
**كلية : الاداب**

**القسم او الفرع : اللغة الانكليزية**

**المرحلة: الاولى**

**أستاذ المادة : أ.م مجيد اسماعيل فياض**

**اسم المادة باللغة العربية : مدخل الى الادب**

**اسم المادة باللغة الإنكليزية : An Introduction to Literature**

**اسم المحاضرة التاسعة باللغة العربية : شرح قصيدة**

# Ozymandias by *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

**اسم المحاضرة التاسعة باللغة الإنكليزية : Ozymandias by *Percy Bysshe Shelley***

**محتوى المحاضرة :**

***Ozymandias'* is written by one of the greatest 19th-century British poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley. It was first published in 1818 in *The Examiner* of London under Shelley's pen name, "Gilrastes." In this sonnet, Shelley's speaker encounters a traveler from an antique land. The traveler describes the colossal wreckage of a great pharaoh's statue. He not only notices how the parts of the statue stand on the sand but also depicts the surroundings. Collectively, the desert and the worn-out statue hint at the central idea of the sonnet, the futility of human actions. It also taps on the themes of the impermanence of power, fate, and the inevitability of rulers' fall**

# Ozymandias by *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

***'Ozymandias'*** **is written by one of the greatest 19th-century British poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley. It was first published in 1818 in *The Examiner* of London under Shelley's pen name, "Gilrastes." In this sonnet, Shelley's speaker encounters a traveler from an antique land. The traveler describes the colossal wreckage of a great pharaoh's statue. He not only notices how the parts of the statue stand on the sand but also depicts the surroundings. Collectively, the desert and the worn-out statue hint at the central idea of the sonnet, the futility of human actions. It also taps on the themes of the impermanence of power, fate, and the inevitability of rulers' fall.**

**Ozymandias**

**by *Percy Bysshe Shelley***

**I met a traveller from an antique land, A**

**Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone B**

**Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand, A**

**Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, B**

**And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, A**

**Tell that its sculptor well those passions read C**

**Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, D**

**The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed; C**

**And on the pedestal, these words appear: E**

**My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; D**

**Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair! E**

**Nothing beside remains. Round the decay F**

**Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare E**

**The lone and level sands stretch far away. F**

# Summary

*'Ozymandias'* by P. B. Shelley describes a traveler's reaction to the half-buried, worn-out statue of the great pharaoh, Ramses II.

In this poem, the speaker describes meeting a traveler "from an antique land." The title, *'Ozymandias,'* notifies the reader that this land is most probably Egypt since Ozymandias was what the Greeks called Ramses II. He was a great and terrible pharaoh in ancient Egypt.

The traveler tells a story to the speaker. In the story, he describes visiting Egypt. There, he saw a large and intimidating statue of Ramses in the desert. He can tell that the sculptor must have known his subject well because it is obvious from the

statue's face that this man was a great leader, but one who could also be very vicious.

He describes his sneer as having a "cold command." Even though the leader was probably very great, it seems that the only thing that survives from his realm is this statue, which is half-buried and somewhat falling apart.

## Meaning

*'Ozymandias'* carries an extended metaphor throughout the entire poem. All around the traveler is desert — nothing is green or growing; the land is barren. The statue, however, still boasts of the accomplishments this civilization had in the past. The desert represents the fall of all empires — nothing powerful and rich can ever stay that strong forever. This metaphor is made even more commanding in the poem by Shelley's use of an actual ruler. He utilizes an allusion to a powerful ruler in ancient Egypt to show that even someone so all-powerful will eventually fall.

## Structure and Form

- **Form:** Sonnet
- **Rhyme Scheme:** ABABACDC EDEFEF
- **Meter:** Iambic Pentameter

*'Ozymandias'* is considered to be a Petrarchan sonnet, even though the rhyme scheme varies slightly from the traditional sonnet form. Structurally all sonnets contain fourteen lines and are written in iambic pentameter.

The rhyme scheme of 'Ozymandias' is ABABACDC EDEFEF. This rhyme scheme differs from the rhyme scheme of a traditional Petrarchan sonnet, whose octave (the first eight lines of the poem) usually has a rhyme scheme of

ABBAABBA. Its sestet (the final six lines of the sonnet) does not have an assigned rhyme scheme, but it usually rhymes in every other line or contains three different rhymes.

Shelley's defiance of this rhyme scheme helps to set apart *'Ozymandias'* from other Petrarchan sonnets, and it is perhaps why this poem is so memorable. The reason he did this may have been to represent the corruption of authority or lawmakers.

## Literary Devices

Shelley plays with a number of figurative devices in order to make the sonnet more appealing to readers. These devices include:

- **Enjambment:** Shelley uses this device throughout the text. For example, it occurs in lines 2-8. By enjambing the lines, the poet creates a surprising flow.
- **Alliteration:** It occurs in "**a**n **a**ntique," "**st**one/ **St**and," "**s**unk a **s**hattered," "**c**old **c**ommand," etc.
- **Metaphor:** The "sneer of cold command" contains a metaphor. Here, the ruler's contempt for his subjugates is compared to the ruthlessness of a military commander.
- **Irony:** Shelley uses this device in the following lines, "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!/ Nothing beside remains." The following lines also contain this device.
- **Synecdoche:** In the poem, the "hand" and "heart" collectively hint at the pharaoh, Ozymandias, as a whole. It is a use of synecdoche.
- **Allusion:** The line "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings" is an allusion to the actual inscription described in the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*.

# Detailed Analysis

## Line 1

I met a traveller from an antique land,

The text of *'Ozymandias'* reads more like a story than a poem, although the line rhymes do help to remind the reader that this is not prose. The speaker in the poem, perhaps Percy Bysshe Shelley, tells the story from his point of view, using the pronoun "I."

In the first line, he talks about meeting a traveler from an antique country. At first, this line is a tad ambiguous: Is the traveler from "an antique land," or did he just come back from visiting one? The reader also does not know where the speaker first met this sojourner. The title indicates which land the traveler has visited. Greeks called Ramses II a powerful Egyptian pharaoh, Ozymandias. So, it is easy for the reader to recognize the "antique land" is Egypt, one of the oldest civilizations in the world.

## Lines 2-4

Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

These lines are much clearer than the first, however, and it is clear to the reader what, exactly, is occurring in the sonnet. The rest of the poem is actually written in dialogue; the traveler recounts his experiences in Egypt to the poet's persona.

Lines two through fourteen are only one sentence in length, as well. These lines also contain some of the most vivid and beautiful imagery in all of poetry. Shelley was such a masterful writer that it does not take much effort on the reader's part to imagine the scene in this piece clearly.

In lines two through four, the traveler describes a statue he saw in Egypt. Through the eyes of the traveler, the reader sees two massive legs carved from stone lying in the desert sand. Nearby, the face of the statue is half-buried. The face is broken, but the traveler can still see the sculpture is wearing a frown and a sneer. From this, he is able to tell that this ruler probably had absolute power, and he most definitely ruled with an iron fist. It is also easy to interpret that this ruler probably had a lot of pride as the supreme leader of his civilization.

## Lines 5-8

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;

The traveler then turns his attention to the sculptor who made the statue. He comments that whomever the sculptor is, he knew his subject very well. Anyone could say that the artist had exceptionally captured the passions of the ruler. Though the pharaoh is long dead, he exists through the creation of a mere sculptor. So, who is more powerful in this case? Undoubtedly, it is the sculptor.

He also seems to be commenting in line seven that while there is an end to living beings, art is eternal—it survives. The gracious carves and the master's touch live past the remnants of history. In the next line, the traveler provides interesting

insight into the leader here. First, his hands show that the pharaoh mocked his people, yet his heart was not all bad: he fed and cared for his people, as well. The hand that held the rod fed not only the citizen but also mocked their pettiness. This line provides an interesting dichotomy often found in the most terrible of leaders. Besides, the "hand" stands for Ozymandias as a whole. It is a use of synecdoche.

## Lines 9-14

And on the pedestal, these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Lines nine through eleven give more details about the sculpture, and the latter ones include words that have been etched into the ruler's pedestal. The words carved on the pedestal, on which the leader sits, also tell of Ozymandias' personality. He is ordering those who see him to look upon all that he has created but do not appreciate what he has done. Instead, the speaker has to despair and be afraid of it. These words perfectly depict the leader's hubris.

The last three lines, however, take on a different tone. Now, the leader is gone, and so is his empire. Shelley implements irony into these lines to show that even though this broken statue remains, the leader's civilization does not. It has fallen, much like the statue, and has turned to dust.

These lines are really powerful. The traveler almost seems to be mocking the ruler. Besides, Shelley's diction here is important. He uses words such as "decay" and

"bare" to show just how powerless this once-mighty pharaoh has become. There is absolutely nothing left. The leader, much like his land, and much like the broken statue depicting him, has fallen. It is in these lines that the theme of the poem emerges: all leaders will eventually pass, and all great civilizations will eventually turn into dust.

## Themes

Shelley makes use of a number of themes in this sonnet. The most important theme is the impermanence of a ruler's glory and his legacy. It is an implicit hint at the idea of futility. No matter how hard a man tries to rivet his name, at some point, people will forget him. For example, Ozymandias tried to become greater than God. He declared himself the "King of Kings." If we look at history, every ambitious ruler declared them, more or less, by the same title. In their pursuit of greatness, they forgot about their very nature: every living thing must die. Besides, the sonnet also utilizes the themes of vainglory, the power of art, the decline of power, etc.

## Tone

The overall theme of *'Ozymandias'* is serious and awe-inspiring. For instance, the line, "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone," arouses both fear and pity in the readers' hearts. The size of the statue undoubtedly makes us wonder about the greatness and power of the ruler. Yet, they also take pity on the decaying depiction of the statue. It makes them think about the nature of human achievement. In the next lines, the tone becomes more serious and fearful. As the poem progresses to the end, it seems the tone softens a bit. The speaker somehow sympathizes with the faded glory of the great ruler, Ozymandias. He emotionally speaks about the

inevitability of death and decay.

## Historical Context

It is an understatement to say that Shelley was a clever man. While one can read this poem to be about an ancient leader of Egypt, the poem could also be read as a criticism for the world in which Shelley lived. Ever the political critic, Shelley perhaps warns the leaders of England that they, too, will fall someday. Their overarching ambition might lead them to their own downfall.

There is an interesting story behind the composition of the poem. In Shelley's literary cycle, the members would challenge each other to write poems about a common subject. In 1817, Horace Smith spent his Christmas at Shelley's house. They both a chose passage from Diodorus Siculus's book *Bibliotheca historica* that contained the inscription:

> King of Kings Ozymandias am I. If any want to know how great I am and where I lie, let him outdo me in my work.