

**Emiko Miyashita (Japan):**

Each word in a haiku holds the real thing. A mission of haiku readers is to respond to the named object. Haiku is not about dreams, but of real maple trees, their leaves, their shades. Judging the contest took me deep into the maple forest, of its greens and reds.

red maples  
prolonging  
sunset

The red colour is dominant in this haiku, its strength, its warmth, and its extravagant finale, but leaving a bit of sadness. "Prolonging" suggests that they are interacting and, in turn, reflecting the author's feelings.

sketching  
a maple leaf  
redwing's song

Colour and sound are both present in this haiku, creating a peaceful moment. Redwing is a winter visitor to the U.K., so the maple leaf is also tinted red by then.

Haiku provides a sense of solace amid the fundamental trends of modern society—urbanization and alienation. Reading a number of haiku submitted for the contest, I was sure that each author was regaining a sense of attachment to nature as they scribbled the lines, and I am very happy that the contest is creating a platform for sharing these findings.

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**Lev Hart (Canada):**

red maples  
prolonging  
sunset

This young poet proves Bashō's maxim, "Let a six-year-old write the verse." In a mere eight syllables, this haiku expresses a worldview that is at once animistic and phenomenological, steeped in *yūgen* and *makoto*. Perhaps haiku contests are divided into age groups to spare the adults from competing with the children.

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**Andrew Shimield (UK):**

Each of the three judges was asked to compile a list of 25 poems that they thought worthy from the 556 entries received, with no conferring. Any poem that appeared on all three lists went forward for further consideration. This gave us a shortlist of 12. We then voted, independently, on these to find our winners. The same process was applied to the under 18s category (65 entries). There were many good haiku submitted, but as a judge I was looking for something that strongly reflected the theme, 'the magic of maples'. The winning poems in each category achieved that for me with the over 18s winner showing the innocence and joy of a child enjoying the leaf fall and the under 18s giving us the red maple leaves blending into the setting sun. I have yet to visit Westonbirt, but after reading all these lovely poems on the subject of maples, I have a mind to go this autumn.