

Ozymandias is a  
poem written by  
percy bysshe shelley  
essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Ozymandias is a poem written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The poem begins with a chance encounter and explores a theme of Universal truth.

Ozymandias was a powerful leader who built a lot of buildings in ancient Egypt and because of this he earned the nickname of "the builder". He was extremely arrogant and looked down on everyone else. His arrogance and unbelievable self-belief is the main topic in this poem.

Ozymandias had a statue of himself built. On the pedestal the words "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: look on my works ye mighty and despair!" were engraved. This phrase was written in present tense and suggests that this man thought his work and achievements would last forever. This is a very arrogant thing to say and he also tells people to "look down" on his work and "despair". Now all that is left of his efforts is a broken statue. All his buildings have been destroyed or just rotted away to nothing and this makes his taunt ironic. Anyone who reads that now can just laugh because in the end he was no better than anyone he mocked.

The rhyme scheme of this poem is split in three voices. The poet is simply the narrator and says that he heard the story of Ozymandias from the second voice which is the traveller. To have travelled to a foreign land in 1817 he would have had to have been a very wealthy and educated man. This adds authenticity to the story because an educated man is likely to be more reliable than an ordinary person. The third voice is Ozymandias himself. His words show his arrogance when he says "My name is" this is a claim of immortality.

Word-choice is important in this poem because each word has meaning behind it. Throughout the poem there are words relating to the power Ozymandias thought he would have forever.

“ Vast”, “ Collosal”, “ Boundless” These words represent how his kingdom was before he died and give us the impression he thought his kingdom was endless as each of these words are never-ending and infinite. The words “ desert” and “ trunkless” describe how his kingdom is now and are in stark contrast to how he thought his kingdom would remain. Now what very little is left is a wreck and the writer uses lots of words to convey this: “ shattered”, “ half sunk”, “ lifeless”, “ decay”, “ bare”, “ stamped” All of these tell the story of his kingdoms destruction. The writer also uses word-choice to convey Ozymandias’s arrogance. On the pedestal it reads “ king of kings” this suggests that he thought he was not only better than his subject but that he was infact better than any other ruler. Ozymandias seemed to think that he was above any mortal man and had the idea that he would become a god when he died.

The words “ the hand that mocked” can represent several meanings and can be looked at in different ways. One meaning may be that the hand in question belongs to Ozymandias and it is refering to the way he “ mocked” his subjects. I think it represents the hand of the sculptor when he was creating the statue because he would have known that even though Ozymandias thought he was above everyone else he clearly was not when he died.

Irony is a big theme in this poem because Ozymandias thought that he was above everyone and in the end he was nothing. The most ironic thing is the words on the pedestal: "look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!" This is ironic because he thought his work would be forever but in actual fact it has completely vanished and the work of someone that Ozymandias would have looked upon as a lowly sculptor has vastly outlived anything that Ozymandias ever did.

The universal truth in this poem is that nothing lasts forever and no matter how powerful and arrogant someone is when they are alive they will end up the same as everyone else when they are dead.