Analyzing Allusions
Warm-Up Activity

An **allusion** is an implied or indirect reference to something <u>assumed to be known</u>, such as a historical event or person, a well-known quotation from literature, an event or person from the Bible, a famous work of art, or a reference to popular culture. An allusion is a form of comparison and can be used by a writer to suggest ideas by **connotation.** The effectiveness of any allusion depends upon the reader's knowledge of the reference alluded to.

Example 1:

1. Allusion: ___***Bart Simpson***___ Type: (where does it come from?) ___*popular culture*___

2. Reference explanation: ___***Bart is a cartoon character on "The Simpsons," who is a***___ ___***rebellious, underachieving, and devious but oddly charming juvenile delinquent.***___

3. Who would be familiar with this allusion? ___***young people who watch animated shows***___ ___***such as "The Simpsons"***___

4. Connotation of the allusion: ___***Mention of Bart Simpson brings to mind someone who's***___ ___***always in trouble, but manages to charm or connive his way out of it.***___

5. Example: ___***His Bart Simpson attitude wasn't earning him many points in the teacher's***___ ___***classroom.***___

Example 2:

1. Allusion: ___*Waterloo*___ Type: ___*historical*___

2. Reference explanation: ___***The Battle of Waterloo was Napoleon Bonaparte's greatest military***___ ___***defeat, resulting in the end of his rule as the French Emperor.***___

3. Who would be familiar with this allusion? ___***students of history***___

4. Connotation of the allusion: ___***The reference to Waterloo suggests defeat, downfall, or***___ ___***destruction. A writer might refer to Waterloo if he/she wants to suggest that a particular***___ ___***undertaking will result in defeat or failure.***___

5. Example: ___***The football team entered the contest with absolute confidence, not knowing***___ ___***this game would be their Waterloo because of player injuries.***___

Activity One—Brainstorming allusions: Think of some (famous) people/events/ideas that you know well from each of the major categories of allusion. Add them to the chart below:

Type :	Mythology	History	Bible	Art	Pop Culture
(Examples)	*Icarus*	*Waterloo*	*Prodigal son*	*The Last Supper*	*Bart Simpson*

Activity Two—Analyzing Allusions: Select two of the allusions you added to the chart above, and complete the information below, using the examples as models.

Allusion 1 (from chart):

1. Allusion: _____   Type: _____

2. Reference explanation: _____
_____
_____

3. Who would be familiar with this allusion? _____
_____

4. Connotation of the allusion: _____
_____

5. Example: _____
_____

Allusion 2 (from chart):

1. Allusion: _____   Type _____

2. Reference explanation: _____
_____
_____

3. Who would be familiar with this allusion? _____
_____

4. Connotation of the allusion: _____
_____

5. Example: _____
_____

Answers

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses. Following are some examples of people/events/ideas that might be included in the chart.

Type	Mythology	History	Bible	Art	Pop Culture

Examples:
 	
(*Note: Mythology doesn't refer just to the Greek/Roman myths, but these are the ones most people are familiar with.*)
	Icarus
	
	Cupid
	Pygmalion
	Diana
	Hercules
	Narcissus
	Oedipus
	Odysseus
	Theseus
	Cassandra,
	Helen of
	   Troy
	Antigone
	Medea
	Odin
	Valkyries
	Thor
	Quetzalcoatl
	Loki
	Coyote
	Ra
	Osiris
		Waterloo
		
		Pearl Harbor
		Fall of the
		   Roman
		   Empire
		Anthony and
		   Cleopatra
		Henry VIII
		Thomas
		   Jefferson
		Pyramids
		Galileo
		Columbus
		the Gold
		   Rush
		Kitty Hawk
		Lindberg
		Amelia
		   Earhart
			Prodigal son
			
			Garden of
			   Eden
			Adam and
			   Eve
			Cain and
			   Abel
			Jonah and
			   the whale
			the flood
			the burning
			   bush
			Lazarus
			Daniel and
			   the lion's
			   den
			the head of
			   John the
			   Baptist
			three wise
			   men
			manger
			turning water
			   into wine
			crucifixion
			resurrection
				The Last Supper
				
				Mona Lisa
				DaVinci
				American Gothic
				Grant Wood
				Water Lilies
				Monet
				David
				Rodin
				Starry Night
				Van Gogh
				I.M. Pei
				the Louvre
				Andy Warhol
					Bart Simpson
					
					the Beatles
					Britney
					   Spears
					Michael
					   Jackson
					Elvis
					Marilyn
					   Monroe
					Transformers
					Batman
					Spiderman
					Oprah
					Tiger Woods
					Kobe Bryant
					LeBron
					   James
					Twilight
					Harry Potter
					Kim
					   Kardashian
					Beyoncé

Note: By its very nature, "pop culture" references are fluid. Students may suggest an entirely different set of references for this column