

During a School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) class exercise held 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, student teams were asked to draw a succinct cartoon representation of principles related to planning and execution of the World War II Solomon Islands campaign. They were to develop an accompanying haiku that distilled major concepts that shaped joint force synchronization and domain convergence contributing to U.S. victory. The accompanying haiku appears as a sticky note on the bottom left of the drawing in the above image. It reads, "Within the Context; Joint Force Capabilities; At Decisive Points." (Photo by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*)

Haiku in the Classroom

Using Poetry to Educate Future Staff Officers

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During the 2023 school year, School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) instructors at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College employed a novel adult-learning teaching technique that used Japanese haiku poetry for the purpose of stimulating intellectual creativity among students in the analysis and remediation of issues that emerge as a part of military campaign planning. Established in 1983, the Advanced Military Studies Program, a program within SAMS at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, provides a second year of intensive, graduate-level education for selected graduates of the Command and General Staff College. Upon graduation, SAMS graduates spend a year as key planners at the division, corps, or Army Service component command levels. Consequently, SAMS instructors are constantly exploring new adult learning techniques to promote creativity in problem-solving, innovative thinking, and enlarged perspectives to help students prepare for their future roles as staff planners. One of those techniques involved pairing visual modeling with the conventions of Japanese poetry to train students to simplify and communicate complex ideas, a key component of helping generate commander's intent.

Haiku at SAMS

The centerpiece of this adult learning technique was the use of haiku, a traditional Japanese poetic form characterized by its brevity in the selection of words specifically intended to capture the essence of meaning in carefully crafted compact written expressions.¹ Student-written haiku was incorporated into classroom practical exercises during the spring of 2023 that examined selected military campaigns, multidomain operational concepts, and other topics that could be subjected to analysis using visual models and tight poetic constructions. One of the goals of this exercise was to condition students to communicate simply and effectively in a way that reduced complexity.

During one week in the 2023 spring academic semester, SAMS students in Team 4 spent three days



SAMS students Maj. David Clouse (left foreground), Maj. Josh Schatzman, and Maj. David Labadorf compare their sketches of U.S. multidomain operations in the Solomon Islands campaign in a SAMS exercise held 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The sketches incorporated haiku to synthesize analysis of effectiveness in campaign planning. (Photo by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*)

studying and analyzing the World War II Solomon Islands campaign in the South Pacific. Historically, following the decisive U.S. sea battles of the Coral Sea (7–8 May 1942) and Midway (4–7 June 1942) against Imperial Japanese armed forces, the U.S. Armed Forces executed a successful multidomain campaign involving an incremental series of amphibious landings, beginning with the seizure of Guadalcanal in August 1942

and culminating six months later in the fall of Rabaul on the island of Papua New Guinea.²

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School of Advanced Military Studies students used sketching materials to rapidly formulate a concept in picture form during analysis of the World War II Solomon Islands campaign on 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. (Photo by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*)

The block of instruction, which evaluated the campaign's multidomain tenets, "clearly demonstrated what was possible when forces in the air, ground, and naval domains could mass fires and effects in their own and other domains."³

The Solomon Islands campaign, one of the curriculum's paramount historical case studies, demonstrated how commanders across the joint force can employ the concept of *convergence* to synchronize the cross-domain activities of joint forces to achieve campaign objectives. (Not coincidentally, the case study's examination of convergence paralleled the Army's October 2022 publication of Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, which defined convergence as it relates to multidomain operations.)⁴

To reinforce the historical application of convergence and meet the lesson's enabling learning objectives, the last hour of the day was reserved for an in-class practical exercise. As part of the exercise, each student was directed to spend twenty minutes crudely sketching out an illustrative image using colored pencils, crayons, or dry-erase markers that synthesized what each viewed as the key elements of American multidomain operations in the Solomon Islands on either a piece of paper or a whiteboard. After completing the initial task, students were assigned to spend fifteen minutes studying one of their peers' visual models, then each was asked to write a haiku that conveyed the meaning of their classmates' visualization in poetic shorthand but leaving it up to the

reader to interpret his or her own meaning in the poems.

A haiku consists of seventeen syllables, arranged in a three-line 5-7-5 pattern with a "cutting word" that acts as a punctuation mark dividing the poem into two sections.⁵ In asking the students to describe their classmates' visual models in haiku, the poems were written in a highly abbreviated form of poetry that compelled students to use the poetic construction to both convey meaning and serve as a distilled peer evaluation for how clearly and unobtrusively the students communicated complex concepts vis-à-vis visual forms. Once the time elapsed, the students briefed one

another on how well their classmates visually represented their conceptions of multidomain operations and how skillfully the poetry conveyed the student analyses.

Student feedback for the practical exercise was overall positive and sometimes effusively positive. U.S. Marine Maj. Joshua Chambers, for instance, offered the following critique: "I thought incorporating haiku into practical exercises was an effective way to build creativity and interdisciplinary thought. The exercise helped students conceptualize and communicate in new and creative ways." He continued, "The haiku exercise also was a perfect opportunity to demonstrate how the intended message may or may not always be the message received. The more successful students were the ones who could better visualize other students' perspective and attempted to communicate from their point of view. In other words, apply strategic empathy."⁶

Reasoning Behind Using Haiku

The haiku style of poetry is an especially adaptable tool for educational and training purposes. As a result, using haiku for instruction is a widely used technique that has been adapted to a broad variety of students of all ages who learn how to write haiku as a creative means for "therapeutic engagement, for facilitating reflective learning and teaching, and for fostering empathy and transformation in education."⁷



During a SAMS exercise on 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Air Force Lt. Col. Zach Minner uses creative sketches and haiku developed by a class team to brief how the U.S. military achieved domain convergence in the Solomon Islands during World War II. Marine Maj. Josh Chambers records notes and observations of class reaction to the briefing. (Photo by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*)

Moreover, while Japanese haikus are traditionally written in the present tense on nature subjects, the haiku poetry convention has proven an adaptable tool for focusing intellectual consideration of various topics. The poems are intentionally short, do not need to rhyme, and are applicable to rumination on almost any topic in a variety of contexts and tenses. Of note, the employment of other poetry forms has been used in a variety of nonmilitary venues to augment research methodology, because it “helps

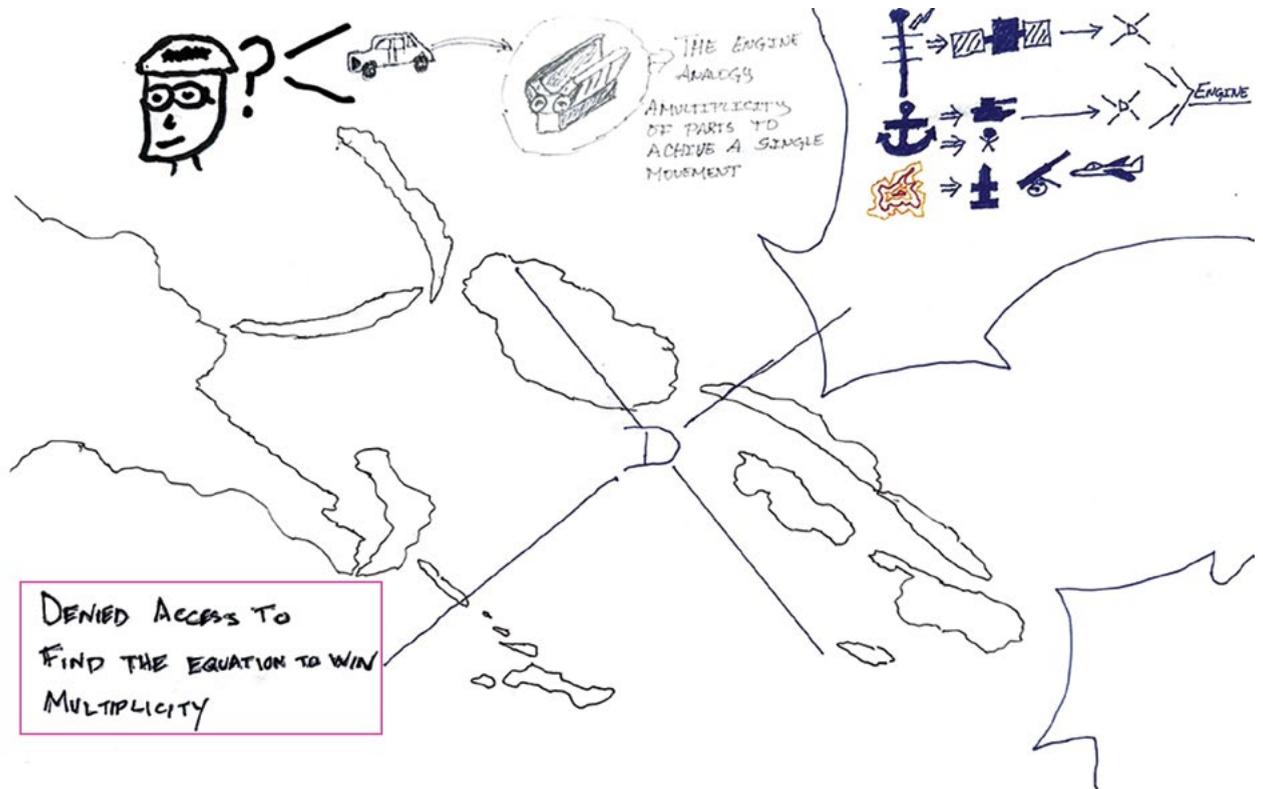
different allied and partnered nations—nevertheless share a unique cultural experience: the profession of arms. In an article on poetry and identity, Elena Abrudan states that culture expresses the tension between practices and representation; it is a product of society that comprises knowledge, language, activities, the system of representation and values, symbols, myths imposed to individuals; then, within the group, it corresponds to a creative movement of all the domains of social life; it is part of work, social

maximize participation and participative writing in aesthetic ways and evokes the possibilities of the relational, ambiguous, and mysterious presence of a phenomenon.”⁸ This may be because some trainers are partial to haiku because it represents a direct experience, or “an instantaneous reflective moment without explication through words.”⁹

For similar reasons, the use of haiku at SAMS was intended to be useful in broadening the intellectual creativity of students who, as graduates, will be expected to (1) analyze and assess complex, ambiguous operational environments; (2) teach, coach, and mentor; (3) understand and adapt to emerging missions; (4) engage senior leaders to enable decision-making and their ability to visualize, describe, and direct; and (5) be skilled practitioners in doctrine and operational art.¹⁰

Consequently, some SAMS instructors chose to incorporate the discourse of haiku into their lessons in the spring semester of 2023 in an effort to promote an aesthetic dimension to social and human research, translating and analyzing data so as to capture the “depth and intensity of emotions, engagement, and experiences of participants.”¹¹

As members of the Armed Forces, many of whom have participated in actual armed conflict or the semblance thereof in intense combat simulation exercises, most SAMS graduate students—though from different branches of the services or civilian backgrounds, and even from



Another representation of principles related to planning and execution of the World War II Solomon Islands campaign developed during a SAMS class exercise held 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The haiku reflects major concepts that shaped joint force synchronization and domain convergence contributing to U.S. victory. The haiku is written on the illustration in the left lower corner. It reads, "Denied Access to; Find the Equation to Win; Multiplicity." (Photo by Michael Lopez, *Military Review*)

relations, entertainment, family life, action, and so on; it is present in all forms of social life, as a product and stimulus of transformation.¹²

Within the context of culture, the term "discourse" is frequently used to indicate "the special way in which natural language, spoken and written, is used in particular disciplines or by particular communities of practice."¹³

Culture is an ingrained feature of individual perceptions of experiences. SAMS students share the profession of arms, and often share actual combat experience, so they can use their shared cultural lens to shape their understanding and creative expressions in different ways than people from other cultural enclaves. As a result, the use of haiku in the classroom invites students to use language as not simply a system for conveying information; rather, the use of language becomes a means of acting socially. Transforming perceptions of combat among SAMS students into haiku presupposes an interaction of personal culture with group culture, while preserving the distinct individualism of the poet.

This shared cultural background also shapes how SAMS students, as adult learners, process educational experiences and highlights Eunice Newton's assertion that the "adult's readiness for learning is inherent in his[/her] societal role as a worker, parent, spouse, organizational member," etc.¹⁴ Newton also observes that the adult learner is a rich resource for learning because the "mature individual is a veritable storehouse of codified experiences which are the essence of his central identity."¹⁵

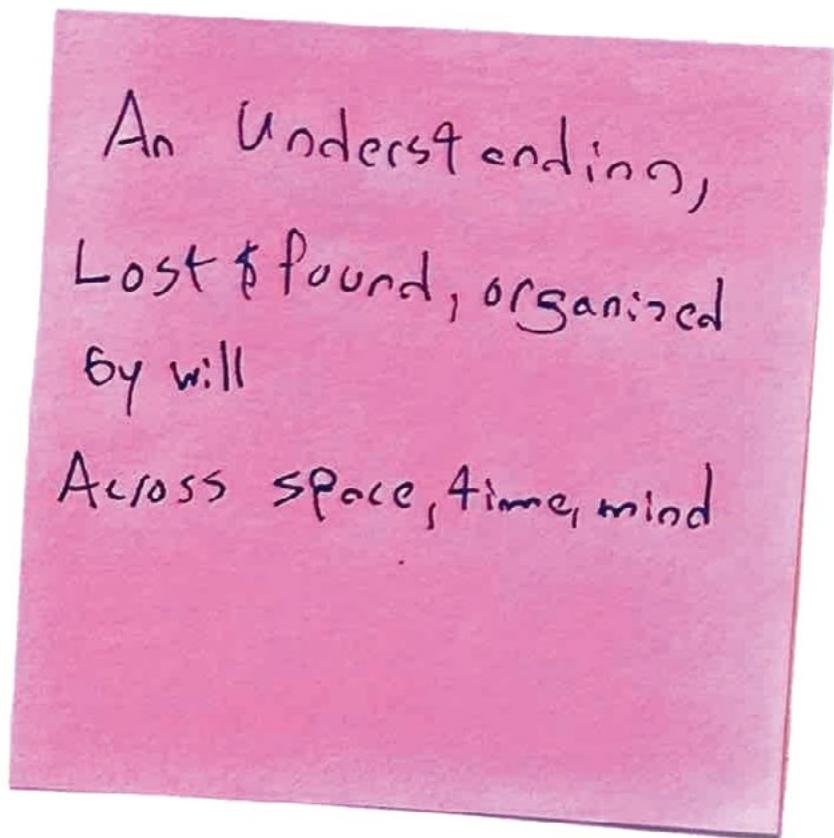
Consequently, the individual richness of personal experience that SAMS students possess, combined with the fact that each was selected competitively for advanced education based on their potential as military officers, suggests that they are well suited to benefit from such novel learning experiences, including the use of haiku. This learning experience trains their minds to communicate simply to generate commander's intent. Consequently, unique perspectives of highly experienced military officers with a background of colorful, if not hazardous practical

experiences, influenced what emerged in their poetry.

What Writing the Haiku Compels an Adult Learner to Do

While the 5-7-5 syllable form is easy to imitate in *theory*, the haiku “has its own poetics difficult to imitate for a [non-Japanese] poet with a different language, culture, and pattern of thinking.”¹⁶ This makes the haiku a challenge, even for graduate students. Haiku is about imagery—the cryptic and compact nature of the style does not provide a “vehicle for explicit musing, rhetoric, symbolism, or flowery language. Any message or emotion must be implicit and be accessed only through the image.”¹⁷

Many current studies, as well as senior-level corporate managers, emphasize that writing and reading poetry can generate critical and creative thinking skills and stretch the boundaries of employees’ imaginations, which are all abilities and skills prized in SAMS graduates. Moreover, reading and crafting poetry provides an indispensable tool for stimulating novel solutions, unlocking innovative thinking, facilitating transformative reflection, developing empathy, and reducing complexity into clear and simple ideas. Sidney Harman, the founder and former CEO of the Harman Industries, captured these sentiments in a 2007 *New York Times* article. “I used to tell my senior staff to get me poets as managers,” Harman explained. “Poets are our original systems thinkers. They look at our most complex environments and they reduce the complexity to something they begin to understand.”¹⁸ Such skills and innovative creativity will be required of SAMS students during their follow-on utilization tours at the division, corps, and Army Service component command levels.



An example of a haiku formulated during a SAMS exercise held 24 February 2023 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Haikus were written in text on the abstract drawings developed or appended with a note. The example above reads, “An understanding; Lost & found, organized by will; Across space, time, mind.” (Photo by Charlotte Richter, *Military Review*)

The intent of this article has been to provide readers with a brief overview of the use of haiku poetry in SAMS during 2023. The authors also hope that it encourages further professional dialogue and collaboration among Army educators about other possible adult learning activities that can enliven the classroom to make it more effective. The activity described in this article challenged uniformed and civilian students to employ alternative, unfamiliar forms of visual and poetic communication to express complexity in novel and illuminating ways. Of note, this approach is consistent with Army doctrine that emphasizes, “visual information is stimulating; therefore, visual models enhance critical and creative thinking ... In other words, seeing something drawn may help individuals think through challenging problems, especially when examining abstract concepts.”¹⁹ ■

Notes

1. Robert Yahnke, "Teaching Haiku Poetry in the Humanities Classroom," *Improving College and University Teaching* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 71.
2. Sean M. Judge, *Who Has the Puck?: Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2009), 55.
3. Christopher M. Rein, *Multi-Domain Battle in the Southwest Pacific Theater of World War II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2017), 62; John Prados, *Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun* (New York: Penguin, 2013). As part of the three-day block of instruction, students read the entirety of Prados's *Islands of Destiny*.
4. On convergence, see Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2022), 3-3-3-4.
5. Mark J. Ravina, *Understanding Japan: A Cultural History* (Chantilly, VA: Teaching Company, 2015), 102-3. According to Ravina, haiku features the two devices that are distinct to Japanese poetry: pillow words and pivot words. Pillow words are set phrases that refer to other poems, wherein one or two words refer to an earlier poem, enabling the poetically literate to enjoy a chain of references. The pivot word is a homophone that changes meaning halfway through the poem. See also Dawn G. Blasko and Dennis W. Merski, "Haiku Poetry and Metaphorical Thought: An Invitation to Interdisciplinary Study," *Creativity Research Journal* 11, no. 1 (1998): 39, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326934crj1101_5. According to Blasko and Merski, the haiku uses only seventeen syllables divided into three verses of 5-7-5 and includes a seasonal reference (*kigo*) and a *kireji*, often translated as "cutting word," which is kind of a spoken punctuation that divides the poem into two sections.
6. Joshua Chambers (major, U.S. Marine Corps), in communication with Tony Carlson, 9 July 2023.
7. Hong-Nguyen Nguyen and Wolff-Michael Roth, "An Analysis of Haiku Teaching Discourse: From Talking About to Doing Haiku," *Journal of Pedagogical Research* 3, no. 3 (2019): 113, <https://doi.org/10.33902/jpr.v3i3.93>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 115.
10. The expected outcomes for Advanced Military Studies Program students noted in welcoming packets distributed to incoming students for the 2024 academic year.
11. Nguyen and Roth, "An Analysis of Haiku Teaching Discourse," 114.
12. Elena Abrudan, "Poetry, Identity and Ideology," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 11, no. 33 (Winter 2012): 237, <http://jsri.ro/ojs/index.php/jsri/article/view/652>.
13. Nguyen and Roth, "An Analysis of Haiku Teaching Discourse," 114.
14. Eunice Shaed Newton, "Andragogy: Understanding the Adult as a Learner," *Journal of Reading* 20, no. 5 (1977): 362, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40032981>.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Makoto Ueda, "Bashō and the Poetics of 'Haiku,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 21, no. 4 (1963): 423, <https://doi.org/10.2307/427098>.
17. Zach Hudson, "Haiku in the Classroom: More Than Counting Syllables," *English Journal* 102, no. 6 (2013): 54, https://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/00138274/v102i0006/54_hitcmtcs.xml.
18. Harriet Rubin, "C.E.O. Libraries Reveal Keys to Success," *New York Times* (website), 21 July 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/21/business/21libraries.html>; also see John Coleman, "The Benefits of Poetry for Professionals," *Harvard Business Review* (website), 27 November 2012, <https://hbr.org/2012/11/the-benefits-of-poetry-for-pro>; Rosalie Chang, "Why Reading Poetry Can Make You a Better Leader," *Medium*, 25 August 2019, <https://marker.medium.com/where-poetry-meets-business-and-entrepreneurship-9ef932c8383f>.
19. Army Techniques Publication 5-0.1, *Army Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2015), 1-9. Given the importance of visual modeling for staff officers, Advanced Military Studies Program graduates are also required to read Dan Roam, *The Back of the Napkin: Solving Problems and Selling Ideas with Pictures*, expanded ed. (New York: Portfolio, 2009).

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