

Poem No.

8

# Ozymandias

(Percy Bysshe Shelley)

I met a traveller 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.

## About the Poet

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822) was an English Romantic poet. He wrote some of his finest lyrics, including the "Ode to the West Wind", "To a Skylark" and "The Cloud" in the last years of his life. He died in a storm at sea after visiting Lord Byron, another great poet. Shelley's works show his remarkable lyrical gift, his originality and his hatred for oppression. He was a great revolutionary poet of his time.

## Theme

It is a very ironic poem which describes the pride of a man and the wretched reality of life. Man becomes proud by success. He thinks that he has toppled the world. He forgets that life is merciless. Time brings all luxuries of life to an end, and death is a great leveller. Shelley considers all feelings of superiority in man as only an illusion and self-deception.

## Paraphrase

The poet met a traveller from an ancient country. He told the poet that he saw two huge, bodiless legs made of stone. Those legs were standing in a desert. Near these legs there was lying the broken body of a man half sunk in the sand. His features gave the impression that he was very proud and contemptuous of others. The artist has beautifully recreated these impressions on the face of stone. One could see that he was proud and heartless. At the bottom of the statue were inscribed these words "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" In the desert there remains nothing except this broken statue.

## Glossary

antique	old and valuable, belonging to the past. very old
trunkless	without the main part of the human body apart from the head arms and legs
visage	a person's face
frown	to show anger, deep thought
wrinkled	having or showing wrinkles
sculptor	a person who makes sculptures
mock	to laugh at, make fun of
pedestal	the base of a statue
colossal	very large, huge; immense
wreck	something damaged, broken

## EXERCISES

### 1. Choose the correct answer.

- i. The traveller saw a \_\_\_\_\_ in the desert.
  - a) snake
  - b) statue
  - c) camel
  - d) water
- ii. The poet met a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) traveller
  - b) sailor
  - c) beggar
  - d) captain



iii. His name was written on the \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) face                      b) body  
c) pedestal                d) wood

iv. The wreck of the statue was \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) colossal                b) small  
c) big                        d) little

**2. Mark the statements true / false.**

- i. The traveller belonged to an ancient country.                      T/F  
ii. The traveller saw nothing in the desert.                              T/F  
iii. Nothing was written on the pedestal of the statue.                T/F  
iv. Ozymandias was a prince.    T/F

**3. Add two more rhyming words to each word given below.**

- i. land                      \_\_\_\_\_  
ii. stone                    \_\_\_\_\_  
iii. decay                   \_\_\_\_\_  
iv. fed                        \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Write down the missing word in each verse.**

- i. I met a traveller from an antique \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) sand                      b) band  
c) land                        d) hand
- ii. Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stood in the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) jungle                      b) desert  
c) hill                         d) ground
- iii. My name is Ozymandias, king of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) state                        b) America  
c) kings                        d) Rome
- iv. Of that colossal wreck, boundless and \_\_\_\_\_.  
a) bare                        b) rare  
c) uncovered                d) head less

**5. Give a summary of the poem.**

**6. What kinds of feelings does the poem create in the reader's mind?**

**7. What did the traveller see in the desert?**