

Student Essay on Who Is Ozymandias a Symbol Of?

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Essay

Who is Ozymandias a Symbol of"

Ozymandias, a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley, was written in 1818. During the 13th Century B.C., Ozymandias was a pharaoh of Egypt. He was a tyrant who believed that he would drive fear into people's hearts through his many works, or statues, long after he died. Napoleon Bonaparte was a military commander, and a twice-emperor of France. He was a very power hungry "Little Corporal." Percy Bysshe Shelley used the image of Ozymandias to describe Napoleon Bonaparte (d. 1821).

There is a single metaphor in Shelley's poem Ozymandias. This metaphor is the shattered, ruined statue of Ozymandias in the desert. Napoleon was very much the same as Ozymandias. He did many things, which he believed were great, just as Ozymandias. We can see that Ozymandias thought he did great things through his inscription on his statue, "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!" (11).

The "works" of Ozymandias were no longer visible, as shown through, "Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare" (12-13). This is ironic coming from a once great king who proudly boasted his prominence. Napoleon also did this by attempting to take over the world. Now, however, there are no traces of Napoleon's dominance years after he was exiled to the island of St. Helena in 1815.

The ruined statue of Ozymandias and the wrath of Napoleon did not withstand the passage of time. Shelly does show us however that art and language outlast legacies of power.