



Imagism movement: Role of literature

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Abstract

Imagism movement in early 20th c. Anglo-American poetry that favoured precision of imagery, clear language. The imagist rejects the sentiments of much romantic and Victorian poetry. Imagist poetry is a style of poetic writing which focused on a particular object or image as the primary subject of the poem. This type of poetry was noted particularly for clear and concise language, which remained poetic and could still use devices such as metaphor or simile, while remaining precise and not emulating the flowery poetry often associated with the Romantic poets. Imagist poetry, as a movement, did not last very long, but had a tremendous impact on those poets who followed.

As a poetic style it gave modernism its start in the early 20th c. Ezra Pound was a famous imagist and he coined the term Imagism in 1912. The birth of Imagist poetry is often associated with England, specifically the London area, and is largely attributed to the meeting of poet Hilda Doolittle and writer and editor Ezra Pound. Pound read a poem by Doolittle, provided some critique, and then passed it along for publication with the poet's name changed to "H.D. Imagist," from which the movement takes its name. This occurred in 1912, but by 1917 the Imagist poetry movement had essentially come to an end.

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Introduction

Imagism

The imagist movement in English poetry marked the beginning of a simple and precise poetic style which focused on describing images with crisp language and great focus. The origin of the imagism can be found in the poetry of T.E. Hulme. It started in the early 1900s when the old ways of writing poetry were abandoned and the modernist movement in poetry was started. Amy Lowell and John Gould Fletcher are famous writers related to this movement. The imagist movement is basically a subset of modernism which keeps its focus on deftly described images and does not waste time on talking about the themes behind the images- instead; they allowed the image to speak for itself. Imagist believes in words. Among the notable imagist poets can be named William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell among others.

During the second decade of the 20th century, this movement was started as a reaction to Georgian poetry which they criticized as facile and loose. The term 'Imagism' was coined by Ezra Pound to denote the principles agreed on by himself and the other members of the literary group which was formed in London in 1912.

According to the rule of movement poem should deal directly with what's being talked about, not try to use fancy words and phrases to talk about it. As a broad movement, Imagism signals the beginning of English and American modernism, and a definite break with the Romantic-Victorian tradition. As a stylistic programme, it manifests the desire of the post-symbolist, pre-war generation for a harder, more precise and objective medium. Name given to a movement in poetry, originating in 1912 and represented by Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and others, aiming at clarity of expression through the

use of precise visual images. In the early period often written in the French form Imagisme.

Quotes

- "No ideas but in things." -- William Carlos Williams
- "Not ideas about the thing but the thing itself." -- Wallace Stevens
- "Make nothing of it [the thing] but the thing itself. Because there may not be meaning, don't insist on it."
- "A poem is a small machine made out of words." -- William Carlos Williams
- "The image presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."

Imagist

A group of American and English poets whose poetic program was formulated about 1912 by Ezra Pound—in conjunction with fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), Richard Aldington, and F.S. Flint—and was inspired by the critical views of T.E. Hulme, in revolt against the careless thinking and Romantic optimism he saw prevailing.

The Imagists wrote succinct verse of dry clarity and hard outline in which an exact visual image made a total poetic statement. Imagism was a successor to the French Symbolist movement, but, whereas Symbolism had an affinity with music, Imagism sought analogy with sculpture. In 1914 Pound turned to Vorticism, and Amy Lowell largely took over leadership of the group. Among others who wrote Imagist poetry were John Gould Fletcher and Harriet Monroe; and Conrad Aiken, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, D.H. Lawrence, and T.S. Eliot were influenced by it in their own poetry.

The four Imagist anthologies (Des Imagistes, 1914; Some Imagists, 1915, 1916, 1917), and the magazines Poetry (from 1912) and The Egoist (from 1914), in the United States and England, respectively, published the work of a dozen Imagist poets.

From an Imagist manifesto

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. Use no word that does not contribute to the presentation. uses as few words as possible.
3. 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.
4. Absolute freedom in the choice of subject.
5. To present an image. 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 his art.
6. To produce a poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
7. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

The major objectives of the movement were to:

- Use the language of common speech but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact
- Avoid the cliché
- Create new rhythms as the expressions of a new mood
- Allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject

Present an image (that is, to be concrete, firm, definite in their pictures -- harsh in outline)

Strive always for concentration, which, they were convinced, was the very essence of poetry

Suggest rather than to offer complete statements

Central features of imagism

- Exactness
- Precision
- Compression
- Common Speech
- Free Verse

The imagists expressed their ideas through the new rhythmic effect of the 'free' poetry and concentrated upon the creation of sharp and precisely delineated images in a language of the common people. The imagists brought out a magazine 'The Egoist' and later on published three volumes of Imagist poetry between 1905-1917. Imagism could not cut much ice for it concentrated exclusively on a new technique, holding that the subject was relatively unimportant. The pursuit of the sequence of very concise images and the use of vers libre often led to obscurity and license, and the movement was strongly criticized and quickly died out. Yet Hulme's conception of the clearly visualized concrete image is one of the most distinctive underlying ideas of later poetry and its

effect is seen clearly in the poetry of T.S. Eliot.

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