

The title refers to Ramses II, an Egyptian Pharaoh who was known for being a tyrant

Ozymandias

The speaker begins by introducing someone they met – most of the poem is told through that person's story

'Antique' suggests age – the events happened a long time ago but the memory is still in existence

I met a traveller from an antique land,

Statue is 'vast' but also broken – shows his power hasn't lasted through time.

Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

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

'Desert' and 'sand' show the isolation of the statue – perhaps a civilisation has been destroyed

'sunk' and 'shattered' shows nature has overtaken any human power

Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

The language here shows the tyranny of the ruler. Even his statue looks evil!

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Juxtaposition between 'survive' and 'lifeless' could suggest the idea of a legend – his memory lives on.

The sculptor has captured Ozymandias' way of ruling. The fact they are his 'passions' could show how severe his rule was. The thing he loved was to be hated and feared.

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The sculptor's hand 'mocked' Ozymandias – shows his courage but he has done it on a huge statue

Reminder that Ozymandias' rule is no more. The statue is not a man – it is a replica of one and his power is gone just like the broken statue.

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

And on the pedestal, these words appear:

Ozymandias' opinion of himself - shows his power and authority

Ozymandias' terrible rule 'fed' the sculptor's ideas. Heart is interesting because it suggests compassion but Ozymandias had none. The statue and heart are made of stone

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Direct contrast the to the previous lines – shows power is fleeting

'My Works' shows he once ruled a thriving empire. 'Despair' suggests how his enemies should feel about him. This contrasts with the fact that there is nothing left behind

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

'Decay' suggests damage and rotting. Not just the statue but Ozymandias' whole rule is destroyed

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away."

Oxymoron – 'colossal Wreck' symbolic of the fragile nature of power and how the mighty can fall

Suggests time is ongoing – man and humanity is no match for nature and time

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

The one with the broken statue

The speaker meets an unknown 'traveller' who has journeyed from a land far away and tells the speaker his story. On his travels he came across a ruined and broken statue in the desert. The statue was once a huge monument to Ozymandias (Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses II) who was a tyrannical and harsh ruler. The traveller implies that Ozymandias has the statue made of himself and the sculptor made it deliberately look cold and sneering. The traveller tells the speaker that, as well as there being not much left of the statue, there is also now nothing left surrounding it. The statue now stands alone as the 'sands stretch far away.'

Key Quotes:

- The poem opens in the first person as the speaker tells of a "traveller" he has met. The use of the adjective "antique" suggests the land he is visiting is rich with history
- The "frown" and "wrinkled", the "sneer of cold command" suggests that the leader's proud, arrogant and stern face is still "stamped" on the broken stone, even though he and the sculptor are both long dead
- The king's proud boast, "Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!" has been ironically disproved
- "Nothing beside remains", suggests that Ozymandias' works have crumbled, his civilisation is gone and has been turned to dust by the power of history and time
- Final words - "The lone and level sands stretch far away," suggests how the broken statue is a monument to man's hubris. The poem is a statement about insignificance of human beings to the passage of time

Context:

- Percy Bysshe Shelley was a romantic poet and wrote a lot about the power of nature
- Shelley was considered to be a 'radical' and Ozymandias reflects this side of his character. He is writing about the dangers of thinking you are invincible

Structure:

- The poem is a sonnet, although it mixes the two main types of sonnet forms. This could show the broken nature of the statue and Ozymandias' rule
- The majority of the poem is through the voice of the 'traveller'. As it has no stanzas it is like a long story

Possible themes and links:

- Power - Hawk Roosting
- Nature and time - To Autumn, Mametz Wood

