Ozymandias: Imagery, Irony, and Theme — Launch-Explore-Discuss Lesson

Teacher	Educator
School	ULAT Partner
Date	October 25, 2026
Duration	47 minutes
Grade Level	English Language Arts, Grade 10
Instructional Model	Launch-Explore-Discuss
SEL Focus	None

Section 1: 10-Component Plan

1. Title

Ozymandias: Imagery, Irony, and Theme — Launch-Explore-Discuss Lesson

2. Standards

- **RL.9-10.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details.
- **RL.9-10.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.
- **L.9-10.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

3. SEL Inquiry Aim

Students will practice respectful disagreement by testing multiple interpretations of a poem against textual evidence, learning that strong readers can reach different defensible readings.

4. Objectives

- Students will annotate Shelley's Ozymandias to identify at least three images and explain the irony of the inscription on the pedestal.

- Students will write a theme claim about the poem and support it with at least two exact quotations and reasoning that connects evidence to claim.
- Students will explain in an exit ticket how one specific image contributes to a theme, using a quotation as support.

5. Vocabulary Bridge

English Term	Definition (English)
imagery	Descriptive language that appeals to the senses and creates pictures in the reader's mind.
irony	A contrast between what is stated or expected and what is actually true or happens.
theme	A central message or insight about life that a literary work conveys, supported by details across the text.
sonnet	A fourteen-line poem, here written in iambic pentameter with a particular rhyme pattern.
pedestal	The base or support on which a statue stands.
sneer	A facial expression or tone of mocking contempt.
decay	The process of rotting or breaking down over time; in the poem, the ruin of the statue.
claim	A statement of interpretation that a writer must support with evidence and reasoning.

6. Materials

- Copies of the full 14-line poem Ozymandias (1818) by Percy Bysshe Shelley, with line numbers and source URL printed at the top
- Three differentiated analysis packets with neutral titles: Packet A (Guided Analysis), Packet B (Standard Analysis), Packet C (Extended Analysis)
- Claim/Evidence/Reasoning organizer (blank template included in each packet)
- Highlighters and annotation pens
- Board or projector for modeling annotation and the Do Now
- Exit ticket slips or digital form

7. Lesson Flow

0-3 min

Teacher: Display the Do Now: 'Look at the title Ozymandias. What kind of person do you predict this poem is about? Write one sentence predicting the subject and one word you expect to see.' Circulate and note predictions. Do not reveal the poem yet.

Students: Write a one-sentence prediction about the subject of the poem and list one expected word. Share with a partner if time allows.

Key Questions:

- What does the title make you predict about the subject of this poem?
- Which word do you expect the poet to use, and why?

3-10 min

Teacher: Distribute the poem with line numbers and source URL. Read the poem aloud once while students follow along. Provide a brief accurate attribution: Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ozymandias, published 1818, public domain, source URL https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias. Model annotation of lines 1-2: circle 'antique land,' underline 'frown,' and note the image of a shattered face. Introduce the vocabulary terms imagery, irony, theme, and pedestal using the vocabulary bridge.

Students: Follow along during the read-aloud. Copy the modeled annotation for lines 1-2 and add the vocabulary definitions to the packet glossary.

Key Questions:

- Which words in lines 1-2 create a picture in your mind?
- What is the traveler describing, and how do we know it is a ruin?

10-22 min

Teacher: Launch the Explore phase. Assign packets by readiness: Packet A (Guided Analysis) for students needing more scaffolding, Packet B (Standard Analysis) for on-level students, Packet C (Extended Analysis) for advanced students. All three packets contain the same poem, the same vocabulary, annotation directions, sentence stems, writing workspace, and a claim/evidence/reasoning organizer. Explain that all packets ask students to make a theme claim supported by textual evidence, but the amount of scaffolding differs. Circulate and prompt students to quote exact lines.

Students: Annotate the poem according to the packet directions: mark images, circle the words of the inscription, and note the contrast between the inscription and the surrounding ruin. Complete the claim/evidence/reasoning organizer with a theme claim and at least two exact quotations.

Key Questions:

- Which image in the poem is most striking to you, and what does it make you see?
- What does the inscription on the pedestal claim, and how does the rest of the poem respond to that claim?
- What theme about power or time does your evidence support?

22-33 min

Teacher: Facilitate the Discuss phase. Use a think-pair-share: students share their theme claims and evidence with a partner, then a few volunteers share with the class. Chart two or three different defensible theme claims and the evidence offered for each. Explicitly name that more than one valid reading can be supported by the text, and ask students to test each claim against exact lines. Model respectful disagreement using a sentence stem such as 'I read that line differently because...'

Students: Share theme claims and evidence with a partner, then with the class. Test classmates' claims against exact lines and revise their own organizer if a stronger claim or piece of evidence emerges.

Key Questions:

- Which line best supports your theme claim, and why?
- Can you find a line that complicates or supports a different reading?
- How does the irony of the inscription shape the theme?

33-43 min

Teacher: Guide students to finalize their claim/evidence/reasoning organizer. Provide the worked teacher key as a model of one valid reading, clearly labeled as one interpretation among several. Remind students that the key is not the only correct answer and that any claim supported by exact lines is defensible. Check that each organizer includes a claim, at least two quotations with line numbers, and reasoning that connects evidence to claim.

Students: Complete and revise the organizer. Check that each quotation is exact and includes a line number, and that the reasoning explains how the evidence supports the claim.

Key Questions:

- Does your reasoning explain how the quotation supports your claim, not just what the quotation says?
- Is your quotation exact, and did you include the line number?

43-47 min

Teacher: Distribute the exit ticket. Read the prompt aloud: 'Explain how one image in Ozymandias contributes to a theme. Use a quotation from the poem in your answer.' Collect exit tickets as students leave. Assess only what the prompt asks: one image, one theme, one quotation, and an explanation of the connection.

Students: Write the exit ticket response independently, naming one image, stating a theme, quoting the poem, and explaining how the image contributes to the theme.

Key Questions:

- Which image will you choose, and which theme does it support?
- How does your quotation show the connection between the image and the theme?

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8. Differentiation Overview

- **ELL:** Provide the vocabulary bridge with plain-language definitions, sentence stems for the claim and reasoning, and a partner read-aloud of the poem. Allow students to annotate in their home language alongside English and to use the sentence stems to draft the exit ticket.
- **IEP:** Provide Packet A (Guided Analysis) with pre-marked line numbers, a partially completed organizer, extended time, and the option to dictate the exit ticket response. Chunk the annotation directions into three short steps with check-ins.
- **Advanced:** Provide Packet C (Extended Analysis) requiring students to compare two possible theme claims, evaluate which is better supported by exact lines, and explain how the irony of the inscription shapes the theme. Students may also analyze how the sonnet form contributes to meaning.
- **Struggling:** Provide Packet A (Guided Analysis) with sentence stems, a word bank of image words from the poem, a modeled annotation of lines 1-2, and a partially completed claim/evidence/reasoning organizer. Pair with a stronger reader for the think-pair-share.

9. Assessment Plan

Formative: Teacher circulates during the Explore phase to check annotation accuracy and organizer completion, noting whether students quote exact lines with line numbers and whether reasoning connects evidence to claim. The Discuss phase think-pair-share provides verbal evidence of students testing claims against the text.

Summative: The exit ticket is scored against the success criteria: names one image, states a theme, includes an exact quotation, and explains how the image contributes to the theme. Only these elements are assessed.

10. Assessment

Explain how one image in Ozymandias contributes to a theme. Use a quotation from the poem in your answer.

Success Criteria:

- Names one specific image from the poem.
- States a theme that the image supports.
- Includes an exact quotation from the poem with a line number.
- Explains how the image and quotation work together to develop the theme.

Section 2: Global Context

In a Grade 10 English class of 28 students, the teacher projects a photograph of the ancient Colossus of Memnon—two massive stone statues in Egypt, each about 18 meters tall, built around 1350 BCE. Students notice the statues are weathered, one even cracked after an earthquake in 27 BCE. The teacher explains that Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote 'Ozymandias' in 1818, inspired by a fragment of a statue of Ramses II and the idea of ruined empires. She shares that the poem is a sonnet with 14 lines and a volta, and that its central image—a shattered statue in a desert—invites readers to question the permanence of power. Students are then asked: How does a single image in a poem carry a theme about time and human ambition? The lesson will guide them to analyze imagery, irony, and theme, and to write a claim supported by evidence.

Hook: If a statue could speak, what would it say about the empire that built it?

Section 3: Differentiated Packets

Source Documents

Ozymandias (Percy Bysshe Shelley, first published in The Examiner, 11 January 1818 (public domain). Source URL: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias)

> *Ozymandias*
>
> *By Percy Bysshe Shelley*
>
> *1 I met a traveller from an antique land,*
> *2 Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone*
> *3 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,*
> *4 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,*
> *5 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,*
> *6 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read*
> *7 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,*
> *8 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;*
> *9 And on the pedestal these words appear:*
> *10 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;*
> *11 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'*
> *12 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay*
> *13 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare*
> *14 The lone and level sands stretch far away."*
>
> *Source URL: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias*

Packet A

Word Bank: imagery, decay, power, time, ruin, pride, situational irony, monument

Question 1. Read the poem "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley (lines 1–14 above). Look at lines 10–11, where the statue's inscription appears. What words does Ozymandias use to describe himself and his works? Circle or list two words that show how powerful he wanted to seem.
↳ *Refer to: source_1*

- The king's name and title appear in line _____.
- Ozymandias calls himself _____ of kings.
- He tells people to _____ on his works.
- The word _____ or _____ shows he wanted people to feel fear or respect.

Answer: Student should identify lines 10–11: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' Key words showing power include: 'king of kings' (repeated title emphasizing supreme rank), 'Mighty' (calling to powerful people), and 'despair' (commanding others to feel defeated). A strong response selects two of these and explains that they show Ozymandias wanted to seem unbeatable. Example: 'He calls himself "king of kings" to show no one is greater, and he tells the "Mighty" to despair, meaning even powerful people should give up hope against him.'

Common error: Students may select words that describe the statue's appearance (e.g., 'stone,' 'frown') rather than words showing the king's claimed power. Reinforce that lines 10–11 are the king's own words about himself, not the poet's description.

Question 2. Look at lines 2–4 and lines 12–14. These lines use imagery (descriptive words that appeal to sight) to show what the statue looks like after many years. List three images that show the statue is broken, damaged, or worn down. Use the word bank if needed.
↳ *Refer to: source_1*

- In lines 2–3, the statue has legs that are _____ and _____ (missing body parts).
- In line 4, the face is described as _____ and lies _____ in the sand.
- In lines 12–14, the statue is called _____ and _____, surrounded by empty desert.
- These three images together show that time has _____ the king's monument.

Answer: Student should identify three of the following images from the text: (1) 'trunkless legs' (lines 2–3) — the body is gone, only legs remain; (2) 'shattered visage' (line 4) — the face is broken; (3) 'Half sunk' (line 4) — buried in sand; (4) 'colossal wreck' (line 13) — called a ruin; (5) 'boundless and bare' (line 13) — surrounded by empty desert. Example answer: 'The legs have no body (trunkless), the face is broken (shattered visage), and sand is swallowing the statue (half sunk). These show the statue is ruined.' Accept any three clear identifications with support from the poem.

Common error: Students may confuse imagery with the overall theme. Remind them to point to specific words or phrases that create pictures in the reader's mind. Also note that 'imagery' describes what we can see, hear, or touch — sensory details.

Question 3. Situational irony occurs when what a character wants or expects is the opposite of what actually happens. In lines 10–11, Ozymandias commands people to 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' But what does the poem actually tell us about his works in line 12? Explain the irony in one sentence using the frame below.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

- Ozymandias wanted people to admire his _____ and feel _____.
- Instead, line 12 says _____ beside remains.
- The irony is that the king tried to _____ forever, but his works _____.
- This is ironic because Ozymandias expected _____ but got _____.

Answer: Ozymandias commanded people to despair at his mighty works (line 11), but line 12 states 'Nothing beside remains,' meaning his works have been completely destroyed and forgotten. The irony is that the king who wanted to be remembered forever has left nothing at all — the opposite of what he intended. Example answer: 'He told people to look at his works and despair, but there is nothing left to look at, so his plan to seem powerful forever failed.'

Common error: Students may describe the statue's ruined appearance without naming the irony. Guide them to compare what Ozymandias wanted (to be feared and remembered) with what actually happened (nothing remains). The gap between expectation and reality is the irony.

Question 4. Use the organizer below to make a theme claim about Ozymandias. A theme is the main lesson or big idea the poem teaches. In the 'Claim' box, write one sentence stating what you think the poem teaches about power, time, or pride. In the 'Evidence' box, copy one line or phrase from the poem that supports your claim. In the 'Reasoning' box, explain in 2–3 sentences why that quote proves your claim.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

- My claim is that the poem teaches: _____ (example: 'Power and pride do not last forever' or 'Time destroys everything, even great kingdoms').
- The best evidence is the line: _____ (choose from lines 10–14).
- This quote shows my theme because _____.
- This matters because _____ (explain what this teaches us about the real world).

Answer: Accept any reasonable claim that connects to the poem's treatment of power, pride, decay, or time's destructive force. Example 1 — Claim: 'The poem teaches that even the most powerful rulers cannot escape the passage of time.' Evidence: 'Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare' (lines 12–13). Reasoning: 'Ozymandias boasted that he was king of kings and his works would last forever. But the poem shows his entire kingdom has been reduced to broken stone in an empty desert. This proves that no matter how powerful someone is, time will destroy their legacy.' Example 2 — Claim: 'Pride and arrogance lead to downfall.' Evidence: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' (lines 10–11). Reasoning: 'The king's arrogant words show he believed his greatness would never fade. But his works have completely vanished, leaving only wreckage. His confidence was false, which teaches that arrogance blinds people to reality.' Both answers are valid; assess for evidence selection and logical reasoning.

Common error: Students may write vague claims like 'The poem is sad' without connecting to a larger theme about time, power, or pride. Reinforce that a theme is a lesson or central idea, not just a feeling. Also check that the evidence clearly supports the claim — a quote about broken stone supports a theme about destruction, not about vanity alone.

Question 5. Choose one image (descriptive phrase) from the poem that you think is most important to the theme. Write the image or quote in quotation marks. Then write 2–3 sentences explaining how that image helps teach the poem's theme. Use your Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer to help you answer.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

- The image I choose is: _____ (example: 'trunkless legs,' 'shattered visage,' 'Nothing beside remains').
- This image shows _____ (what the reader sees or understands).
- This image supports the theme that _____ (connect to the big idea).
- Therefore, this image is important because _____ (explain its purpose in the poem).

Answer: Accept any defensible choice of imagery with clear reasoning. Example 1 — Image: 'Nothing beside remains' (line 12). Explanation: 'This phrase is the most powerful image in the poem because it shows the complete failure of Ozymandias's plan. He wanted people to look at his great works forever, but nothing is left. This image teaches us that time destroys everything, even the proudest monuments. It makes the theme unforgettable.' Example 2 — Image: 'lone and level sands stretch far away' (line 14). Explanation: 'This image of empty desert surrounding the ruins helps show how completely Ozymandias's kingdom has been erased. Where there was once a great empire with cities and people, now there is only barren sand. The loneliness of the desert reinforces the theme that power is temporary and monuments cannot preserve memory.' Both are valid; assess for identification of a specific image and logical explanation of its connection to theme.

Common error: Students may choose an image and simply describe what it looks like without explaining its connection to the theme. Require them to answer the 'why' question: How does this image help teach the poem's lesson about power, time, pride, or legacy? Emphasize that good analysis connects details to big ideas.

Packet B

Question 1. Read the poem Ozymandias (lines 1-14, attributed to Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Examiner, 11 January 1818). Using the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer below, make a claim about what theme the poem conveys regarding the relationship between power and time. Support your claim with one direct quotation (include line number), then explain how that evidence supports your theme claim. | Claim | Evidence (Quote + Line Number) | Reasoning | |---|---|---| | | | |

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: SAMPLE ANSWER (Multiple valid responses possible): Claim: The poem conveys that all worldly power and monuments are temporary and will inevitably decay over time. Evidence: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' (lines 10–11). The speaker contrasts Ozymandias's boastful inscription with the actual state of his ruins. Reasoning: Ozymandias commanded others to despair before his mighty works, but now 'Nothing beside remains' (line 12) except a 'colossal wreck' (line 13) surrounded by 'boundless and bare' desert (line 13). This ironic gap between the king's proud claim and the present reality of total ruin demonstrates that even the most powerful rulers cannot preserve their legacies against time's erosion. The poem thus suggests that power, no matter how absolute, is ultimately fragile and subject to decay. ALTERNATIVE VALID ANSWER: Claim: The poem explores how human ambition and pride are preserved in art even as the artifacts themselves crumble away. Evidence: 'The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed' (line 8) refers to the sculptor's ability to capture Ozymandias's passions in stone. Reasoning: Although Ozymandias's actual empire has vanished, the sculptor managed to immortalize the 'passions' and 'sneer of cold command' (line 5) in the broken statue. This suggests that while physical monuments decay, the emotions and ambitions of powerful figures can survive stamped into lifeless materials. The theme here emphasizes art's paradoxical power to preserve human character even as time destroys the monument itself.

Common error: Students may claim the theme is simply 'nothing lasts forever' without explaining how the specific evidence of the boastful inscription contrasts with the ruined state. Effective responses must show the situational irony—the gap between what Ozymandias claimed and what actually remains. Also note that multiple theme interpretations are valid: decay of power, the vanity of human ambition, art's paradoxical permanence within impermanence, or the indifference of nature to human achievement. Accept any well-supported claim.

Question 2. Describe how the imagery of the broken statue (lines 2–5: 'trunkless legs,' 'shattered visage,' 'wrinkled lip,' 'sneer') contributes to the poem's exploration of power and decay. How does this visual imagery reinforce the theme you identified in Problem 1?

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: SAMPLE ANSWER: The imagery of the fragmented statue—severed legs, broken face, creased features—physically embodies the destruction of Ozymandias's power. His body is literally torn apart ('trunkless'), and only scattered pieces remain. The adjectives 'shattered' and 'wrinkled' emphasize degradation and age, creating a visual impression of something once grand now dismantled and deteriorated. This fragmentation directly reinforces the theme of power's impermanence. The 'sneer of cold command' (line 5) was once a living expression of absolute authority, but it now appears only as a frozen, lifeless grimace carved in stone. The imagery shows that physical destruction dismantles not just the statue but the very symbols of power the king sought to preserve. The broken pieces scattered in the desert illustrate how completely his reign has been obliterated—there is no intact monument, no functioning empire, only fragments that tell viewers of vanished glory. The contrast between the violent, fractured state of the statue and the proud boast inscribed on its base (lines 10–11) makes the imagery doubly ironic: the medium meant to preserve his eternal power has become evidence of its total loss.

Common error: Students may list imagery without explaining its thematic significance. Merely stating 'the legs are gone' is not sufficient. Strong answers connect specific visual details (fragmentation, decay, incompleteness) to the larger claim about power's transience. Also note that students should reference specific words ('trunkless,' 'shattered,' 'sneer') to ground their analysis in textual evidence.

Question 3. Explain the situational irony created by the contrast between Ozymandias's inscription (lines 10–11: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!') and the actual condition of his remains (lines 12–14). What does this irony reveal about the poem's commentary on ambition?

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: SAMPLE ANSWER: The situational irony arises because Ozymandias commands 'ye Mighty' to despair at his works, implying that his monuments will inspire awe and fear in perpetuity. However, the poem then explicitly states 'Nothing beside remains' (line 12), revealing that his supposed eternal works have been reduced to a solitary, 'colossal wreck' (line 13) in an empty desert. Ozymandias's confident assertion that his name and deeds will endure is contradicted entirely by the evidence before the traveler's eyes. This irony reveals that ambition, no matter how grand or backed by royal power, cannot guarantee permanence or lasting influence. Ozymandias believed his works would make rivals despair, yet now there is no kingdom, no subjects, and no works to behold—only ruins. The poem suggests that ambitious rulers deceive themselves about their own permanence. The inscription serves as a time capsule of Ozymandias's overconfidence, preserved only to demonstrate how utterly his ambitions have failed. The commentary becomes tragic: the very pride and certainty expressed in his words are exposed as hollow by the passage of time.

Common error: Students may confuse situational irony with sarcasm or may identify irony without explaining its thematic purpose. Situational irony occurs when reality contradicts expectation; here, the expectation (eternal fame and power) contradicts the reality (complete erasure). Strong answers should name the irony explicitly and then connect it to a larger statement about ambition, hubris, or time's power.

Question 4. EXIT TICKET (4 minutes): Choose one image or visual detail from Ozymandias (for example, the 'lone and level sands' in line 14, the 'wrinkled lip and sneer' in line 5, or the pedestal and inscription in lines 9–11). Explain how this image contributes to one of the poem's themes about power, time, or human ambition. Include a direct quotation with the line number.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: SAMPLE ANSWER: The image of the 'lone and level sands stretch far away' (line 14) contributes to the theme that time and nature are indifferent to human power and achievement. The vast, empty desert surrounding the broken statue emphasizes utter isolation and abandonment. Ozymandias once ruled a kingdom with subjects, armies, and monuments, but now his remains sit alone in an infinite landscape where nothing else survives. The 'boundless and bare' (line 13) desert suggests that nature has reclaimed the land entirely, erasing all trace of human civilization. This image reinforces the idea that even the most powerful ruler is ultimately insignificant against the scale of time and nature. The desert does not mourn Ozymandias or preserve his memory; it simply endures while empires crumble. The starkness of the image—no cities, no people, no evidence of his rule—demonstrates that power is temporary and that the natural world operates independently of human ambition. ALTERNATIVE ANSWER: The image of the 'shattered visage' whose 'frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command' (lines 4–5) contribute to the theme of how pride and tyranny are ultimately reduced to broken artifacts. The sculptor captured Ozymandias's expression of dominance and contempt in stone, preserving the emotional mark of his rule. However, that face is now 'shattered'—fragmented and powerless. The 'sneer' that once terrified subjects is now a frozen, lifeless grimace on a broken stone. This image shows that all the psychological power of a tyrant's presence and authority dissolves with time, leaving only physical ruins.

Common error: Students may describe the image without connecting it to theme, or may state the theme without showing how the image supports it. Effective exit tickets require both: identification of the image, a quotation, and a clear explanation of how that image illustrates or supports a thematic claim. Accept multiple valid interpretations as long as the connection between image and theme is explicitly stated.

Packet C

Question 1. Analyze how Shelley uses imagery of decay and fragmentation to develop the theme that human power and pride are ultimately impermanent. In your response, (a) identify at least two specific images of destruction or incompleteness from the poem, (b) explain how each image contributes to this theme, and (c) evaluate whether the inscription on the pedestal (lines 10-11) strengthens or complicates this theme. Use the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer below to structure your analysis.
↳ Refer to: source_1

Answer: Exemplary response would include: (a) Two specific images such as 'trunkless legs of stone' (line 2), 'shattered visage' (line 4), or 'colossal wreck' (line 13). (b) The trunkless legs show that even the physical form of the king has been severed and rendered incomplete; the shattered visage reveals that time has destroyed not just the body but the face itself, erasing the individual identity; the colossal wreck emphasizes the paradox that something once enormous is now debris. (c) The inscription strengthens the theme by providing ironic contrast: the king boasted of eternal greatness and challenged others to despair at his works, yet nothing remains but empty words and rubble. The pedestal itself becomes a monument to failure rather than success. Alternatively, a student might argue that the inscription complicates the theme by suggesting that the king's words survive even if his works do not, implying that language or memory preserves power in some form. Both readings are defensible and show synthesis of form and meaning. Complete Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer example: Claim: Shelley uses fragmented imagery to argue that even the greatest human achievements cannot withstand time. Evidence: 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert' (lines 2-3) and 'Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away' (lines 12-14). Reasoning: The legs without a body and the vast wreck surrounded by emptiness show that grandeur decays into isolated fragments, supporting the theme that power is temporary.

An exemplary Tier 3 response demonstrates synthesis by connecting multiple images to a single thematic claim and by engaging with the potential ambiguity of the inscription. Students should avoid surface-level summary; instead, they should explain the mechanism by which imagery creates meaning. Accept multiple valid interpretations of whether the inscription complicates or strengthens the theme, provided the student supports their position with evidence and logical reasoning. Common incomplete responses may cite images without explaining their thematic function, or may treat the inscription as merely decorative rather than as a thematic pivot point.

Question 2. Some readers argue that 'Ozymandias' is primarily a critique of Ozymandias's arrogance, while others contend that the poem critiques the nature of time and power more broadly, making the individual king almost incidental to the message. Evaluate both interpretations by (a) identifying textual evidence that supports the first reading, (b) identifying textual evidence that supports the second reading, and (c) synthesizing these perspectives to explain what the poem suggests about the relationship between individual pride and universal human fragility. Which interpretation do you find more persuasive, and why?

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: Exemplary response recognizes that both interpretations are valid and supported by the text. (a) Evidence for a critique of Ozymandias's arrogance includes the 'sneer of cold command' (line 5), the boastful inscription 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; / Look on my Mighty, and despair' (lines 10-11), and the ironic collapse between his claim and reality. This reading emphasizes the specific hubris of this ruler. (b) Evidence for a broader critique of time and power includes the frame narrative (the traveler reporting to the speaker), the use of the desert as an indifferent landscape, and the final image where 'boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away' (lines 13-14), which suggests that all human works are subject to erasure by impersonal natural forces. (c) A synthesized response might argue that Ozymandias's particular arrogance is significant precisely because it demonstrates a universal human delusion: individuals believe their works will endure, but the poem reveals that all pride—whether Ozymandias's or any ruler's—is subject to time. The poem critiques both the individual and the condition of mortality. A student might favor the first interpretation by arguing that the poem's power lies in the specific irony of a tyrant's downfall, or favor the second by arguing that the removal of the individual's name and the emphasis on timelessness create a universal meditation. Both positions are defensible.

This is a Tier 3 synthesis question because it requires students to hold two competing interpretations simultaneously and to articulate how they interact. Do NOT write an answer key that declares one interpretation correct and the other wrong. Exemplary responses demonstrate intellectual maturity by acknowledging validity in both readings while taking a reasoned position. Common weaker responses collapse the distinction between the two interpretations or claim that one is obviously correct without engaging with the countervailing evidence. Stronger responses recognize that the poem's ambiguity is a strength, not a weakness.

Question 3. Propose a modern scenario (historical figure, political movement, corporation, or technological innovation) to which the themes and imagery of 'Ozymandias' apply. In your response, (a) describe the parallel between the modern scenario and Ozymandias's fall, (b) identify which specific lines from Shelley's poem most powerfully illuminate your chosen scenario, and (c) argue whether your scenario suggests that Shelley's 1818 meditation on impermanence remains relevant today or whether modern circumstances have fundamentally altered the relationship between power, achievement, and time.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: Exemplary response demonstrates synthesis of historical, textual, and contemporary knowledge. Example: A student might choose the fall of the Soviet Union and argue that Lenin and Stalin's monuments were similarly intended to endure forever, yet the 'colossal wreck' (line 13) and the image of 'Nothing beside remains' (line 12) parallel the dismantling of statues and the erasure of ideology across Eastern Europe. The lines 'Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' (line 11) echo the boasts of communist permanence, which proved equally hollow. A student might argue that Shelley's theme remains relevant because digital deletion and monument removal are forms of the same decay Shelley describes—power that once seemed eternal vanishes completely. Alternatively, a student might choose a tech company (e.g., Myspace, Kodak) and argue that the 'shattered visage' (line 4) parallels the dissolution of once-dominant platforms. Another student might argue that Shelley's pessimism about permanence must be complicated by the existence of recorded history, archive technology, and collective memory, which allow some works to endure in a different form than Ozymandias imagined. This response would synthesize textual evidence with contemporary analysis and would engage with the possibility that modern conditions create new dynamics.

Tier 3 extension requires students to apply the poem's themes beyond its immediate historical context and to think critically about whether Shelley's 1818 argument still holds. Exemplary responses choose a specific, historically grounded scenario (not vague generalizations like 'people get old'). They root their answer in specific lines and explain the parallel precisely. The strongest responses also engage with potential complications or nuances—e.g., does digital permanence (the eternal internet archive) contradict Shelley's vision, or does it simply describe a new form of 'decay'? Accept multiple defensible scenarios and multiple positions on contemporary relevance, provided the student justifies their choice with textual evidence and logical reasoning.

Question 4. Using the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer provided, write a claim that synthesizes irony and imagery in the poem to support a specific interpretation of theme. Your claim should (a) name one type of irony present in the poem (situational, verbal, or structural), (b) identify one image that reinforces that irony, and (c) explain what Shelley's use of irony and imagery together suggests about human mortality or the nature of legacy. Complete the organizer and write a 2-3 sentence explanation of your reasoning.

↳ *Refer to: source_1*

Answer: Exemplary response identifies situational irony (the king expects his works to inspire awe but they inspire only emptiness) and connects it to a specific image such as 'trunkless legs' or the inscription surrounded by 'boundless and bare' desert. Example organizer completion: Claim: The situational irony between Ozymandias's arrogant inscription and the complete decay of his works reveals that human attempts to impose meaning on the world are inevitably erased by time. Evidence: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings; / Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' (lines 10-11) contrasts with 'Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away' (lines 12-14). Reasoning: The juxtaposition of the king's boast with the image of isolated ruins and endless desert demonstrates that even the most grandiose human achievements lose their meaning and power. Shelley uses this irony to argue that mortality is not just a physical process but a process of erasure and the loss of intentionality. The desert represents indifference to human ambition. A student might alternatively identify structural irony (the poem is framed as a report from a traveler, emphasizing the distance between the original event and our knowledge of it) and argue that this distance itself represents how time fragments and distorts even eyewitness testimony to greatness. Both interpretations are valid if supported with textual evidence and clear reasoning.

This question integrates the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning organizer explicitly and requires synthesis of literary devices (irony and imagery) with thematic interpretation. Exemplary responses avoid circular reasoning (e.g., 'the irony is ironic because it is ironic') and instead explain the specific mechanism by which the irony reinforces the theme. Weaker responses may cite irony without explaining its function, or may confuse types of irony. Accept any type of irony (situational, verbal, structural) that a student can defend with textual evidence. The organizer should be filled out clearly, and the reasoning should be coherent and specific to the student's chosen irony and image.

Section 4: Teacher Toolkit

3-Point Mastery Rubric

3 — Complete Mastery: The response names one specific image from the poem, quotes it accurately with line reference, and clearly explains how that image builds a defensible theme claim. The reasoning connects the quoted words to the theme without straying into unrelated summary or biography.

2 — Partial Understanding: The response identifies an image and offers a quotation, but the link between the image and the theme is general or only partly explained. The theme claim is present but the reasoning

needs one more step of connection to the quoted words.

1 — Needs Significant Support: The response may name an image or theme but lacks an accurate quotation or omits the explanation of how the image supports the theme. The connection between evidence and claim is missing or unclear.

Common Misconceptions

Irony means sarcasm only

Students think: Students think irony always means a character being sarcastic or saying the opposite of what they mean in dialogue.

Why: Everyday usage of 'ironic' is tied to sarcasm, so students miss situational and dramatic irony in a poem with no dialogue.

Fix: Contrast verbal irony with situational irony using the inscription on the pedestal versus the ruined statue; ask students to state what the reader knows that the 'king of kings' expected and did not get.

The poem's speaker is Shelley

Students think: Students assume the poet is the traveler and that the poem expresses Shelley's own direct opinion in the first person.

Why: Students often conflate author and speaker, especially in short lyric poems, and miss the frame of 'I met a traveller from an antique land.'

Fix: Have students map the layers of speech (poet, traveler, sculptor, inscription) on a quick diagram and discuss how each voice adds distance and irony to the message about power.

Theme equals topic

Students think: Students write that the theme is 'power' or 'time' rather than a full statement about what the poem suggests regarding power or time.

Why: Students are taught to identify topics first and are not consistently pushed to convert a topic into a claim about human experience.

Fix: Model converting a one-word topic into a claim using a sentence stem such as 'The poem suggests that ...' and have students revise a topic-only statement into a full thematic claim before writing.

Implementation Notes

- Setup: Before class, print the three neutral packet versions (A, B, C) on different colored paper without labels like 'advanced' or 'remedial,' and post the full 14-line poem with line numbers and the traceable source URL (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias) at the front and on each packet. Confirm that every packet contains the vocabulary list, annotation directions, sentence stems,

the claim/evidence/reasoning organizer, and writing workspace so all students access the same analytical demand.

- Pacing: Follow the exact pacing outlined in Section 1's Lesson Flow, including the 3-minute Do Now and 4-minute exit ticket, and do not substitute a new timeline. Use a visible timer for the Do Now and exit ticket so the 47-minute total is protected, and keep the Explore phase anchored to the organizer rather than adding new tasks.
- Grouping: Use mixed-ability triads during Explore so students reading different packet versions can compare theme claims and supporting lines. Assign roles of Quotation Finder, Reasoning Builder, and Claim Checker, and rotate roles so every student practices citing exact lines and explaining how an image supports a theme.
- Tiered packet flow: Distribute packets based on the scaffolding students need, not on perceived ability labels, and allow students to move to a version with more or fewer stems as they work. Version A offers the most sentence stems and a partially completed organizer, Version B offers stems and a blank organizer, and Version C offers minimal stems with a blank organizer and an open prompt to construct the claim independently; all three require a theme claim supported by textual evidence.
- Teacher key use: Keep the worked teacher key with exact supporting lines (for example, lines 4-5 'Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command' and lines 10-11 'Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair! / Nothing beside remains.') available for conferencing, but present multiple defensible readings of the sneer and the pedestal inscription. Assess the exit ticket only on the prompt's demand: one image, one quotation, and an explanation of how it contributes to a theme.

Extension Activities

- Early finisher task: Ask students to write a second exit-ticket-style paragraph using a different image from the poem and a different theme claim, then exchange with a partner to check that the quotation is exact and the reasoning connects image to theme.
- Cross-curricular connection: Have students research a real monument or inscription (for example, a local memorial or a museum artifact) and write a short comparison explaining how its physical condition or wording shapes the message it sends about power and memory, citing at least one line from Ozymandias.
- Real-world application: Students draft a brief public-facing caption or museum placard for a hypothetical exhibit on 'Monuments and Memory' that uses one quoted image from the poem to argue a theme about how time treats claims to power, then revise for a general audience.