



### SUNSHINE STATE STANDARDS

#### Literary Analysis

**Benchmark LA.1112.2.1.3** Analyze, compare, evaluate, and interpret poetry....

**Benchmark LA.1112.2.1.8** Explain how ideas, values, and themes of a literary work often reflect the historical period in which it was written.

#### NOTABLE QUOTE

*"Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."*

#### FYI

Did you know that Percy Bysshe Shelley ...

- published two gothic novels while in his teens?
- supported vegetarianism?
- was not popular in his own day because of his radical views?

### AuthorOnline

For more on Percy Bysshe Shelley, visit the [Literature Center at ClassZone.com](#).

Shelley's grave in Rome

## Selected Poetry

by Percy Bysshe Shelley



### Percy Bysshe Shelley

1792–1822

An idealist and a nonconformist, Percy Bysshe Shelley passionately opposed all injustice and dreamed of changing the world through poetry. He wrote with the fervent conviction that poetry nourishes the imagination, and the imagination—by enabling empathy for others—brings about social change.

**Turbulent Early Years** Born into an aristocratic family, Shelley enjoyed a happy early childhood. At school at Eton, however, the shy and eccentric adolescent suffered constant bullying, an experience that fueled a lifelong hatred of tyranny and conformity. Although Shelley enjoyed greater acceptance at Oxford University, he was soon expelled from the school for circulating an essay defending atheism. His refusal to renounce his views, coupled with his elopement in 1811 with the 16-year-old Harriet Westbrook, caused a permanent rupture with his conservative father.

**Poet and Activist** In 1812, Shelley moved to Dublin, where his work on behalf of Catholic emancipation and independence for Ireland brought him under the scrutiny of the British government. In his first major poem, *Queen Mab* (1813), he continued to attack social institutions such as marriage, the monarchy, and the church. In 1814, Shelley met and fell in love with another radical thinker, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, the daughter of the philosopher William Godwin and the feminist author Mary Wollstonecraft. Abandoning Harriet, who was then expecting their second child, Shelley eloped to France with Mary, returning to England several weeks later.

**Social Outcast** Shelley's scandalous behavior drew severe censure from British society, and he soon found himself an outcast. In 1816, Shelley fled with Mary to Geneva, Switzerland, where his stimulating conversations with the poet Lord Byron invigorated his thinking and writing. Two years later, following the suicide of Harriet, Shelley finally married Mary Godwin, and the couple settled permanently in Italy. In 1819, despite his grief over the recent deaths of his two infant children, Shelley produced many of his greatest poems, including "Ode to the West Wind" and the verse drama *Prometheus Unbound*.

**A Tragic Death** Between 1820 and 1822, Shelley enjoyed a period of relative stability in Pisa, during which he composed many fine lyrics, including "Adonais," an elegy in memory of John Keats. On July 8, 1822, Shelley and a friend drowned when their boat capsized in a sudden storm. Shelley's ashes were buried in Rome, near the graves of John Keats and Shelley's son William.



**LITERARY ANALYSIS: RHYTHMIC PATTERNS**

Shelley's poetry is admired for its musicality, among other qualities. One element that makes poetry musical is **meter**, the regular repetition of a rhythmic unit. Each unit of meter, known as a **foot**, consists of one stressed syllable (˘) and one or more unstressed syllables (ˉ). An **iamb** is a foot that contains an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: rēgrēt. A **trochee** is a foot that contains a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: sórrōw. The first chart shows types of feet. Meter is also expressed in terms of the number of feet in a line, as shown in the second chart.

Type of Foot	Number of Feet
iamb (˘ ˘)	monometer—one
trochee (˘ ˘)	dimeter—two
anapest (˘ ˘ ˘)	trimeter—three
dactyl (˘ ˘ ˘)	tetrameter—four
	pentameter—five
	hexameter—six

**Iambic pentameter**, the most common meter in English, contains five sets of iambs:

*ī mēt | a trāvēlēr frōm | an āntīquē lānd*

As you read the following poems, identify the meter. Also notice departures from the regular meter and the effect they have.

*Review: Rhyme Scheme*

**READING SKILL: UNDERSTAND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The **historical context** of a literary work refers to the social conditions that inspired or influenced its creation. Romanticism in 19th-century England developed in part as a reaction to the French Revolution, the rise and fall of Napoleon, the industrialization of the economy, and the poverty and oppression of workers. Shelley wrote "Ode to the West Wind" in 1819, the year of the Peterloo massacre, in which workers demonstrating for reform were killed by soldiers. Another poem, "England in 1819," explicitly condemns England's "leech-like" rulers, her army's "liberticide," and her "Christless" religion. As you read the following works by Shelley, written over a span of 2½ years, consider their historical context and that they are poems of protest.

*What can NATURE  
teach us?*

**KEY IDEA** Romantic poets believed that profound lessons could be learned from observing **nature**. They believed that there was no greater beauty than that found in nature, and they saw higher truths reflected in natural scenes.

**QUICKWRITE** Visualize one of the following elements of nature—a sand dune, the wind, or a bird. Think deeply about it. What lesson about life could it suggest to you? Contemplating the wind, for example, might make you realize that any life circumstance can suddenly change, as the wind does. *Join down one possible lesson about life and discuss it in a small group. Then read Shelley's poems to find out what lessons he saw in sand, the west wind, and the song of a skylark.*



# Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveler 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,  
5 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:  
10 "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay **A**  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

**2 trunkless legs:** legs separated from the rest of the body.

**4 visage** (vīz'ij): face.

**6–8** The passions outlast the sculptor whose hand mocked those passions and the king whose heart fed those passions.

**10 Ozymandias** (ōz'ī-män'dē-əs): a Greek name for the Egyptian pharaoh Rameses II, who reigned from 1279 to 1213 B.C.

**A RHYTHMIC PATTERNS**  
What words in lines 12 and 13 are emphasized by their departure from the regular meter?

## Literary Analysis

- 1. Clarify** What kind of man was Ozymandias?
- 2. Identify Irony** What is ironic about the words on his pedestal?
- 3. Understand Historical Context** What message is there in the poem for European kings or self-proclaimed emperors like Napoleon?

Head of Rameses II at Thebes, Egypt



# ODE TO THE *West Wind*

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

## I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being, **B**  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
5 Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

10 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear! **C**

## II

15 Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled bough of Heaven and Ocean,

**B RHYTHMIC PATTERNS**  
Read lines 1–9 aloud. What  
is the predominant meter?

4 hectic: feverish.

9 sister . . . Spring: the reviving south  
wind of spring.

10 clarion: a trumpet with a clear,  
ringing tone.

**C RHYME SCHEME**  
Describe the interlocking pattern  
of rhyme, called *terza rima*, in  
the first four stanzas of section I.  
How does the fifth stanza bring  
the pattern to a close?

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,  
20 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
25 Will be the dome of a vast sepulcher,  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

### III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
30 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

35 All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
40 The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

### IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
45 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

18 *angels*: messengers.

19 *aëry*: airy.

20–22 *Like . . . height*: The clouds lie in streaks from the horizon upward, looking like the streaming hair of a *maenad* (mē'nād')—a wildly dancing female worshiper of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

23 *dirge*: funeral song.

25 *sepulcher* (sēp'əl-kər): tomb.

31 *crystalline* (krī's-tāl'īn) *streams*: the different-colored currents of the Mediterranean Sea.

32 *pumice* (pūm'īs): a light volcanic rock; *Baiae's* (bī'ēz') *bay*: the Bay of Naples, site of the ancient Roman resort of Baiae.

37 *level powers*: surface.

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
50 As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

55 A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

### V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:  
What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

60 Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
65 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
70 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? **D**

50 **skyey** (skī'ē) **speed**: the swiftness of clouds moving across the sky.

51 **vision**: something impossible to achieve.

57 **lyre**: a reference to the Aeolian harp, an instrument whose strings make musical sounds when the wind blows over them.

62 **impetuous** (im-pēch'ōō-as): violently forceful; impulsive.

65 **incantation**: recitation, as of a magic spell.

#### **D** HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In lines 63–70, what does the poet imply is the state of the world? Relate these lines to the social conditions mentioned on pages 846 and 847.

## Literary Analysis

1. **Analyze the Ode** An **ode** is an exalted, complex lyric that develops a single, dignified theme. Many odes praise people or elements of nature. What qualities of the west wind are glorified in this ode?
2. **Make Inferences** What does the poet request of the west wind, and why?
3. **Interpret Metaphor** Give your interpretation of the last line. What might be meant by “Winter” and “Spring”?



TO A  
*Skylark*

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from Heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
5 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire;  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
10 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. **E**

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
Thou dost float and run;  
15 Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

**1** *blithe* (blīzh): carefree.

**5** *unpremeditated* (ūn'prī-mēd'ī-tā'tīd): natural; not planned out ahead of time.

**E** **RHYTHMIC PATTERNS**  
Describe the **meter** of the first stanza. Is the metrical pattern maintained in the second stanza? Explain.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight;  
Like a star of Heaven,  
In the broad daylight  
20 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear  
25 Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
30 The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou are we know not;  
What is most like thee?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
35 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
40 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not: **F**

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
45 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glowworm golden  
In a dell of dew,  
Scattering un beholden  
Its aërial hue  
50 Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

16 **even**: evening.

22 **silver sphere**: the planet Venus, called the morning star because it is visible in the east just before daybreak.

**F HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread lines 36–40. Notice how Shelley views the poet's role. Use your background reading to speculate about the "hopes and fears" unheeded by the world.

49 **bower**: private room; boudoir or bedroom.

46 **glowworm**: wingless female firefly or firefly larva.

49 **aërial** (âr'ê-əl) **hue**: insubstantial glow.



Like a rose embowered  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflowered,  
Till the scent it gives  
55 Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-wingéd thieves:

53 **deflowered**: fully opened.

55 **thieves**: the warm winds.

Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awakened flowers,  
All that ever was  
60 Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

56 **vernal**: spring.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine:  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
65 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,  
Or triumphal chant,  
Matched with thine would be all  
But an empty vaunt,  
70 A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

66 **Chorus Hymeneal** (hī'mā-nē'oi): a wedding song.

69 **vaunt**: boast.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains?  
What shapes of sky or plain?  
75 What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

71 **fountains**: sources.

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be:  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee:  
80 Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

77 **languor** (lāng'gər): lack of energy; listlessness.

80 **satiety** (sə-tī'y-tē): fulfillment to excess.

Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
85 Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

82 **deem**: know.

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not:  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught;  
90 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. **G**

Yet if we could scorn  
Hate, and pride, and fear;  
If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,  
95 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,  
100 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow  
105 The world should listen then—as I am listening now. **H**

**G RHYTHMIC PATTERNS**

How is **rhythm** used to emphasize the last line of each stanza? Read line go aloud, considering what to stress and where to pause.

91 if: even if.

**H HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Reread lines 101–105, considering the era in which Shelley was writing. What might he want the world to hear?

## Reading for Information

**ESSAY** Shelley wrote *A Defense of Poetry* after reading a composition in which a friend and fellow poet jokingly claimed that poetry no longer had a place in society. Because it seemed to Shelley that this view was in fact becoming widely held, he made a passionate argument for the value of poets and poetry.

from  
*A Defense of Poetry*

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

**P**OETRY is indeed something divine. It is at once the center and circumference of knowledge; . . . Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. . .

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation<sup>1</sup> of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy<sup>2</sup> turns to potable<sup>3</sup> gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms.

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1. **incarnation** (ɪnˈkār-nāˈshən): appearance in earthly form.

2. **alchemy** (ælˈke-mē): chemical reaction.

3. **potable** (pōˈte-bəl): drinkable.



**SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD**  
**Literary Analysis**  
**Benchmark LA.1112.2.1.3** Analyze, compare, evaluate, and interpret poetry for the effects of various literary devices, graphics, structure, and theme to convey mood, meaning, and aesthetic qualities.

### Comprehension

1. **Recall** To what things does the speaker compare the skylark?
2. **Summarize** In the speaker's eyes, what makes the skylark different from humans and its song different from human songs?
3. **Clarify** In lines 101–105, what does the speaker want the skylark to teach him, and what would he do with this knowledge?

### Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Imagery** What are the most striking images in these three poems? Explain what makes the imagery effective.
5. **Interpret Symbols** In the poems, what larger ideas are symbolized by the following elements of **nature**?
  - the sands near the statue of Ozymandias
  - the west wind
  - the skylark
6. **Examine Rhythmic Patterns** What is the **meter** of each poem? In which poem is the meter most regular? Discuss instances in which the rhythm of lines helps communicate ideas.
7. **Evaluate Sound Devices** How skillfully does Shelley use other sound devices besides meter? Support your opinion with examples.
8. **Analyze Form** Review page 327, and then explain how “Ozymandias” shows the characteristics of a **Petrarchan, or Italian, sonnet**. How closely do the numbered sections of “Ode to the West Wind” match the sonnet form?
9. **Apply Historical Context** Use your knowledge of Shelley's times and political views to interpret his three poems as protest poems. From the poems, what would you guess is his vision of an ideal society?

### Literary Criticism

10. **Critical Interpretations** In “A Defense of Poetry” (page 857), Shelley wrote that “Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed.” In what ways is this comment reflected in the poems you read? Explain.

# Reading-Writing Connection

## WRITING PROMPT

**WRITE A POEM** Reread the excerpt from “A Defense of Poetry” on page 857. Then write a **poem** in which you attempt to capture the “sleeping beauty” of an element of nature, as Shelley does in “Ode to the West Wind” and “To a Skylark.” Try to use **rhyme, meter, personification,** and other devices Shelley uses in his poems.

## SELF-CHECK

**A powerful poem will . . .**

- contain fresh images and original figurative language
- capture the feelings and ideas the natural element evokes in you

## GRAMMAR AND STYLE

**CREATE EFFECTIVE IMAGERY** Shelley was an inventive poet who created striking and exquisite imagery through his use of personification. **Personification** is a figure of speech in which an object, animal, or idea is given human qualities. In the following passage from “Ode to the West Wind,” Shelley personifies the sea life in the Mediterranean to show how powerfully the west wind affects it:

*The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know  
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,  
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!* (lines 39–42)

Notice how Shelley uses **predicates** such as *know thy voice* and *grow gray with fear* to assign characteristics that would normally be applied to humans. He attributes the emotion of *fear* to the sea plants and speaks of the *voice* of the west wind. This use of personification enables readers to form a vivid mental picture of the wind and its power.

**PRACTICE** Copy each of the following lines from “Ode to the West Wind.” Then compose your own lines about an element of nature, mimicking Shelley’s use of personification in order to create effective imagery.

### EXAMPLE

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; / Destroyer and preserver;  
hear, oh, hear!  
*Lonely sky, which art weeping everywhere, / Mourner and rager; sleep, oh sleep!*

1. O thou, / Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed / The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low, . . .
2. Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow / Her clarion o’er the dreaming earth, . . .
3. Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams / The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, . . .



### SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD

#### Writing Process

**Benchmark LA.1112.3.3.1** Evaluating the draft for development of ideas and content, logical organization, voice, point of view, word choice, and sentence variation.



For prewriting, revision, and editing tools, visit the **Writing Center** at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).