

Evaluate the Poem Ozymandias as a Sonnet.

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In "Ozymandias" (1818), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) creates a sonnet that delivers a powerful message about the fleeting nature of power and fame. The poem is a Petrarchan sonnet. This means it follows a specific structure with 14 lines. This structure helps Shelley build up his theme and then introduce a twist or surprise, known as the volta.

Form: First, let's look at the form. A traditional sonnet has 14 lines, and "Ozymandias" has exactly 14 lines. These lines are written in iambic pentameter. This means each line has ten syllables, with the stress pattern alternating between unstressed and stressed syllables. This gives the poem a rhythm, which makes it sound musical.

Rhyme Scheme: The poem follows the typical sonnet rhyme scheme of ABAB, ACDC, EF EG EG. This pattern connects the lines beautifully. This gives the poem a smooth, flowing rhythm. The final rhymed couplet emphasizes the ironic twist — the mighty king's works are reduced to nothing but ruins.

The Volta (Shift in Tone): In sonnets, there is often a turn, or volta, that changes the tone or message. In this poem, the volta comes when the narrator reveals the inscription on the pedestal, **"Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"** The message is ironic because, instead of showing power, it shows how time has destroyed everything Ozymandias once ruled.

However, "Ozymandias" is a powerful sonnet that uses its structure, rhyme, and volta to highlight the lesson that all things, no matter how mighty, will eventually fade away.