



# HAIKU INSPIRED BY DNA

*edited by Brianne Kirkpatrick*



WATERSHED  
— DNA —



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# Introduction

The poetry in this book was collected during Watershed DNA's contest held in 2021 in honor of International Haiku Poetry Day, April 17th, and National DNA Day, April 25th. Fifty-seven participants from all over the world shared over 100 haiku in total. Such brilliant work was submitted. Some haiku were funny, some poignant, some cryptic, and some crystal clear.

The top three haiku were chosen using rules that--to haiku lovers--were admittedly arbitrary. The winning entries fit the traditional 5/7/5 syllable pattern, which is a modern, Western interpretation of a type of poetry that originated in Japan roughly 400 years ago.

They brought in an aspect of nature and humanity. Their message brings the reader a clear image, and DNA is involved in it. In no particular order, the top 3 haiku were submitted by Charlie, Bo, and Tracy. Read their poems here, followed by those of all who submitted to the contest.

"Haiku always begin with an experience," writes Jim Kacian in *How to Haiku*. With these DNA-inspired poems, we invite you to reflect on your experience in the present and how it connects you to your past, to the people in your life now, and those in your history.

A few comments by participants:

*Having seen the topic of the contest, it came to me that what we get from parents at the beginning of our lives is a genetic lottery – a combination of 46 halves of chromosomes merging into 23 pairs, and this inevitably, led my imagination to associate the similar shapes of chromosomes with the cross marks (not Marks!) of selecting the numbers in the Lotto lottery. Voilà! The haiku was ready. Later on... only 349 readings out loud, 47 more versions of which I, of course, chose the first... or, maybe, the ninth. Creating haiku sometimes takes me 15 minutes, sometimes 15 days (15 years?). - Bo Jaroszek*

*[While writing my haiku] I was remembering climbing stairs 2 steps at a time with my grandfather when I was maybe 5 years old. He was holding my hand so I could make the big leaps and we were both laughing. -Charlie Smith*



*Old spiral staircase  
Grandpa's lanky gait and laugh  
My double helix*

*-Charlie Smith*





*biolottery*  
*23 chosen numbers*  
*and I am alive*

*-Bo Jaroszek*

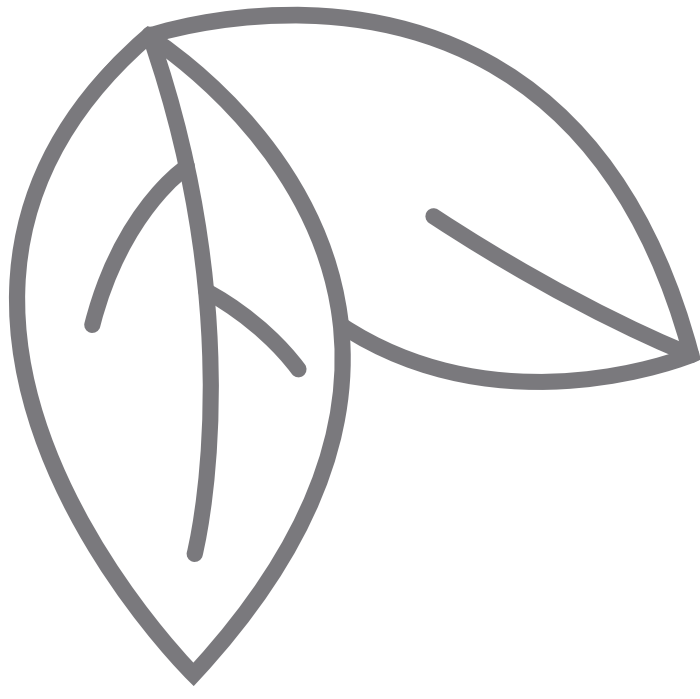


*DNA results*

*I am no longer alone  
in this lonely world*

*-Tracy Davidson*





*Controlling his shoot  
Snapdragon too*

**Ernesto P. Santiago**

*In love  
Embracing each other  
Like our DNA coils*

*My DNA test  
Frisky and unfaithful  
Great-grandmother*

*In the crib  
Crying the whole night  
Our DNAs together*

**D.V. Rozic**

*Fomalhaut  
Being there  
Is not enough*

*Funeral home  
The receptionist  
Puts me on hold*

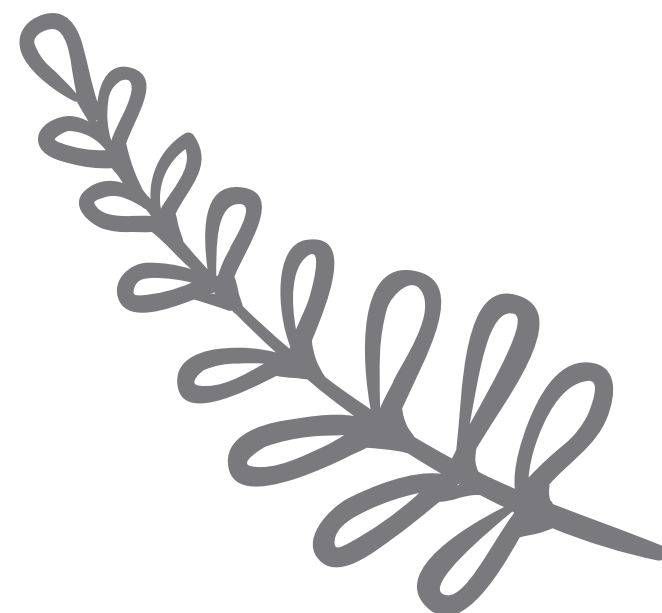
*Basking flower  
The baby smiles  
In sleep*

**Aparna Pathak**

*Dark clouds  
Pass without rain  
A crow pheasant's cry*

*Tonight  
So many moons  
Sakura*

**Subir Ningthouja**





*Cherry petals  
Letting flows  
La vie en rose*

*Freezing rain  
Even the barbed wire  
With a festive air*

*Cold night  
Wrapped tenderly  
A fly in the spider's web*

**Mirela Brăilean**



*As I look at the moon  
Moon looks at me  
A shooting star trails*

*Here I am  
Like a water drop  
On a lotus leaf*

**Ram Chandran S**

*Replication  
My father's smile  
On my son's face*

**Vladislav Hristov**

*Moonlit  
85% of me  
In the cat's mouth*

*Midnight snack  
Unpeeling a relation  
And taking a bite*

*So many moons -  
Even this virus  
Becomes us*

**Alan Peat**



*Acupuncture  
Stealing my DNA  
Winter mosquito*

*My sister's red hair  
The one thing she has on me  
We can't fight over*

*Covid death  
What it did  
To my DNA*

*No choice what we get  
From parents  
Who choose each other*

*Tugging on my sleeve  
A raspberry bramble  
Tags my DNA*

*Family plot  
My DNA  
Already buried*

## **Marilyn Ashbaugh**



*Convalescence  
In the family album  
Blood donor's photo*

*Me and mosquitoes  
There is room for everyone  
On the milky way*

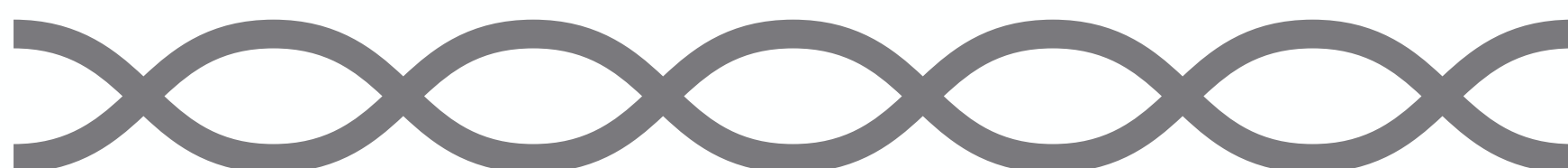
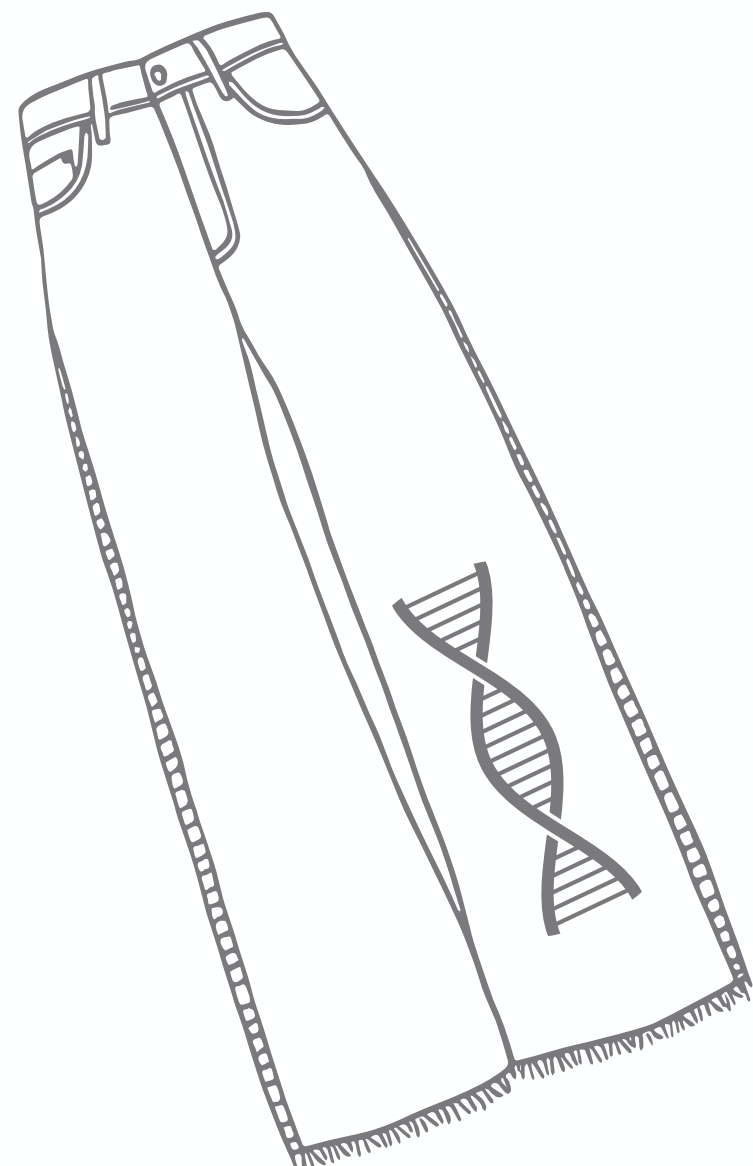
*A fish hook  
Side by side DNA  
Salmon's and mine*

## **Wiesław Karliński**

## **Barrie Levine**

*DNA screening  
Test Results envelope drops  
A hole in my genes*

## **Charlie Smith**



*Her DNA  
Helping him workout  
Every little thing*

*His DNA  
Sulking on the couch  
Glares into the tv*

*Human DNA  
Women cry  
Hence men lie*

## **Amrutha Prabhu**

*Gathering twilight  
A strange disease keeps silent  
Among our genomes*

*Optimistic sky  
My father edits the genomes  
So uniformly*

*Expansion of space  
Obsessed with the loneliness  
A unique genome*

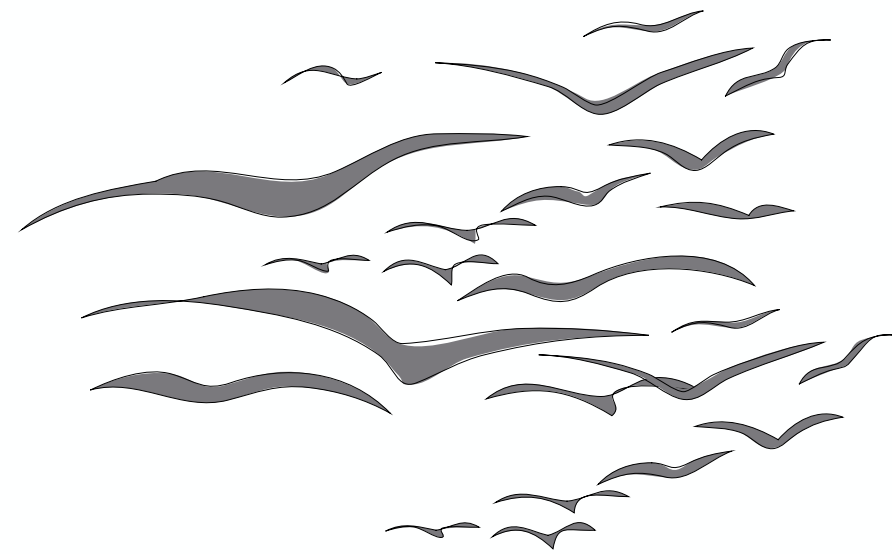
## **Goran Gatalica**

*Sickling positive  
The thin line between  
Love and science*

## **Obed Benyin-Mensah**

*Ancestry.com  
Says she has wildflower  
DNA*

## **Dan Campbell**



*DNA  
It's always a mystery  
And it's my story*

## **Diane Bertram**





*In my widest dreams  
I could not have imagined  
Identity shattered.*

*Wind whipping through me  
Unable to find footing  
This was all for fun*

*With Exquisite pain  
I go on like I know what  
I'm doing. I don't.*

*Tears on each corner  
Remembering what I knew  
As my life before*

*Oh! Now that makes sense  
Brown curls, blue eyes, suntan skin  
You're Leonard's daughter*

*I'm pleased to know that  
Amidst mom's deep pain & tears  
There was happiness*

**Maggie Chenard**

*Heart shaped pebbles most  
On my way home to my mom  
I pick these as gifts*

*Ever in my heart  
Rosary, bow, cross and smile  
Old photo of dad*

*An old golden book  
The cover heart decorates  
Thoughts of mom and dad*

**Pat Geyer**



*Arguing  
Neanderthal genes are  
Increasingly erupting*

**Željko Vojković**



*Pregnancy test  
Past, present and future  
In one +*

*Finally  
After four boys  
It's a girl!*

*Fireplace crackling  
Grandpa and his precious one  
In the rocking chair*

**Franjo Ordanić**

*Deciphering  
The genetic codes  
Family reunion*

*Evolutionary steps  
We are still climbing up  
The ladder of DNA*

*Twist and turn  
Of the spiritual DNA  
Double helix*

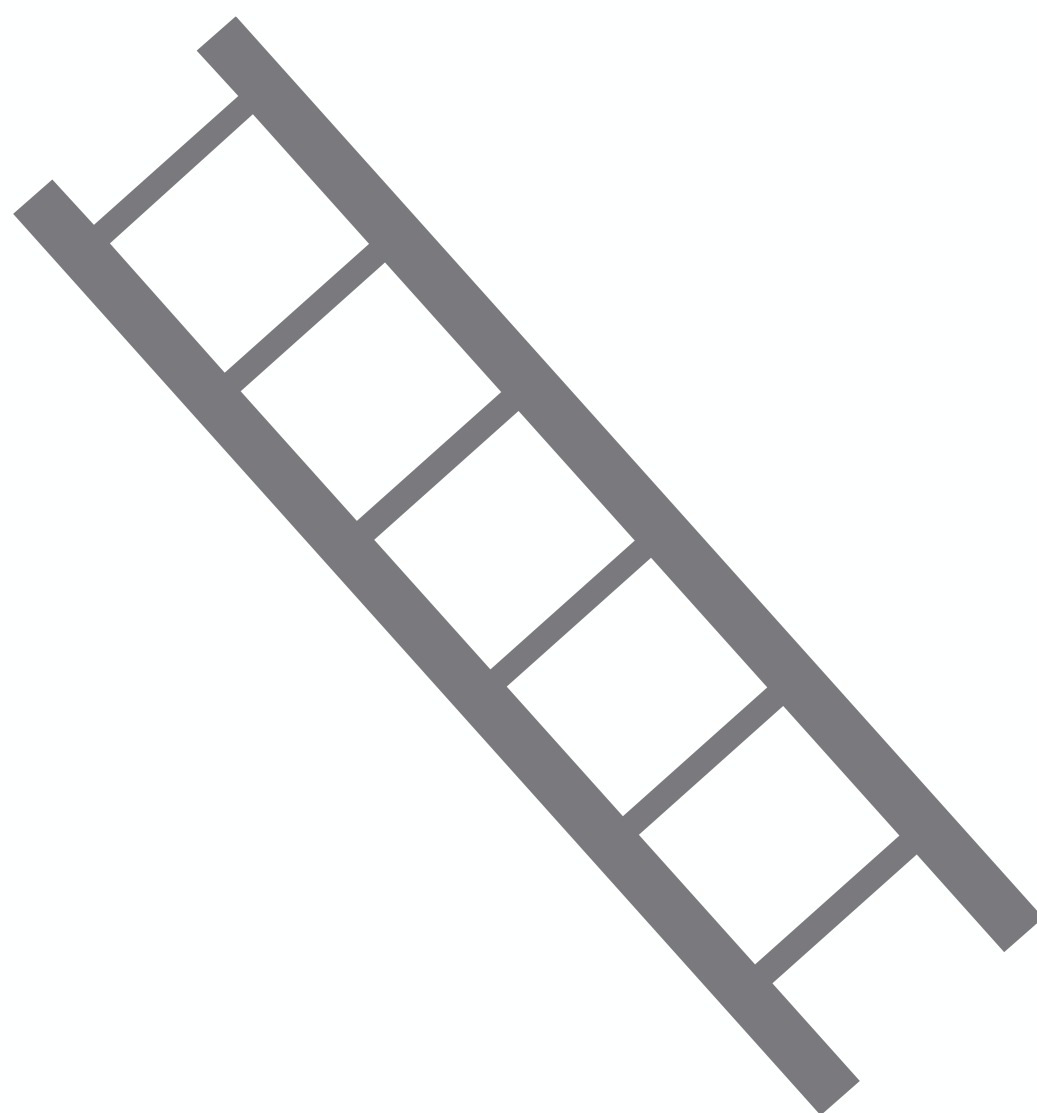
**Hifsa Ashraf**

*In every cell  
Its code like a sculpture  
Essence of what we are*

*DNA's magic  
How tender she looks  
The mother belly*

*Familiar face  
Patiently trying to  
Recognize herself*

**Mónica Margaride**



*DNA  
Plays with the environment  
Makes me up*

**Subir Ningthouja**



*Moon and stars  
Mothers nature work  
Beautiful*

*Moon and stars  
Lemon hot herbal tea  
Mediate*

*Freshed washed blackberries  
Double the cost from the farm  
No anxiety*

**Ellen Urowitz**

*Recombinations  
Origami crane moving  
In rainbow colors*

*Building skyscrapers  
With colorful lego bricks  
A family game*

*A fern leaf in spring  
Folding and then unfolding  
Caressing a life*

**Daniela Misso**

*Bright lights in the night  
An unexpected meeting  
The fool is alive*

*Left my life behind  
Am I a seed of a tree  
Or a fallen leaf*

*Moment of respite  
A feeling long forgotten  
The heart at unease*

**Petr S.**



*Hustling bustling world!  
Abreast sanctity within;  
Vibrancy acclaim.*

**R-G-Lyn C. Labaniego**





*Mother's ears and hair  
With Dad's shoulders, knees and toes  
Just a melting pot*

### **Caroline Moal**



*Nightmares  
Dead mother turns to  
My only daughter*

*Bombing war field  
Call from family doctor  
A soldier born*

*Traveling karma  
I carry with a smile  
A poetic gene*

### **Arunachalashiva Ravi Sankar**

*Genetic drift  
Our daughters smarter  
Than us*

*Marital discord  
The law of dominance  
Universal*

*Evolution  
Still not done  
With patriarchy*

### **Vandana Parashar**

*All the stories  
In their wrinkles  
Family album*

*Battle of the bulge  
All the struggles  
Against my DNA*

*The pull  
Of a child's almond eyes  
Soul connection*

### **Barrie Levine**



*One brown eye and one  
Of blue, red blonde hair  
And freckles too*

*Double helix  
Confirming  
I'm not a robot*

*Do I make me who I am?  
Not  
Always.*

*ACGT  
Home run  
With bases loaded*

*Lighter flick, I  
Put mom's old sweater on  
And pick up dad's bad habit*

*Grandmother's green thumb  
An uncle's gift for numbers  
Heirloom seeds*

**A. Burgard**

**Laurie Greer**



*Grandchild  
The twisting ribbons  
Within you within me*

*Pieces  
Of mother  
In you*

*Weaving  
Connecting and forming  
Generations*

*The dance  
Shaping the steps  
To life*

**Skaidrite Stelzer**

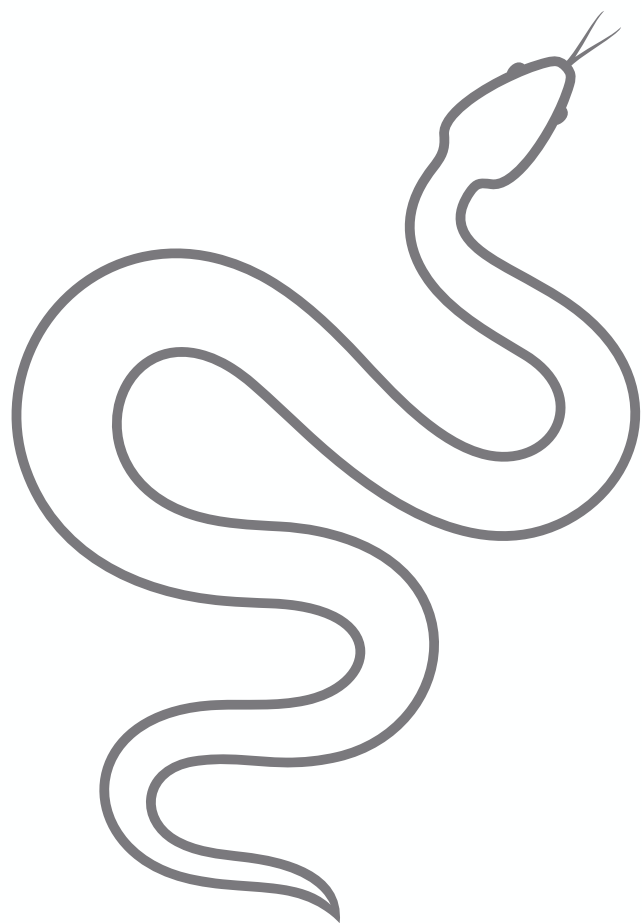
**Ana Marie D.**



*DNA*  
*A green snake under*  
*The green grass*

*DNA*  
*Teaching a child variation*  
*With mango and maize*

**Oluwasegun Adesina**



*Gatekeeper of dreams*  
*Too short to join the rockettes*  
*Some doors must be closed.*

**Gillian Leonard**

*DNA*  
*The way i am in*  
*Mom and dad*

*DNA*  
*Mom and dad's own*  
*Protein mix recipe*

*DNA*  
*My life clinging*  
*By the double-helix*

**Joe Sebastian**

*Feeling so awake*  
*Waiting for dawn to arise*  
*For a brand new start*

*Feelings are not shown*  
*But when with you in a day*  
*I am satisfied*

**Roslen Faith M.**





*Biolottery  
23 chosen numbers  
And I'm alive*

*Building blocks of life  
Each molecule a small piece  
Of nature's lego*

*Generations  
Emerge in a newborn  
The world is (not) changing*

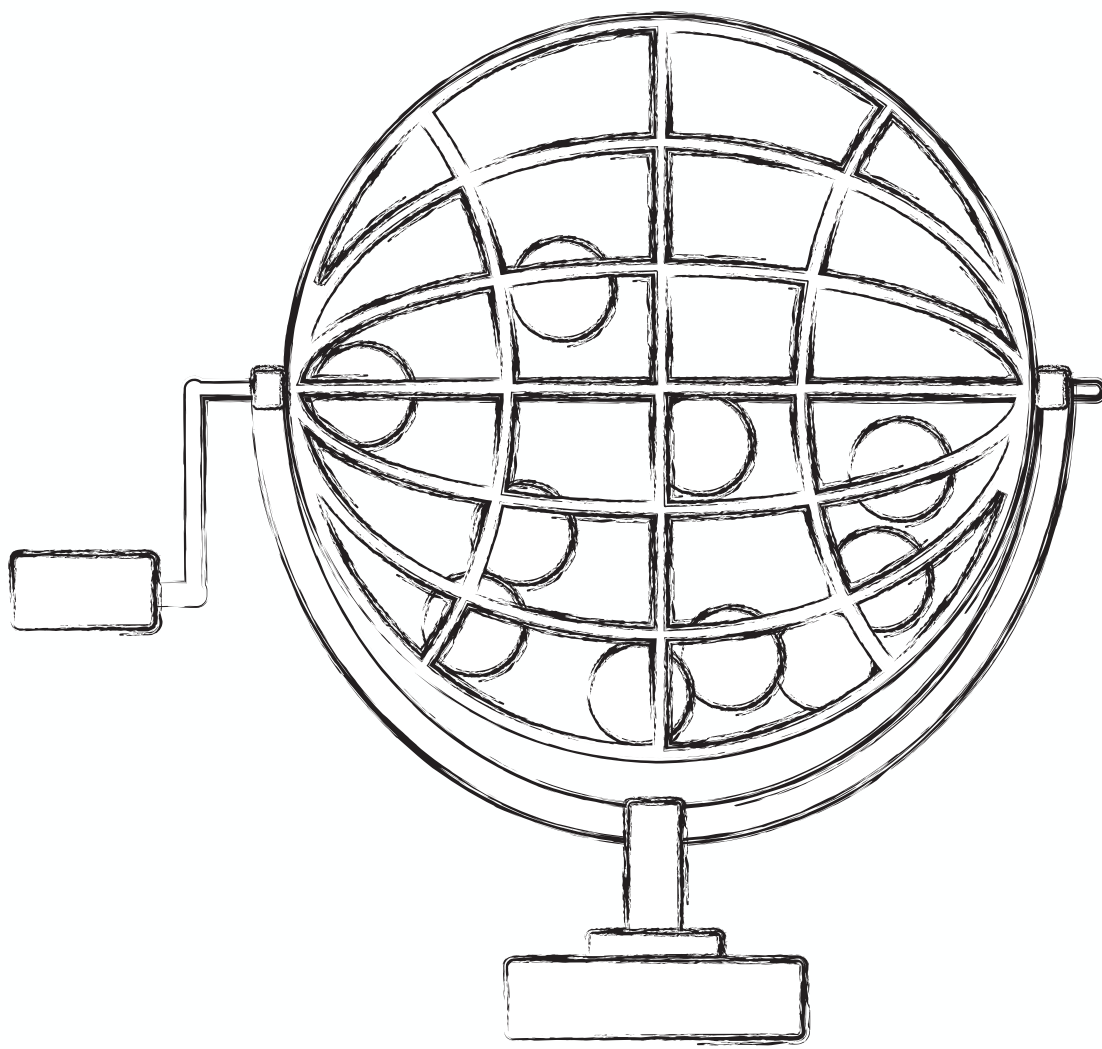
*DNA results  
I am no longer alone  
in this lonely world*

*Nature experiments  
Its another trial  
Our disaster*

*All I remember  
Of genetics in high school  
Mendel's crossed pea plants*

**Bo Jaroszek**

**Tracy Davidson**



*Tracking mud indoors  
I'm asked, if it's upbringing  
Or heredity*

*A rainbow of hands  
Identical but for  
A few genes*

*A fallen woman  
The best blossom bares no fruit  
Ornamental prize*

**Josh Shenouda**

**James Z.**



*"Who am I?", I asked  
All it takes is just a spit  
Ninety-nine percent*

**Joy B.**



*Nocturnal beings  
A raccoon flees from the path  
Of the swerving car*

*Herd immunity  
Breeding brown-eyed cows is not  
The goal of science*

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

*Twenty-three petals  
His chromosomes  
Twenty-three petals*

*Wildflowers  
Learned to talk  
To his chromosome*

**Carmela Marino**

*DNA Sample  
I cradle the vial  
An heirloom*

*A child's error in copying  
He captures the sky  
In his pigmentless eyes*

*Baby's genetic report  
I pass it on to  
The anxious grandpa*

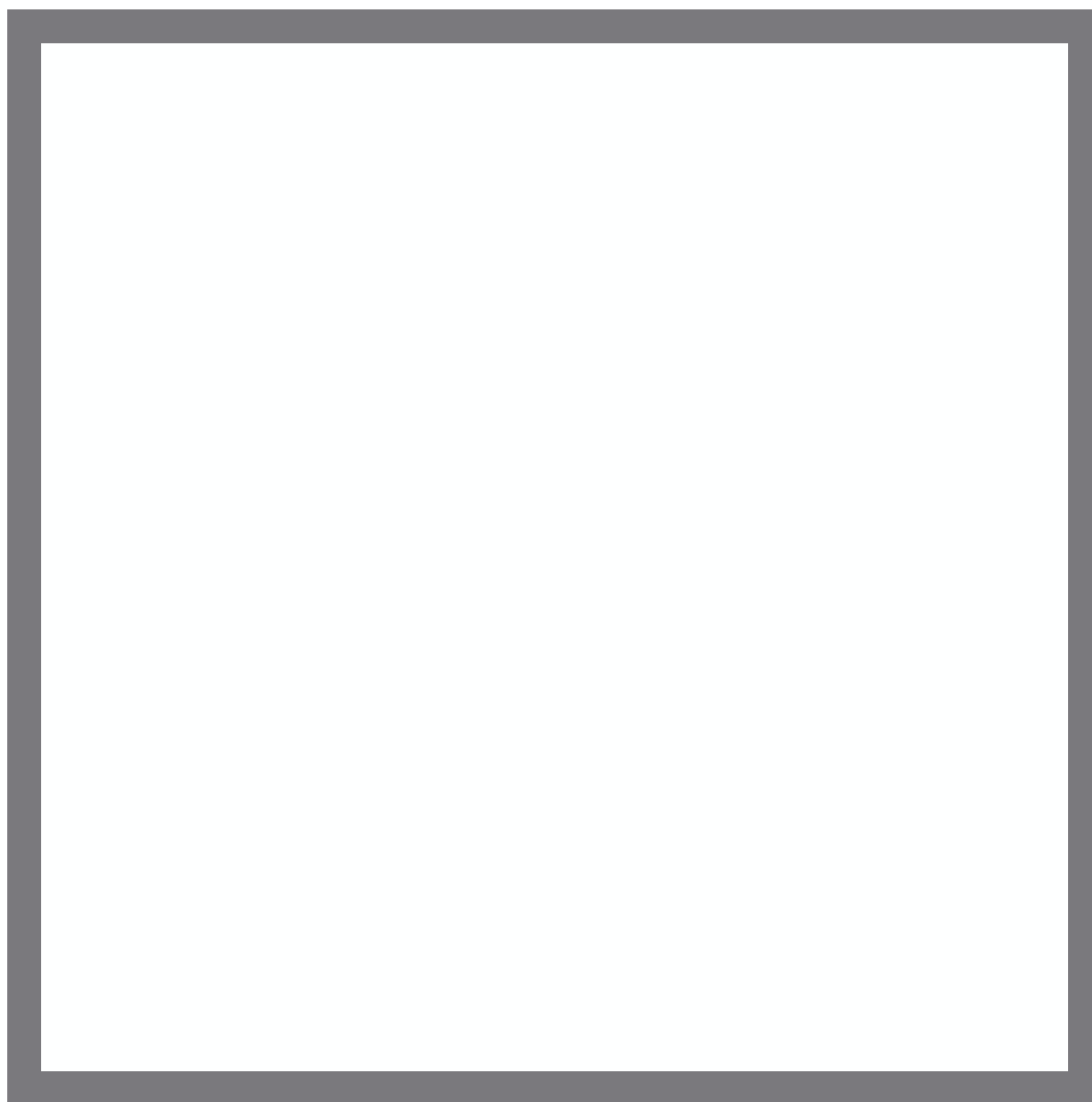
**Pitamber Kaushik**



*The double helix  
In the geneticist's wrist  
A brand-new tattoo*

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

If you were to get a tattoo, what would it look like? Where would you put it? Use the space below to doodle or describe it.



*World haiku day  
Another cherry petal  
On my birthday cake*

**Mihovila Ceperic-Biljan**

*A life in a book  
Written in double helix  
Waiting to be read*

*My five year old son  
Showed me a human genome  
Made from building blocks*

*In every cell  
The same exclusive barcode  
Tells I am unique*

**Annette Akkerman**

*Look back, ancestors expand  
4, 8, 16, 24, 48 ... and on  
Look forward --- it's me!*

**Laura Stukel**



*The cherry blossoms  
We wait for the results of  
The genetic tests*

**Bruce H Feingold**





*DNA questions?  
Genetic Counselors have  
Lots of the answers*

*DNA is life  
More alike than different  
Yet each is unique*

*In the mirror's gaze  
I can see my mother's face  
Looking back at me*

**Nancy C.**

*Our Father, Divine  
The Engineer from whose code  
All DNA flows*

*Slipping the skin  
To skinny dip in a pool  
Without genes*

*The DNA  
Helix: a Dadaistic  
Masterpiece*

**Michael (MV)**

*The last child  
His brown eyes and the blue ones  
Of his siblings*

**Deborah Karl-Brandt**



*Addiction  
Extracting a haiku  
Out of my DNA*

**Sanela Pliško**



# Learn More

Haiku is an art and a poetry with a long history. In its original form, there is much more than counting syllables. Learn more about the history and art of writing haiku from the Haiku Foundation and "How To Haiku" by its founder Jim Kacian.

<https://thehaikufoundation.org/>  
<https://thehaikufoundation.org/omeka/items/show/164>

This book was developed by Brianne Kirkpatrick, MS, LCGC as part of the "Writing is Healing" program.

Learn more about the full curriculum and online course at:

[www.WatershedDNA.com/writing-is-healing](http://www.WatershedDNA.com/writing-is-healing)



