

Summary*

Songs of the Pandemic: World Haiku is a two-part anthology capturing the first year of COVID-19 through the compressed lens of haiku, combining the author's own quintets with a curated global collection of single-verse haiku from dozens of other poets. Structured as a "two-stage" performance, the book positions itself as both personal record and worldwide chorus, documenting 2020 as it was lived rather than as it was later remembered.

Stage 1 presents 22 of the author's own haiku quintets, written in real time during the pandemic's early months. These pieces move between dread and dark comedy: reflections on racing to finish the manuscript before the virus might claim him, imagined final moments of dying patients, and grim jokes about mask shortages sit alongside domestic scenes of quarantine life — home cooking, incubating chicks on a condo balcony, and self-described "luxury jail" confinement with his wife. Recurring themes include mortality and legacy, the strange privilege of surviving comfortably while others suffered, and attempts to find meaning or humor within collective crisis, often filtered through the author's secular-humanist worldview.

Stage 2 shifts entirely away from the author's voice, gathering 179 traditional single-verse haiku from 61 poets across 21 countries, arranged without thematic grouping so readers can "browse aimlessly." These contributed verses range from ICU nurses describing exhaustion and held hands through iPads, to isolated elders, Zoom funerals, homeschooling parents, and small domestic griefs — a Kenyan haiku about scarce garlic, a Ghanaian reflection on lockdown loneliness, a New Zealand nurse's account of technology-mediated goodbyes. Read together, the section functions as a crowd-sourced world diary, emphasizing shared vulnerability across vastly different circumstances and continents.

The book closes with a short author biography — a retired mediator, psychologist, and educator in Sarasota, Florida — rendered, fittingly, as its own haiku quintet, along with links to the author's other works on mediation, secular humanism, and haiku.

*Summary created by perplexity.ai

