

Imagism

- One of the movements sparked by Modernism.
- Between 1908 and 1912, an interest in innovation was growing among the literary circles in London.

F.S. Flint, offers a description of the "Imagistes" in 1913:

"they were contemporaries of the post-impressionists and the futurists, but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto. They were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition as they found it in the best writers of all time — in Sappho, Catullus, Villon. They seemed to be absolutely intolerant of all poetry that was not written in such endeavor, ignorance of the best tradition forming no excuse

Imagism

- Imagism is an Anglo-American movement.
- English contribution to Imagism is represented by:
 - A. Edward Storer's 'Image' from *Mirrors of Illusion*
 - B. T.S. Hulme

The American Contribution:

- A. Ezra Pound coins the term
- B. Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington
- C. Amy Lowell

-

Imagism

Ezra Pound, the main founders of Imagism, said that there were three tenets, or rules, to writing Imagist poetry:

- "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," to which Pound signed his own name, and which he began with this definition: "An 'image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."
- *Direct treatment of the subject.* That is, the poem should deal directly with what's being talked about, not try to use fancy words and phrases to talk about it.
- *Use no word that does not contribute to the presentation.* Use as few words as possible.

Imagism

- *Compose in the rhythm of the musical phrase, not in the rhythm of the metronome.* In other words, create new rhythms instead of relying on the old, boring ones.
- Cut poems down to the bone and eliminate every unnecessary word — “Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something. ... Use either no ornament or good ornament.”
- Make everything concrete and particular — “Go in fear of abstractions.”

Imagism

- Do not try to make a poem by decorating prose or chopping it into poetic lines — “Don’t retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose.
- Don’t think any intelligent person is going to be deceived when you try to shirk all the difficulties of the unspeakably difficult art of good prose by chopping your composition into line lengths.”
- Study the musical tools of poetry to use them with skill and subtlety, without distorting the natural sounds, images and meanings of language — “Let the neophyte know assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft ... your rhythmic structure should not destroy the shape of your words or their natural sound or their meaning.”

Imagism

Lowell then served as editor of a series of anthologies, "Some Imagist Poets," in 1915, 1916 and 1917. In the preface to the first of these, she offered her own outline of the principles of imagism:

- "To use the language of common speech but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly exact, nor the merely decorative word."
- "To create new rhythms — as the expression of new moods — and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist on 'free-verse' as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea."

Imagism

- "To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911."
- "To present an image (hence the name: 'imagist'). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of art."
- "To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite."
- "Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry."