

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Business



“ Ozymandias” by Percy Bysshe Shelley was written in 1817 (Ozymandias) in response to a bet made with two other English men.

The men bet they could come up with the best poem in fifteen minutes (Biterman). Shelley himself was one of the most intense writers of the Romantic period. He was a generous, imaginative man with an open mind. Shelley came from a wealthy family and spent his youth in expensive private schools. He spent six months at Oxford before being expelled for writing a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism* in 1810. His first wife, Harriet Westbrook, drowned herself when she learned that Shelly no longer loved her.

The courts denied him custody of their children around the time “ Ozymandias” was written. He was grief stricken (Adventures in English Literature). The name is an alternate version for the Egyptian king Rameses II. The poem itself is an oddity for Shelley because it’s not as dreamy and romantic as his usual work. It is a political sonnet with 14 lines and iambic pentameter (Biterman). The rhyme scheme is unusual and does not fit the era in which in was writing.

It links the first eight lines with the last six lines in the form of ABABACDCEDEFEF (Ozymandias). The name of the poem has four syllables that fit with the meter of the rest of the poem. Shelley is seemingly mocking Rameses II by the central theme of the undeniable fall of rulers and their kingdoms, no matter how magnificent they are. His kingdom was once bustling but it isn’t anymore. In the poem, a native egyptian tells the narrator of a statue to Rameses that is falling apart.

The distance of the story from the ruler undermines Rameses initial power. The statue is unhappy and stamped with emotions and words that allude to the destruction of the Egyptian empire, “ My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: look on my works, ye Might, and despair!” but the statue is the alone in the flattened desert. The poem reads as desolate and tired, which is exactly the point Shelley was trying to portray with the barren desert. “ Ozymandias” doesn’t have much of anything to do with Shelley’s life experiences. However, one might conclude he was inspired by how defeated he felt when losing the custody battle for his children.

He almost relates to the king in the poem as being magnificent at one time, but finds himself unhappy and withering away. Biterman, Aaron. “ Analysis of Ozymandias.” Freedom Poetry. N. p.

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p., 2011. Web. 9 May 2011. . adventures in english literature