

Imagist Poets

By D.H. Lawrence

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Imagism was an Anglo-American poetry movement around 1912-1917 that although short lived was influential on modern poetry. Its earliest most famous exponent was Ezra Pound and later Amy Lowell who both outlined the rules for the movement which remain central to current poetry practise and are still imparted to anyone attending poetry workshops. These rules included using only those words that were absolutely necessary, employing the exact word including common speech - not the decorative one, a total freedom of subject matter, making everything concrete - not abstract, creating new rhythms and most important of all was to concentrate everything the poet wished to communicate in a precise image. As Pound said, “It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.” Despite this radical departure from the Romantics and the Victorian poets that preceded them, Imagists were also classicists reviving the poetry of Sapho and other ancient Greek and Roman as well as Japanese and Chinese verse and 15th century French poetry which often compressed expression to its very essence. This interest in the ancients might seem conservative but the movement was hugely progressive not least for its inclusion of a number of women writers.

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