

ASM TUITION ACADEMY

OZYMANDIAS

Ozymandias

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,
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:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing besides remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Context:

- **Historical and Literary Context:**
"Ozymandias" was written in 1817 during the Romantic period. The poem references the figure of Ramses II, an Egyptian pharaoh known as Ozymandias in Greek. Shelley wrote it as a reflection on the transient nature of power and human achievements. It was inspired by a large statue of Ramses II that was being transported to the British Museum at the time, symbolizing the impermanence of human grandeur.
- **Themes:**
The poem explores themes such as the **ephemeral nature of power, human pride, and the inevitable decay of all things**. Despite Ozymandias's grand claims of being a mighty king, his statue lies in ruins, surrounded by an empty desert, symbolizing the futility of human arrogance against the passage of time.

Grammatical Techniques:

- **Reported Speech:** Shelley uses reported speech through the voice of the traveller: "I met a traveller from an antique land who said...". This creates a sense of detachment and makes the description of the statue more objective and credible.
- **Direct Quotation:** The poem includes a direct quotation on the pedestal, "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" The use of direct speech contrasts Ozymandias's pride with the reality of his ruined statue, highlighting irony.
- **Use of Passive Voice:** Phrases like "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert" use the passive voice to emphasize the ruined state of the statue rather than focusing on any active presence.

Poetic Devices:

1. **Irony:**
 - The central irony of the poem is that Ozymandias's grandiose claims about his power and legacy are belied by the ruined and insignificant state of his statue. The line, "Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" is especially ironic because there are no works left to admire—only decay.
2. **Imagery:**
 - Shelley uses vivid imagery to describe the broken statue: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone," "a shattered visage," and "sneer of cold command." These images convey the sense of destruction and decay that have overtaken Ozymandias's monument.
3. **Alliteration:**
 - The line "boundless and bare" uses alliteration to emphasize the emptiness of the desert surrounding the ruined statue.
4. **Metaphor:**
 - The statue itself serves as a metaphor for political power and human hubris. Its broken state symbolises the inevitable downfall of those who seek to immortalise themselves through worldly achievements.
5. **Personification:**
 - Shelley personifies the statue's "visage" by describing it as having a "frown, and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command," giving it human emotions and characteristics to convey the arrogance of Ozymandias.
6. **Enjambment:**
 - The use of enjambment, where a sentence or phrase flows over from one line to the next without a pause, helps maintain the flow of the narrative, e.g., "Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand, / Half sunk, a shattered visage lies..."
7. **Caesura:**
 - Shelley uses caesura (a pause in the middle of a line) effectively in lines like "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay," to create a dramatic pause, emphasizing the starkness and emptiness of the scene.
8. **Symbolism:**
 - The "shattered visage" and "trunkless legs" symbolize the fall of power and the fragmented nature of human legacies.
9. **Tone:**
 - The tone of the poem is both **reflective** and **mocking**. While the traveller reflects on the ruined state of Ozymandias's empire, the irony mocks the king's pride and ambition.

Structure:

- **Sonnet Form:**

The poem is a sonnet, consisting of 14 lines with a rhyme scheme that combines elements of both the Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnet forms (ABABACDCEDEFEF). The structured form contrasts with the chaotic and fragmented image of the broken statue.
- **Meter:**

The poem is primarily written in **iambic pentameter**, which provides a rhythmic consistency and helps convey the gravity of the subject matter.

This analysis highlights how Shelley uses various grammatical and poetic techniques to emphasize the themes of the poem and its critique on human arrogance.

COMPARISON WITH LONDON

. Contextual Comparison:

- **Ozymandias:**
 - Written during the Romantic era, “*Ozymandias*” critiques the impermanence of political power and human arrogance. It focuses on the fate of a single ruler (Ozymandias) and the collapse of his mighty empire, symbolized through the ruins of his statue in the desert.
- **London:**
 - Also written during the Romantic period, “*London*” is a social critique that explores the suffering and oppression faced by people in the city of London. Blake paints a bleak picture of urban life, highlighting the impact of industrialization, poverty, and institutional control on the lives of ordinary people.

2. Themes:

- **Power and Authority:**
 - “*Ozymandias*” addresses the theme of political power and its ultimate futility. The shattered remains of the statue show that even the mightiest of rulers cannot escape the ravages of time.
 - “*London*” explores the abuse of power by institutions such as the Church, the monarchy, and the government. The poem focuses on the oppression of the common people and critiques the control exerted by these institutions over individual lives.
- **Decay and Transience:**
 - In “*Ozymandias*”, the ruined statue is a symbol of the temporary nature of human achievements and the inevitable decline of all power.
 - In “*London*”, the decay is metaphorical, referring to the moral and social decay within society. The speaker observes the mental and emotional suffering of people as a sign of a decaying society.
- **Suffering and Despair:**
 - In “*Ozymandias*”, the despair is implied through irony—Ozymandias’s boastful inscription contrasts with the barren surroundings, highlighting the insignificance of human pride.
 - In “*London*”, despair is direct and pervasive. Blake’s imagery and language choices, such as “mind-forged manacles,” convey a sense of deep anguish and mental suffering.

3. Poetic Devices:

- **Imagery:**
 - “*Ozymandias*” uses vivid visual imagery to describe the statue’s remains, e.g., “Two vast and trunkless legs of stone” and “a shattered visage.” This imagery emphasizes the physical decay of the statue and the surrounding desolation.

- “*London*” uses auditory and visual imagery, e.g., “cry of every man,” “the chimney-sweepers cry,” and “blackening church.” Blake’s imagery evokes the sounds of suffering and the sights of social and moral corruption.
- **Irony:**
 - “*Ozymandias*” employs irony through the inscription on the pedestal: “Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!” The irony lies in the fact that there are no great works left to admire—only ruins remain.
 - In “*London*”, irony is evident in phrases like “Marriage hearse,” which juxtaposes the joy of marriage with the finality of death, highlighting the destructive nature of social conventions.
- **Symbolism:**
 - In “*Ozymandias*”, the statue is a symbol of human ambition and the impermanence of power.
 - In “*London*”, symbols such as “the Chimney-sweeper’s cry” and “the Soldier’s sigh” represent the exploitation and suffering of the vulnerable and oppressed members of society.

4. Tone and Mood:

- **Ozymandias:**
 - The tone is reflective and ironic. The poem meditates on the fate of those who seek power and control. The mood is sombre, as the reader contemplates the ruins of a once-great empire.
- **London:**
 - The tone is critical and accusatory. Blake condemns the institutions that perpetuate suffering and oppression. The mood is bleak and despairing, as the speaker witnesses the misery of the people.

5. Structure:

- **Ozymandias:**
 - The poem is a sonnet, using a mixture of the Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnet forms. The tight structure mirrors the poet’s critique of human efforts to impose order and control, which ultimately fail.
- **London:**
 - The poem has four quatrains with a regular ABAB rhyme scheme, reflecting the strict and oppressive control imposed by society on its people. The repetitive structure mimics the inescapable cycle of suffering.

6. Use of Language:

- **Diction:**
 - “*Ozymandias*” uses elevated and formal diction. Words like “sneer of cold command” and “colossal Wreck” reflect the grandiosity of Ozymandias’s power and the subsequent downfall.
 - “*London*” uses more direct and simple language, such as “cry of every man” and “mind-forged manacles,” to make the suffering of people more immediate and real.

7. Overall Message:

- **Ozymandias:**
 - The poem conveys the idea that no matter how powerful a ruler is, time erases all human achievements, and arrogance is futile.
- **London:**
 - The poem suggests that society itself is responsible for the oppression and suffering of its people, and these conditions are not easily changed, symbolizing a kind of eternal suffering.

Conclusion:

Both poems explore the theme of power, but while “*Ozymandias*” focuses on the inevitable decay of political power over time, “*London*” critiques the ongoing social and institutional power that causes suffering and despair. Shelley's poem uses irony and imagery to depict the downfall of a single ruler, whereas Blake's poem uses direct language and repetition to highlight the systematic oppression of an entire society.

it is compared with London, the last Dutchess and prelude.