

# Ozymandias analysis



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'Ozymandias' is a petrarchan sonnet, evident from the 10 syllable lines and the shift in argument past line eight. It is full of imagery and mystery. Set in context, similar to the framing of 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Coleridge.

Shelley tells a story or at least that is how I perceive the sonnet. 'I met a traveller from an antique land Who said: 'Immediately the framing of the sonnet allows the story to become more tangible and believable. The context of somebody else's words emphasises Shelley's use of a Greek translation ('Ozymandias' – meaning Rameses II), maybe a connection to the passing on of Greek myths and legends. As the tale is introduced 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert..

.' Shelley uses a caesura or break in the sonnet to distinguish the story from what he wants us to believe is the reality of the 'traveler's' story. The setting has changed. Rameses II ruled Egypt in the 13th century, the way Shelley describes the statue's shattered reputation 'a shattered visage lies' but how at the same time reveals the legacy, 'Which yet survive..

.' illustrates the impact that 'Ozymandias' had on the country. We know from historical evidence that he was a forceful leader, Shelley describes a perspective of him when referring to the statue's appearance 'A wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command'. When I read this line I think of someone 'cold' and demanding, dictating.

The 'sculptor' is in fact the public or people who he reigned over. The word 'passion' really emphasises the strength of hatred people feel towards 'Ozymandias'. There are three words throughout the poem that are all similar, 'trunkless..

. lifeless...boundless’.

They all describe an almost half life. A statue is not renowned for having no trunk and it is not looked upon as a ‘ lifeless thing’ but of one remembered for something outstanding in life. The words are all found following or are followed by examples of punctuation allowing the reader to dwell upon the end of the reign of ‘ Ozymandias’. ‘ stamped upon these lifeless things,’ wreck, boundless and bare.

..’. The reign will end but will the legend? he is only ‘ Half sunk’.

Enjambment is only used twice by Shelley, for example when describing people’s ‘ passions’ of hatred for Ozymandias ‘ Which yet survive,’ (he does through his statue) and later after the significant eighth line change (from his reign to his ironic ‘ decay’) when Shelley visualises for the reader ‘the decay of that colossal work’ maybe to contradict the continuous and unfortunate survival of history to the future and never changing decay of his reign. He will never come back. I refer to the decay as ironic because Ozymandias was someone so immense that with ‘ nothing beside’ remaining the two, ‘ nothing’ and ‘ besides’ become ironically juxtaposed. The Petrarchan style of sonnet had allowed this change, maybe this is why Shelley chose to write to this particular structure. As well as it being structured a sonnet is to the point and blunt.

Emphasis of words for emotional impact is greater than flowing sentences found in free verse. They are short and require thought and application of strict techniques like assonance or consonance, Shelley has repeated the ‘ s’ sound with ‘ sand...shattered...survive...stamped’, when you look closely the <https://assignbuster.com/ozymandias-analysis/>

words contradict or juxtapose the others meaning, rather like the reign to the decay of Ozymandias.