

Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
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,
5 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.
And on the pedestal these words appear—
10 "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.'

Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Describe the **form** and **structure** of the poem. Does it have a specific **meter**, and if so, what is it? Does it have a **rhyme scheme**, and if so, what is it? How is the poem structured in terms of lines and stanzas? Does it belong to a specific category of poem? Do these structural aspects of the poem contribute to its effect in any way?
2. Read the poem aloud. What **sound devices** can you identify? How would you describe their effect?
3. What does it mean that the legs of stone are "trunkless" (line 2)?
4. What things did the sculptor of the statue "read" (line 6), and how do they "survive" (line 7)? (Note that line 6 does not follow typical English syntax.) What do you think the "hand" and "heart" are (line 8)? In what sense might they "mock" and "feed," and what **rhetorical device** is this an example of?
5. Who are the words on the pedestal addressing (lines 9-11), and what is their message? How might this audience "despair" in a different way than the words imply?
6. What contrast(s) does the speaker draw between the statue's original form and its current state? How is it significant that "nothing beside remains" (line 12) and that the sands around it are "boundless and bare" (line 13)? What **rhetorical device(s)** does this contrast exemplify?
7. What **themes** does the poem express, and what role does **tone** play in expressing these themes? Cite specific details to support your interpretation.
8. Why do you think Shelley chose to frame the description of the broken statue as the words of an anonymous "traveller"?