



HOW TO WRITE A CINQUAIN

A **CINQUAIN** is a **syllabic form of poem** – that means that its form or shape is dictated by counting the syllables.

Syllables, in English, are **sound units**, and counting them depends on how any word, phrase or sentence is said out loud. The best way to count syllables is to clap the ‘sound units’ as you say the words, or to count them on your fingers.

Syllable count examples:

- Ice cream – 2 syllables
- I like ice cream – 4 syllables
- Dogs chase cats – 3 syllables
- Etc – 4 syllables!

The most famous type of syllabic poem is a **HAIKU**. Haikus originated in Japan and carry considerable cultural significance. A Haiku should, in theory, carry a spiritual insight beyond the apparent simplicity of the words; it is said that Samurai warriors trained their minds through writing Haikus.

A **CINQUAIN** is not as ‘hi falutin’ as a Haiku, and you can have more than one verse if you want to.

A CINQUAIN has:

A title

First line – 2 syllables

Second line – 4 syllables

Third line – 6 syllables

Fourth line – 8 syllables

Fifth line – 2 syllables

This is an example of a cinquain, written collectively by Frozen Ark personnel and Rowena Sommerville:

Polar Bear

White sky

Wind-howl tundra

Majestic, powerful

Hunter prowling on melting ice

Save me!

Play about with the words until you think you have the best version of what you are trying to say!

