

جامعة تكريت
كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية
قسم اللغة الانكليزية



المرحلة: الثانية

Subject Name: Intoduction to liteature

Lecture: *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Full name: Dr. Dheyaa R. A

2025-2026

Sixth lecture

"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Introduction

Good morning, dear students. Today, we will discuss one of the most famous poems in English literature: "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. This poem is a powerful reflection on pride, power, and the passage of time. Through vivid imagery and clever language, Shelley tells the story of a once-great king whose legacy has been reduced to ruins. Let us explore the meaning, themes, and literary devices of this timeless poem.

1 .Background on Percy Bysshe Shelley

Before we analyze the poem, let's learn about the poet:

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was one of the greatest poets of the Romantic era.

Romantic poets were interested in nature, emotions, and the power of imagination.

Shelley often wrote about political and social issues, criticizing tyranny and celebrating freedom.

He wrote "Ozymandias" in 1817, inspired by a statue of the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II (Ozymandias).

2 .Overview of the Poem

"Ozymandias" is a sonnet, a 14-line poem. It describes a ruined statue in the desert, symbolizing the fall of a once-mighty king. The poem begins with a traveler describing the statue and ends with a reflection on the power of time and nature to destroy even the greatest achievements.

Here is the poem:

<I met a traveler 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 beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

3 .Themes in the Poem

1 .The Transience of Power: The poem shows that even the greatest rulers and empires will eventually fade away.

2 .Pride and Arrogance: Ozymandias's inscription shows his pride, but his ruined statue reveals the emptiness of his claims.

3 .Nature vs. Human Achievement: The desert, vast and eternal, outlasts the statue and its creator.

4 .Art and Legacy: The sculptor's work captures Ozymandias's arrogance, but the statue itself is now broken and meaningless.

4 .Structure and Form

"Ozymandias" is a Petrarchan sonnet, which traditionally follows a 14-line structure. However, Shelley modifies the form slightly:

The rhyme scheme is ABABACDCEDEFEF.

This irregularity reflects the fragmented state of the statue and its story.

The poem uses iambic pentameter, a rhythmic pattern of ten syllables per line.

5 .Literary Devices in the Poem

Shelley uses several literary devices to make the poem vivid and meaningful:

1 .Imagery

The poem is full of visual images, such as “vast and trunkless legs of stone” and “shattered visage.” These descriptions help readers picture the ruined statue and its surroundings

2 .Irony

The inscription says, “Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!” However, there is nothing left to see except ruins and sand. This contrast highlights the arrogance of Ozymandias.

3 .Symbolism

The statue symbolizes human pride and ambition. Its ruins represent the inevitable decline of power and glory.

The desert symbolizes time and nature, which erase human achievements.

4 .Alliteration

Shelley uses repeated consonant sounds, such as “boundless and bare” and “lone and level,” to emphasize the emptiness of the scene.

5 .Metaphor

The statue serves as a metaphor for the fleeting nature of power and fame.

6 .Analysis of Key Lines

“I met a traveler from an antique land”

The poem begins with a story within a story. The traveler’s account adds mystery and distance, making the events seem ancient and universal.

“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert”

The image of the broken statue shows the passage of time and the fragility of human creations.

“My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair”!

This inscription reflects Ozymandias’s pride and belief in his eternal power. However, it is ironic because his “works” have vanished.

“The lone and level sands stretch far away”.

The endless desert emphasizes the insignificance of Ozymandias and his empire in the face of time and nature---.

7 .Why is "Ozymandias" Important?

Timeless Message: The poem reminds us that nothing lasts forever—not even the mightiest empires.

Human Reflection: It challenges us to think about our own achievements and legacies.

Masterful Language: Shelley’s use of imagery and irony makes the poem memorable and thought-provoking.

8 .Discussion Questions

1 .What do you think Ozymandias wanted people to feel when they read his inscription?

2 .How does the poem show the power of time and nature?

3 .Why do you think Shelley used a traveler to tell the story?

9 .Activity

Write a short poem about something that changes over time, like a city, a tree, or a memory. Use imagery and emotion to describe how it changes.

Example:

<Once tall and green, the mighty tree,
Now stands alone in memory.
Its branches bare, its leaves all gone,
A whisper of what once lived on.

Conclusion

"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley is a brilliant poem that uses the image of a ruined statue to explore themes of power, pride, and the passage of time. It reminds us that no matter how great we think we are, time and nature will outlast us all. Through vivid imagery and clever language, Shelley delivers a powerful and timeless message.

Thank you for listening, and I hope you enjoyed this journey into the world of poetry. See you in the next