

July 2021

Dear Partners:

Subject: The 35th Toyo University Gendai Gakusei Hyakunin Isshu
(One Hundred Poems of Modern Students) Contest

On behalf of Toyo University, I send you my warm greetings.

At Toyo University, each year we organize an event called Gendai Gakusei Hyakunin Isshu, a poem contest open to students. The contestants are called to express their ways of viewing daily life, everyday sentiments and feelings in a traditional Japanese fixed-form poem called tanka (see No.6 below). Each year we receive many entries from students across Japan. The 34rd contest held in 2020 drew a total of 65,499 poems.

Since 2019, we are inviting entries from students at our partner universities abroad, including yours. Would you kindly transmit this message, with the information attached below, to your faculty members who teach Japanese to the students? I am sure that the contest would be a great opportunity for them to try their Japanese skills in an interesting manner.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and send my best wishes for your university's further development.

Yours sincerely,

Etsuko Yaguchi
President
Toyo University

1. Enter Period

Friday, September 17 – Wednesday, October 13, 2021 (both dates inclusive)

2. How to apply

Write your poem and the required information in the attached application form, convert the file into a PDF, and send it to the address below.

3. E-mail address

mlkoho@toyo.jp (PR Section, General Affairs Dept., Toyo University)

4. What is Hyakunin Isshu ?

In Japan, word play in a style similar to that of tanka began around the 7th century. Since then, the art of poetry composition developed among the country's ruling class and at court. During Japan's Middle Ages, from the Heian to Kamakura era (794-1333 CE), one hundred poems by noted authors were compiled into a collection called Hyakunin Isshu (literal translation: "one hundred persons, one poem each"). Hyakunin Isshu still exists and is popular in today's Japan as a form of traditional culture, one well-known collection being widely used in a New Year's card game.

Modeling this anthology on the Hyakunin Isshu, Toyo University openly solicits tanka poems from students and selects the best 100 entries that express their fresh sensibilities and trends of the times.

5. What is Gendai Gakusei Hyakunin Isshu ?

Gendai Gakusei Hyakunin Isshu (One Hundred Poems of Modern Students) Contest began in 1987 as a Toyo University centennial commemorative event. In 2021, its 35th will be held. The total number of tanka poems entered in the previous contests, expressing present-day students' views of the world and their daily life, has reached over 1.5 million.

6. What is tanka ?

Tanka is a fixed-form poem composed of 31 Japanese units of sound (31-mora) in total that can be divided into phrases of 5-7-5-7-7 sounds to express one's feelings and impressions in a daily situation. One unit of sound corresponds to one kana character.

For example, 「沖繩で海にもぐって魚とりあの海へびはおそろしかった」 (Okinawa-de umi-ni mogutte sakana tori ano umihebi-wa osoroshikatta – In Okinawa, I dove into the sea and caught fish; that sea snake was scary) comprises phrases of 5 sounds (o-ki-na-wa-de), 7 sounds (u-mi-ni-mo-gu-t-te), 5 sounds (sa-ka-na-to-ri), 7 sounds (a-no-u-mi-he-bi-wa), and 7 sounds (o-so-ro-shi-ka-t-ta) . A good tanka poem makes a creative use of characteristics of the Japanese language and enables the reader to vividly imagine the scene depicted or sympathize with the author's feelings expressed.