



# Reading the Poem

## Ozymandias

### Presenting the Poem

Read the poem aloud, several times, to yourself before presenting it to the class.

Examine the sentence structure: after the full stop in the third line there is a very long sentence. Work out where to pause in reading this. Decide how you will read the two line inscription. Finally, slow your delivery of the last three lines to add to the sense of desolation.

### Teacher Strategy A - Background to the Poem



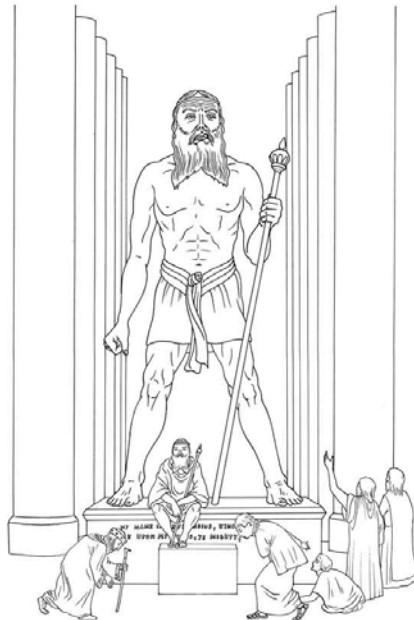
**Preparation:** Find books and posters that show ancient Egyptian temples, tombs and statues.

- i. Have class browse through the illustrated material of Egyptian buildings and sculptures.
- ii. Explain that the poem you are about to introduce was first published in 1818 at a time when the British were fascinated by ancient Egypt. The hieroglyphics, an unsolved puzzle for more than a thousand years, were being translated for the first time and in London exotic carvings and artifacts were arriving from Egypt for display in the British Museum.

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#### Teacher Strategy A - Background to the Poem



- iii. The famous poet Shelley had read about a ruined statue depicting **Rameses II**, a 13<sup>th</sup> century BC Pharaoh. This ruler called himself the King of Kings and an inscription on his massive statue issued a challenge to any who felt they could surpass his greatness.
- iv. Read the poem to the class and then display poem as you re-read it.
- v. Have class discuss the imagery that Shelley has created. Do this by asking them to select the parts that are so well described that we can 'see' them in our mind.



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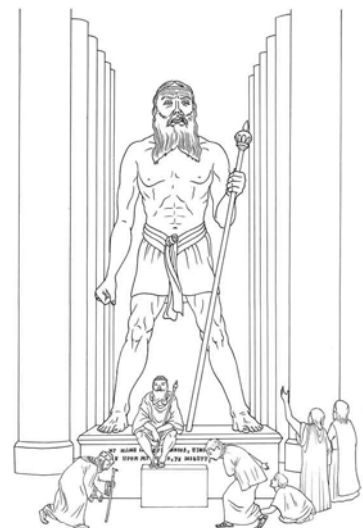
### Teacher Strategy B - Looking Closer at What the Poet Says

- i. Have the heading **Ozymandias** on chalk board or overhead.
- ii. Ask class to recall what the poet told us about Ozymandias. List any suggestions.
- iii. Draw attention to the words: *visage*, *pedestal*, *colossal* and explain their meaning if necessary.
- iv. Underline *antique* and have class suggest why the poet has used this word rather than *foreign* or some other word suggesting an exotic place. How does it add to the sense of time past?
- v. Underline the word *mocked*. Ask class to tell what it normally means and how this fits in the context of the poem. Explain that in Shelly's time it had two meanings.
  - 'to create an imitation' just as we use it today in such ways as describing "mock cream".
  - to ridicule.

The line ***The hand that mocked them*** has a double meaning saying that the sculptor has created a likeness of the pharaoh but in showing his 'sneer of cold command' has ridiculed (mocked) him.

- vi. Read the poem aloud and have class discuss just what they think the poet is telling us.

- vii. Have class complete **BLM Ozymandias 1.**



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#### Teacher Strategy C



- i. Re-read poem. Leave it displayed for the class to read.
- ii. Explain that history records that Ozymandias or Rameses was a tyrant. Have class look up the meaning of **tyrant** and record it.
- iii. Put the following to the class for discussion:

Tyrants were able to gain power in ancient times because people in the past did not understand democracy. Such things cannot happen in modern times.

- iv. Following discussion have class complete **BLM Ozymandias 2**