really powerful.

**Imagery**. Some poems capture an image so effectively – you can see the image. Some poems miss in that the image or message is lost in vague and ambiguous wording and imagery. They seem to try too hard to be flowery or emotional and the message is unclear. **Clarity is essential**.

**Emotion**. Poetry, in sijo or any form, has to capture an emotion and transfer that feeling to the reader. Some poetic emotion is in the category of sadness – loss, loneliness, abandonment, insult, being ostracized. Happiness – love, acceptance, success, accomplishment. The thing about sijo, more so than haiku, is that the form can capture **a wide range of emotions**.”

# Untitled by Hapshiba Kwon (10th grade), first place, 2014

Rustling fabrics, I explore seas of tweed, paisley blouses, and plaid.

Tangible remembrances; your days of youth, have become mine.

Clothed in strength, now you chase no trends. Wrinkled, gray, lovely threads.

**Cancer** by **Amy Malo** (11th grade) third place tie, 2013.

Childhood memories infest my head with splendid visions.

In my parents' room, I was impervious to sorrow.

Now it is smothered in disease and Death peers in the window.

# Panda by **Zachary Andrews** (6th grade), honorable mention, 2014

I look at him in awe

through the lush forest, a panda wakes.

Peacefully, he sits while eating

a morning snack of bamboo

getting prepared to battle extinction

as he does everyday.

Example  
student  
winning  
sijo

**Alexandra Kindahl** (12th grade)

**17321-012**

Airplanes arc with contrails like ivory streams through blue ground.  
Fearless, I rise towards them, wrap my fingers around their wings.  
“Your time’s up,” the prison guard yells. “Get back inside.” Slowly, I do.

**Jeanna Qiu** (10th grade)

**Lao-Ye (Grandfather)**

The moon interrupts, the stars wink—the inky sky is their playfield.  
In China, Grandfather climbed mountains to greet the escorts of Night.  
Though now in America, he still salutes the moon and stars.

**Toni Smith** (11th grade)

**Belated Breakfast**

One cup of coffee ready to pour.  
Two pieces of wheat toast to eat.  
Three spreads of grape jelly.  
Four minutes to get ready.  
Cat steals my toast, then spills my coffee.  
Now, I’m five minutes late.

**Katie McFarland** (10th grade) honorable mention

Here I am, the human pincushion, constantly stabbing my skin with needles.  
Here I am, a disappointment to my parents, with a chronic disease.  
Here I am, a teenager, trying to hold onto a piece of nonexistent string.

Last year's  
winners  
(student  
division)

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**Sofia Liaw** (12th grade)

first place

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### **Absentee Parents**

Make their excuses when asked why they aren't at your concert.  
Pat yourself on the back when you see others holding bouquets.  
You have become your own cheerleader. This is a crucial skill.

**bio**

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**Hye In Lee** (11th grade)

second place

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### **A Kisaeng's Sijo**

With the rhythm of the janggu, we dance like magpies,  
iridescent and spinning, hoping for freedom from the men  
and their hands feeling at our ivory ankles, calves, and thighs.

**bio**

---

**Sophie Baltzan** (9th grade)

third place tie

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The thrashing waves drown out the cries from the helpless victim  
Hearing the sky scream in agony the dark abyss swells below  
The ding wakes me from my hypnosis of the turning laundry

Last year's  
winners  
(adult  
division)

**Lily Daniels**

first place

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**Abandoned**

This window reveals mysteries.

Behind glass, a life that would have been.

As I fade from your memory,

You grow clearer in my mirror.

Mom, Dad, do you search each other's faces

For the girl you threw away?

**bio**

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**Kaitlyn Jurewicz**

second place

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**Rain Dance**

Without fear, I offer myself to the darkening sky.

I dare to wear her delicate, silver teardrops as my crown.

Through the storm, I close my eyes and *I dance and dance and dance.*

**bio**

---

**Ha Young Shin**

third place

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**Contemporary Love**

Swiping left, then left left right

Judging faces without a thought

Seeking love that fills the heart

Oh could you be, my Mr. Right?

Marriage bells ring left right left right

For the fifth time this minute

Try it!

Let's Write!



Line 1: 3-4-4-4 (introduction)

Line 2: 3-4-4-4 (development)

Line 3: 3-5-4-3 (twist and conclusion)

44-46 syllables total

Share!



# Sijo writers' markets

Any place poetry is accepted!

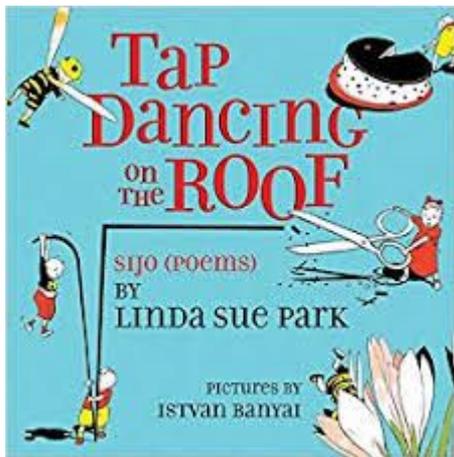
Submittable (micro, flash, poetry)

Sejong Cultural Society: sijo adult competition (\$1,000)

**\*\*CONTEST WILL OPEN IN TWO WEEKS!\*\***



# Resources



Park, L. S., & Banyai, I. (2015). *Tap dancing on the roof*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

## poetry

### Korean Poetry Competition Provides Opportunity for American Creative Writing Students

Elizabeth Jorgensen

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*Jorgensen shares anecdotes of students submitting sijos, a Korean form of poetry, to the Sejong Cultural Society*

Each semester, in Hartland, Wisconsin, I welcome 180 high school students to my creative writing classes with a course introduction and overview. I read intrigue, investment, and interest on their faces as I say, "My goal is for each of you to be an award-winning or published author by the end of the semester." What follows is a curriculum focused on writers' markets. By requiring students to practice professional writing, they submit short stories, poems, and vignettes to competitions and publications throughout the semester. I say, "Everything we do will be sent to a writers' market. This semester, you will practice what it means to be a professional author."

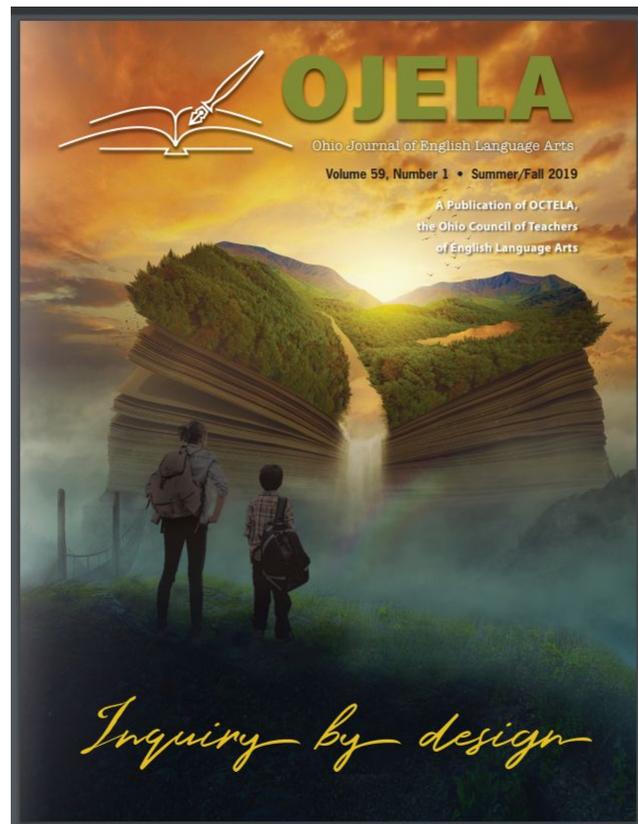
I start with a haiku, a familiar form of poetry. "Oh yes, we did this in elementary school," Sarah says. She's typing on her laptop. "Haikus have the 5-7-5 syllable form. It's a Japanese form of poetry. And they're typically about nature or the seasons." She and the rest of the class churn out haikus and submit them to various writers' markets.

"You're right. And if you can write haiku, you can write sijo," haiku's lesser known Korean cousin. Students, after success with haiku, find comfort in the similarities. "And the thing about sijo is there's more flexibility—and more room to tell a story."

Wisconsin writing standards require students to "produce clear and coherent writing in which the

30 Korean Poetry Competition Provides Opportunity for American Creative Writing Students

Jorgensen, Elizabeth. "[Korean Poetry Competition Provides Opportunity for American Creative Writing Students](#)." *Wisconsin State Reading Association Journal*. Volume 56, No. 1. Spring 2019. pp. 30-33. Reprinted from *Wisconsin English Journal*, Volume 58, Number 2, pp. 34-39.



Jorgensen, Elizabeth. "[Inquiry, Questioning and the Art of Korean Poetry](#)." *Ohio Journal of English Language Arts*. Volume 59, No. 1. Summer/Fall 2019. Page 43.

# Resources

## The Korea Times

TheKoreaTimes All Q f t v

### Opinion

Park Moo-jong Choi Sung-jin Mark Peterson Troy Stangorone Tong Kim Leo Seong-hyon John Burton Jason Lim Donald Kirk Hyon O'Brien Deazward Myers Bernard Rowan Casey Lartigue, Jr. Stephen Costello Semoun Chang

Mark Peterson

### American sijo

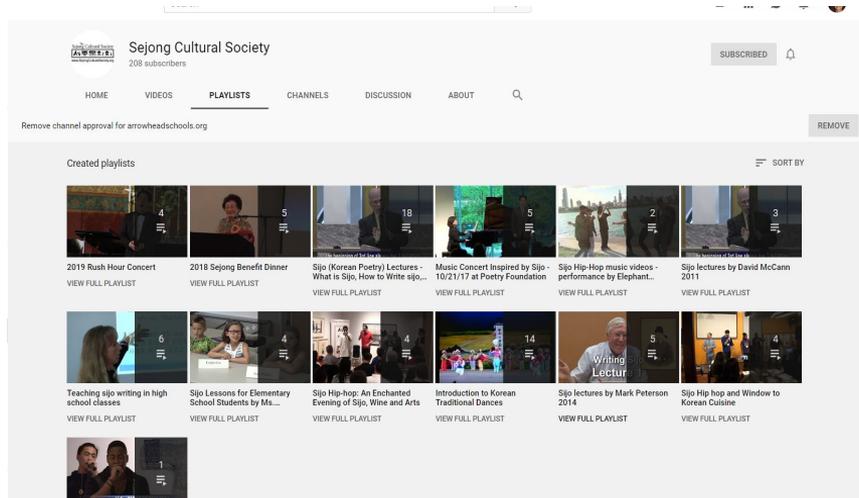
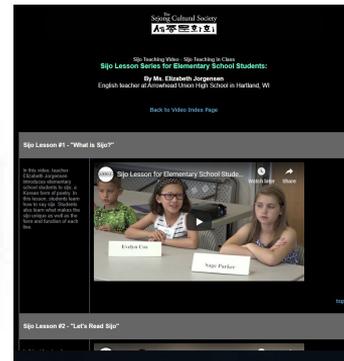


By Mark Peterson

Whereas many Koreans consider sijo a dead art form, the poetic genre is starting to catch on in America.

In a previous column I wrote that haiku, the Japanese short poem form, has become a part of American culture. Every student in America today has studied haiku and has actually written their own haiku in English. There are books on English haiku, websites on English haiku – it is a success. Haiku is part of English literature! But now sijo is close on its heels.

Sijo is the next step for many American students. They've learned about, and learned to write haiku – a short three line poem that features syllable counting as the structural element – not rhyme, a more-common feature of English poetics. Now comes sijo, also in three lines with a syllabic count that is a little more elaborate than haiku. Sijo has four segments in each line with three or four beats in each segment, with the exception of a longer segment in the third line. It's that longer segment, the second of four, in the third line that often provides the "punch line" or the twist, or the resolution of the issue set up in the first two lines.



Contact me!

<https://lizjorgensen.weebly.com/>

[elizabeth.jorgensen@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.jorgensen@gmail.com)

## LIZ JORGENSEN



\*\*APPEARANCES\*\*



thank you