

Classic Poetry Series

**Kobayashi Issa**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2004

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Kobayashi Issa(1763 - 1827)

Kobayashi Nobuyuki (Issa) was born in Kashiwabara, Shinano province, to a farming family and began writing in his childhood, which was marred by misfortune and sadness, his mother died and his father remarried resulting in torment at the hands of his step mother and step brother.

In 1777 he was despatched to Tokyo to study the Haiku form under such masters as Sogan and Chikua. He was forced to support himself by taking menial jobs before gaining entry into the Kasushika poetry school. At the age of 28 he was to be given a teaching post at the school but lasted just a year after it became clear that his modern style of haiku did not suit the clerical confines that were expected of him.

For the next two years Kabayashi wandered the provinces of Japan where he found a patron in the form of Seibi Natsume, during this period he took the pen name (Issa). upon his return to Tokyo he was to publish his first collection Tabishui 1795 Issa was to visit most of the prominent Japanese cities of the day over the next few years, publishing the following collections to recount his travels.

Chichi No Shuen Nikki 1801

Kyowakujo 1803

Shichiban-Nikki 1810

Waga Harushu 1811.

In 1812 he returned to his native Kashiwabara and was to resume the feud with his Step family who had dishonoured his father's will. He also married at this time but again misfortune struck with his four children dying in infancy, and his wife later in 1823.

During this period he gained his reputation as the leader of the Haiku form in the shinano province, with his style being open and natural his verse was read by many as being relevant to everyday life. Three collections were published during this period:

Hachiban-Nikki 1818

Oragaharu 1819 tr: The year of my life.

Kuban Nikki 1822.

Kobayashi was to marry again and was blessed with a daughter born just after his death in 1827. He was seen as a re-juvenating influence on the Haiku form and has left a legacy of over 20,000 haikus, describing nature, life in everyday terms and sympathetic vulnerability.

his collections are translated and sold to this day.

# A Bath When You'Re Born

His death poem:

A bath when you're born,  
a bath when you die,  
how stupid.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# A Cuckoo Sings

A cuckoo sings  
to me, to the mountain,  
to me, to the mountain.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# A Huge Frog And I

A huge frog and I,  
staring at each other,  
neither of us moves.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# A World Of Dew

The world of dew is, yes,  
a world of dew,  
but even so

Kobayashi Issa

# All The Time I Pray To Buddha

All the time I pray to Buddha  
I keep on  
killing mosquitoes.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa



# Asked How Old He Was

Asked how old he was,  
the boy in the new kimono  
stretched out all five fingers.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Blossoms At Night

Blossoms at night,  
and the faces of people  
moved by music.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Brilliant moon

brilliant moon  
is it true that you too  
must pass in a hurry?

Kobayashi Issa

# Children Imitating Cormorants

Children imitating cormorants  
are even more wonderful  
than cormorants.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Don'T Kill That Fly!

Look, don't kill that fly!  
It is making a prayer to you  
By rubbing its hands and feet.

Kobayashi Issa

# Don'T Know About The People

Approaching my village:

Don't know about the people,  
but all the scarecrows  
are crooked.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Don'T Worry, Spiders

Don't worry, spiders,  
I keep house  
casually.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Ducks Bobbing On The Water

Ducks bobbing on the water--  
are they also, tonight,  
hoping to get lucky?

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa



# Even On The Smallest Islands

Even on the smallest islands,  
they are tilling the fields,  
skylarks singing.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Even With Insects

Even with insects--  
some can sing,  
some can't.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Face Of The Spring Moon

Face of the spring moon--  
about twelve years old,  
I'd say.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Having Slept, The Cat Gets Up

Having slept, the cat gets up,  
yawns, goes out  
to make love.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Hey, Sparrow!

Hey, sparrow!  
out of the way,  
Horse is coming.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# How Much

How much  
are you enjoying yourself,  
tiger moth?

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# I'M Going Out

I'm going out,  
flies, so relax,  
make love.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# In Spring Rain

In spring rain  
a pretty girl  
yawning.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa



# In The Thicket's Shade

In the thicket's shade  
a woman by herself  
singing the rice-planting song.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# In These Latter-Day

In these latter-day,  
Degenerate times,  
Cherry-blossoms everywhere!

Translated by R.H. Blyth

Kobayashi Issa

# In This World

In this world  
we walk on the roof of hell,  
gazing at flowers.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# It Once Happened

It once happened  
that a child was spared punishment  
through earnest solicitation.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Last Time, I Think

Last time, I think,  
I'll brush the flies  
from my father's face.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Napped Half The Day

Napped half the day;  
no one  
punished me!

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Napping At Midday

Napping at midday  
I hear the song of rice planters  
and feel ashamed of myself.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# New Year's Day

New Year's Day--  
everything is in blossom!  
I feel about average.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa



# New Year's Morning

New Year's morning:  
the ducks on the pond  
quack and quack.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# No Doubt About It

No doubt about it,  
the mountain cuckoo  
is a crybaby.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Not Knowing

Not knowing  
it's a tub they're in  
the fish cooling at the gate.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Not Very Anxious

Not very anxious  
to bloom,  
my plum tree.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Pissing In The Snow

Pissing in the snow  
outside my door--  
it makes a very straight hole.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Seen

Seen  
through a telescope:  
ten cents worth of fog.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Summer Night

Summer night--  
even the stars  
are whispering to each other.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# That Pretty Girl

That pretty girl--  
munching and rustling  
the wrapped-up rice cake.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa



# That Wren

That wren--  
looking here, looking there.  
You lose something?

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Crow

The crow  
walks along there  
as if it were tilling the field.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Man Pulling Radishes

The man pulling radishes  
pointed my way  
with a radish.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Moon Tonight

The moon tonight--  
I even miss  
her grumbling.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Pheasant Cries

The pheasant cries  
as if it just noticed  
the mountain.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Snow Is Melting

The snow is melting  
and the village is flooded  
with children.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Toad! It Looks Like

The toad! It looks like  
it could belch  
a cloud.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# The Wren

The wren  
Earns his living  
Noiselessly.

Kobayashi Issa



# These Sea Slugs

These sea slugs,  
they just don't seem  
Japanese.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# This Moth Saw Brightness

This moth saw brightness  
in a woman's chamber--  
burnt to a crisp.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Under My House

Under my house  
an inchworm  
measuring the joists.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Under The Image Of Buddha

Under the image of Buddha  
all these spring flowers  
seem a little tiresome.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Visiting The Graves

Visiting the graves,  
the old dog  
leads the way.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# What A Strange Thing

What a strange thing!  
to be alive  
beneath cherry blossoms.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Windy Fall

At my daughter's grave, thirty days  
after her death:

Windy fall--  
these are the scarlet flowers  
she liked to pick.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Winter Seclusion

Winter seclusion -  
Listening, that evening,  
To the rain in the mountain.

Kobayashi Issa



# With My Father

With my father  
I would watch dawn  
over green fields.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa

# Writing Shit About New Snow

Writing shit about new snow  
for the rich  
is not art.

Translated by Robert Hass

Kobayashi Issa