Title: A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.11-12.1, RI.11-12.2, RI.11-12.4, RI.11-12.6, RI.11-12.10; W.11-12.2, W.11-12.3, W.11-12.4; SL.11-12.1, SL11-12.2; L.11-12.1, L.11-12.2, L.11-12.4, L.11-12.5

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Imagism is a movement in poetry, which aims at clarity of expression through precise visual images.

Synopsis *(Taken from About the Selection on page 656)*

Ezra Pound was one of the founders of Imagism who helped define its philosophy. In his essay warning Imagist poets against writing pitfalls, Pound establishes his essential idea: less is more.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Explain Ezra Pound’s definition of an image and what is meant by “that sense of sudden liberation”? | “An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. “ The image is a manifestation or presentation of both the mind and heart. When intellect and emotion converge there is “…that sense of sudden liberation” when all of the elements of the image are actualized and the thinker grows from having experienced the image. |
| Understanding that Imagist poetry is highly visual, why does Pound state, “It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works”? | Poets should expense energy into creating the most precise image they can so that those reading can experience the image as it was meant to be intellectually and emotionally, rather than only focusing on creating a large body of work. |
| After reading the footnotes, why does Pound cite Frank Stuart Flint? How does using Flint’s work help Pound explain his point? | Frank Stuart Flint is another Imagist poet who thought of three rules that imagist poets employ when creating poetry. Pound uses Flint to make his point about less is more by citing his rule, “Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.” Flint’s emphasis on the use of precise language corroborates Pound’s position. In the text on page 730 Pound states, “Don’t be descriptive: remember that they painter can describe a landscape much better than you can,…” |
| What is the difference between dogma and the results of “long contemplation”? | The results of “long contemplation” have been carefully thought out, whereas dogma is mindlessly followed. |
| An abstraction is a process by which higher concepts are derived from the usage and classification of literal ("real" or "concrete") concepts. Explain how the expression “dim lands of peace” mixes an abstraction with the concrete. | In the phrase “dim lands of peace” the term peace is the abstraction that is not clearly defined. The words “dim lands” do not generate a clear image of the term peace. By stating that the “natural object is always the adequate symbol,” Pound is stating that the actual term for the state of the land is better than referencing the ambiguous term of peace. |
| What is Pound telling beginner poets to do in the paragraph that begins, “Go in fear of abstractions”? Why is this rule of avoiding abstractions consistent with the goals of Imagist poetry? What evidence from the text supports your answer? | Pound is telling novice poets to stay away from generalizations and be precise. The writers of prose have the opportunity to fully elaborate their points and poets should not seek to take prose and force it into poetic form by chopping sentences into poetic lines. Imagist poets sought to evoke specific and vivid images for readers. Abstract ideas do not lend themselves to such specificity. |
| Explain the rhythm and rhyme rule. What does Pound say should govern the rhythm of a poem? | The same rules that apply to good music apply to the rhythm of Imagist poetry. Rhyme should not be too predictable but not too bizarre either. He states, “Let the beginning of each line catch the rise of the rhythm wave,” and “behave as a musician, a good musician” and goes on to state, “A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise if it isi to give pleasure:”. |
| Pound states, “Don’t mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possibly exceptions.” What is the author’s purpose behind this statement? | In keeping with the Imagist’s manifesto of less is more, Pound challenges poets to find the exact word. Although he acknowledges that there are instances when this rule wouldn’t apply, he admonishes other poets for “being too lazy” to be accurate.  \*Answers may vary according to students’ interpretation of the statement. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | voluminous  dogma  superfluous  whittled  prose | precision  tabulate  contemplation  shirk  parallels |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | abstraction  proscriptions | complex  concrete |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*Explain how Ezra Pound’s advice to novice poets in “A Few Don’t s by an Imagiste” would assist his readers in creating crisp, clear images that touch readers intellectually and emotionally. Compose an informative text that is at least one page in length. Include valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence from the text, including direct quotes and page numbers.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “An ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.”  “It is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously which gives the sense of sudden liberation: that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits:” | Here Pound lays out the beginning of his definition of Imagist poetry and how it gives the reader a sense freedom that then allows it to touch the reader both intellectually and emotionally. |
| “To begin with, consider the three rules of Mr. Flint, . . . not as dogma—never consider anything as dogma—but as the result of long contemplation, which, even if it is some one else’s contemplation, may be worth consideration…”  Mr. Flint’s three rules are cited in the footnote:   1. Direct treatment of the ‘thing,’ whether subjective or objective. 2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation. 3. As regarding rhythm to compose a sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. | Pound cites the three rules recorded by Mr. Flint as a guideline for Imagist writers, but that they are not to be followed as commandments without exception. Pound continues on to give examples and explanations of the three rules and his interpretation. |
| “Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something. Don’t use an expression as ‘dim lands of peace.’ It dulls the image.” | Pound explains that the language of an Imagist poem should be detailed, but succinct. |
| “Go in fear of abstractions. Don’t retell in mediocre verse what has been already been done in good prose.” | Pound is stating here that abstractions will leave the reader unclear of the author’s intent and purpose and should avoid them altogether. |
| “ When Shakespeare talk of the ‘Dawn in russet mantle clad’ he presents something which the painter does not present. There is in this line of his nothing that one can call description:”. | Pound is stating that Shakespeare is giving a description rather than just stating the thing, which is a rule with Imagist poetry. |
| “In short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music.”  “A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise if it is to give pleasure: it need not be bizarre or curious, but it must be well used if used at all…” | Pound is describing the rule of relating rhyme and rhythm to Imagist poetry and its connection to music. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

In his essay, *A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste*, Ezra Pound states his definition, “An ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time”. Pound cites the rules set by Mr. Flint “not as dogma—never consider anything as dogma—but as the result of long contemplation, which, even if it is some one else’s contemplation, may be worth consideration…” and adapts them to fit his viewpoint on Imagist poetry. In order for poets to afford their readers experience of intellectual and emotional complex, they must apply the three rules Pound highlights in his essay. The first being to not use “superfluous words” for such words can cloud the readers thinking and detract from their ability to formulate crisp pictures. Pound also cautions beginner poets to “Go in fear of abstractions” and be very deliberate with word choice. Abstractions, generalizations and other ambiguous terms will leave readers unclear of the poets’ desired outcome. Pound cites an example of this when he cites Shakespeare’s line “Dawn in russet mantle clad.” Pound explains that Shakespeare is presenting a description of a thing instead of just stating the thing. He argues that this does not support the reader’s image of the morning. The third rule Pound describes is to “behave as a musician” when crafting rhythm and rhyme. Pound believes rhythm and rhyme should not be predictable or bizarre but instead, “have in it some slight element of surprise”. Ezra Pound’s “*A Few Don’t s by an Imagiste*” guides Imagist poets to craft poems that create crisp, clear images that touch readers intellectually and emotionally.

Additional Tasks

* *Compare* A River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter *by Ezra Pound and Robert Frost’s* Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Determine and defend which selection produces image using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence as outlined in Pound’s essay.*

Answer: Responses will vary.

* *Utilizing the information from Ezra Pounds essay,* A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste*, write an imagist poem of your own. Provide an explanation of how your poem follows the rules and guidelines outlined in his essay.*

Answer: Responses and written tasks will vary based on student interpretation of the essay.

* *Select one of the following Imagist poems. Read the poems aloud with a partner and independently. Determine and analyze how well the poet follows Ezra Pound’s rules and guidelines for Imagist poetry.*
  + *The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter* by Ezra Pound
  + *The Red Wheelbarrow* by Williams Carlos Williams
  + *Heat* by H. D.

Answer: Responses will vary based on student interpretation of the poems.

Note to Teacher

* Encourage students to read sections out loud to themselves. If necessary, create a fluency activity, where they can practice with partners.
* Give students the opportunity to translate the last two paragraphs. Encourage them to ponder the advice in and of itself inside that sentence, particularly when Pound writes “To this clause there are possible exceptions.” Given the points he is making and examples he is using ask students to contemplate which clause he is referring to and what exceptions might be and why there might be exceptions.

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**“A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste”**

1. Explain Ezra Pound’s definition of an image and what is meant by “that sense of sudden liberation”?
2. Understanding that Imagist poetry is highly visual, why does Pound state, “It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works”?
3. After reading the footnotes, why does Pound cite Frank Stuart Flint? How does using Flint’s work help Pound explain his point?
4. What is the difference between dogma and the results of “long contemplation”?
5. An abstraction is a process by which higher concepts are derived from the usage and classification of literal ("real" or "concrete") concepts. Explain how the expression “dim lands of peace” mixes an abstraction with the concrete.
6. What is Pound telling beginner poets to do in the paragraph that begins, “Go in fear of abstractions”? Why is this rule of avoiding abstractions consistent with the goals of Imagist poetry? What evidence from the text supports your answer?
7. Explain the rhythm and rhyme rule. What does Pound say should govern the rhythm of a poem?
8. Pound states, “Don’t mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possibly exceptions.” What is the author’s purpose behind this statement?