

“Ulysses” is a poem written by the Victorian poet Alfred Lord Tennyson in 1833. The extract is organized as a dramatic monologue in blank verses, so the poem is spoken by a single character, who reveals his identity by his own words. The poem is subdivided into four paragraphs with different functions and themes.

Right from the start the title “Ulysses” immediately recalls in reader’s mind the hero of Homer’s Odyssey, where “Ulysses” is the latin name, characterized by his courage. According to homer’s myth Ulysses is the king of Itaca, married with the legendary Penelope and father of Telemaco. Homer attributed to Ulysses features as: courage, brave and smart. Furthermore the title refers also to Ulysses in Dante’s inferno, Canto XXVI, in which Dante is led by Virgilio to meet Ulysses and heard his tale.

The poem is set in Ithaca, the place change during speaking voice’s monologue, indeed in the last stanza Ulysses is near the port standing next to his mariners by the ship and this is underlined by the words “There” (line 53) and “there” (line 54) :convey in reader’s mind the idea of something concrete next to the speaking voice.

The first paragraph Tennyson introduces Ulysses ‘features and considerations on his social status: he is an idle king of an ancient savage population. Ulysses seems as a stranger in his country that “hoard, and sleep, and feed and know not me” (line6). The speaking voice feels imprisoned in his kingdom and through the lines the convey the melancholy of his adventures. He spent most of his life travelling around the world and now he recognizes his inadequacy to rule his reign. this melancholy is underlined in line 8 where Ulysses states “I cannot rest from travel”. The function of this passage is bring to surface Ulysses’ passion for adventure and travel life that allowed him to appreciate “cities of men and manners, climates, councils, governments, myself not least, but honoured all of them all.”. Ulysses’ way of life brought him to reject the pauses and live every day as if it was the least. In the last part of the first paragraph there are different alliterations of the sound n, that focuses the attention of the reader on Ulysses condition.

The second sequence focuses the attention on Ulysses ‘spirit of adventure, and create the image an hero as the result of all his experience “I am of all that I have met” (line 23) who is steadily led by the need of knowledge even if this bring him “beyond the utmost bound of human thought”

The third scene of the monologue Ulysses left Telemachus, his son, the “sceptre and the isle”(line 43). Telemachus is the opposite of Ulysses, indeed he has qualities and the virtues of the king “prudence”, “tenderness”, “decent”, “blameless”) suitable of rugged people. Telemachus features are underlined by the alliteration of the sound s. In addition Ulysses’ son is the result of Victorian mentality that Tennyson regrets because he “subdue them to the useful and good”(line 47). The lexical choices “my”, “mine” convey to the interlocutor the idea of Telemachus as a propriety of Ulysses. The function of this paragraph is to focus reader’s attention on the desire to leave of Ulysses, which is also present in Dante’s Inferno.

In the last sequence Ulysses address to the mariners, with who sheared all his experiences, feeling emotions. He stead that even if they are old, they still have the potential to do another noble and honourable adventure before "the long day wanes."(line 67) . He encourages them to make use of their old age because " 'tis not too late to seek a newer world” and showing that the vessels are ready to face “the dark broad seas” .They’re apparently old , but their spirits are still strong and alive. The poem ends with the sentence “to strive , to look, to find, and not to yield” that is the result of Ulysses way of thinking and living, he accepted his destiny but neither in front of time and death his desire of knowledge disappears. In this passage Tennyson uses perception verbs such as “to seek”, “to find”, “to strive” the purpose is to better involve the reader in Ulysses’ condition.

