

Percy Bysshe Shelley  
Ozymandias  
More challenging questions!

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Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in Sussex in August 1792. He was from an aristocratic family, his father being a squire and a member of Parliament. The young Shelley was educated at Eton College and then proceeded to Oxford University but was soon expelled for publishing an article promoting atheism.

Within a couple of years, the poet eloped with Harriet Westbrook, a working-class teenager. The marriage, however, was a failure. He then hitched up with Mary Godwin, daughter of a philosopher and anarchist. She was of a more literary disposition. Harriet in the meantime drowned herself which cleared the way for the poet to marry his new love. As Mary Shelley, she herself would become famous for her novel *Frankenstein*.

Shelley wrote "Ozymandias" in 1817 when interest in Egyptology was growing. The poet had just visited the British Museum where he had seen the recently acquired Rosetta Stone, as well as a statue of Pharaoh Rameses II. The boast "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings" comes from Diodorus Siculus's description of the several monuments to Rameses II. The quote had then appeared in several travel books of the time.

Shelley was drowned in 1822 when his small schooner struck a rock and sank. He was only thirty years of age. His body washed ashore at Viareggio where it was burned on the beach. His ashes were later buried in Rome. He is remembered as one of the most successful of the Romantic poets.

1. "And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'"
  - Comment on the IRONY of the pharaoh's words, "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" (4)
  - To whom is Ozymandias referring he speaks of "ye Mighty"? Indeed, why should they "despair"? (4)
  - Why should Ozymandias refer to himself as "King of Kings"? (2)
  
2. "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."
  - What does the poet mean when he says that "Nothing beside remains"? (4)
  - Comment on these words as a conclusion to the sonnet. (4)
  
3. GENERAL QUESTIONS:
  - What is the theme of the Octave? (4)
  - What is the theme of the Sestet? (4)
  - What type of sonnet is this? Remember to give reasons for your answer. (6)

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