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American Studies English

**Imagist Poetry and Selected Poems by William Carlos Williams**

**Background Notes on Imagist Poetry**

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**Poem Selections by William Carlos Williams**

**Directions:** Read and annotate the selected poems by William Carlos Williams and respond to the corresponding discussion questions.

“The Red Wheelbarrow”

so much depends   
upon   
  
a red wheel   
barrow   
  
glazed with rain   
water   
  
beside the white   
chickens

1. What is the structural pattern of the poem?
2. What words or ideas are emphasized through the strategic line breaks in the poem?
3. Identify the colors named in the poem.
4. What feelings or ideas does the poem evoke?

“Spring and All”

By the road to the contagious hospital

under the surge of the blue

mottled clouds driven from the

northeast-a cold wind. Beyond, the

waste of broad, muddy fields

brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water

the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish

purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy

stuff of bushes and small trees

with dead, brown leaves under them

leafless vines-

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish

dazed spring approaches-

They enter the new world naked

cold, uncertain of all

save that they enter. All about them

the cold, familiar wind-

Now the grass, tomorrow

the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined-

It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of

entrance-Still, the profound change

has come upon them: rooted, they

grip down and begin to awaken

1. Identify the colors named in the poem.
2. What aspect of spring is emphasized by these colors?
3. What words and phrases does the speaker use to characterize the newly growing plants?
4. Identify an example of personification in the poem.
5. What feelings or ideas does the poem evoke?

“This is Just to Say”

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

1. What word choices does the speaker use to characterize the plum?
2. What feelings or ideas does the poem evoke?

**Reflect**

1. Do you think imagist poems lose anything because of their strict focus on images? Explain your response.
2. Why do you think Williams rarely uses punctuation in his poems?
3. Choose one poem and compose a sketch in the margin that reflects the image that the poem evokes for you. Be sure to use color.
4. Choose one item in the classroom and compose an imagist poem to capture the object.