OZYMANDIAS

Percy Bysshe Shelley



WHAT HAPPENS? A ruined statue exposes the gap between a ruler's ambition and what survives.

BIG IDEA **Power leaves claims behind; surviving art makes those claims vulnerable to judgement.**

FOUR EVIDENCE FRAGMENTS · ZOOM IN, THEN EXPLAIN

"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone"

Contrasting adjectives

The monument's vast scale suggests power, but its missing body exposes that power as broken.

"sneer of cold command"

Alliteration

Hard consonants sharpen the impression of severity.

"Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Imperative and irony

The ruler commands admiration; the surrounding ruin makes the command an ironic warning about failure.

"Nothing beside remains."

Abrupt sentence

A short declaration punctures the ruler's expansive boast.

FORM

A 14-line sonnet in one stanza; mainly iambic pentameter with an interwoven rhyme scheme.

CONTEXT

Shelley published the poem in 1818. The ruined monument recalls Ramesses II; its political warning reaches beyond one ruler.

COMPARE IT WITH…

My Last Duchess: controlling men and the limits of power. The Prelude: human confidence challenged.

VOICE, TONE & FEELINGS · FOLLOW THE SHIFTS

Opening encounter

DETACHED

The opening speaker reports a traveller, placing the ruler at several removes from the reader.

Statue and inscription

CRITICAL, THEN COMMANDING

Fragments reveal cruelty before the inscription briefly restores the ruler's own voice.

Final landscape

BLEAK AND IRONIC

The account answers the boast with emptiness, then expands beyond the monument.

FULL POEM: use your anthology. Evidence fragments are prompts for close reading.

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