

## *Imagery – Imagist Poems*

### **What Is Imagism?**

**Imagism** is a type of poetry that describes images with clear, sharp, simple language and great focus. It came out of the Modernist movement in poetry. In the early 1900s, poets abandoned the old ways of writing poems and created a new movement in poetry called **Modernism**. Modernist poets changed the style and content of poetry by abandoning rhyme and meter, among other things. The Imagists were willing to experiment with non-traditional verse forms, and used free verse.

Some Modernist poets began to focus on imagery in poetry. In traditional poetry, images are described in great detail with many words, and then they are linked to a philosophical idea or theme. But some of the Modernist poets decided that the best way to write poetry was to describe things with simple and few words. In addition, many of them did not explicitly discuss the ideas and themes of the poem.

Imagism is a subset of Modernism that focuses on simply described images and little more. In Imagist poetry, the writer does not talk about the themes behind the image; they let the image itself be the focus of the poem. A characteristic feature of Imagism is its attempt to isolate a single image to reveal its essence. There were many famous American Imagist poets, including Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D., and Amy Lowell.

**Oread by H. D.**

Whirl up, sea—  
whirl your pointed pines,  
splash your great pines  
on our rocks,  
hurl your green over us,  
cover us with your pools of fir.

**The Pool by H. D.**

Are you alive?  
I touch you.  
You quiver like a sea-fish.  
I cover you with my net.  
What are you—banded one?

**“Afternoon Garden in Stone” by Dale Gregory Cozart**

Rose quartz blooms  
among peridot buds  
Jade trees dangle  
Ruby Reds  
Lapis jays  
swoop unafraid  
on an topaz cat  
with emerald eyes  
lazing  
under a citrine sun  
Amethyst iris blossom  
through amber rays  
of afternoon  
the shadow  
of a moon stone  
whispering  
behind an aquamarine sky  
A silent pool meditates  
in turquoise

**"l(a" by E.E. Cummings**

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**"In the Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound**

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
petals on a wet, black bough.

**"The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams**

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

**“Nantucket” by William Carlos Williams**

Flowers through the window  
lavender and yellow

changed by white curtains –  
Smell of cleanliness –

Sunshine of late afternoon –  
On the glass tray

a glass pitcher, the tumbler  
turned down, by which

a key is lying – And the  
immaculate white bed

**“This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams**

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

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For each of the poems:

1. What happened in this poem? What is the moment that was captured?
2. What is a powerful descriptor in this poem that lends to its imagery?