

An allusion found in “A Retrieved Reformation”

Literature in context

Definition: An allusion is a reference in a work of literature to a person, place, or thing in another artistic work (literature, art, music, history, painting, or mythology).

Example: O. Henry writes, "Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine's ashes ...' **The allusion here is to the phoenix**, a mythical bird of the Arabian wilderness. It was believed to die flames every 500 or 600 years. Then, the phoenix would be reborn, rising from its ashes.

Allusion: The Phoenix

Purpose: The allusion helps readers understand that Jimmy Valentine has completely reinvented himself as Ralph Spencer.

Define "allusion": _____

Remember, an allusion is understandable only to those with prior or background knowledge of the reference in question (as the writer assumes the reader has). Note: An "allusion" is definitely NOT the same as an "illusion".

There are several ways that an allusion can help a writer:

- Allusions engage the reader and will often help the reader remember the message or theme of the passage.
- Allusions allow the writer to give an example or get a point across without going into a lengthy discourse.

Directions: Read each sentence/quotation below and identify the allusion. If you recognize it, briefly explain its meaning in the space provided.

1. "All right, *Doogie Howser*, so how do you know that this is *really* poison ivy?"
2. "All I did was toss the football to her and the next thing I knew, she was screaming like Marsha Brady saying her nose was broken!"
3. "And which of your friends are going on this trip with you? ... How do I know they're not partying and going all Winehouse *style*?" -"Castle"
4. "My Dad wouldn't let me go out last night until I cleaned my room. When I said I did, he went all Danny Tanner on me using a white glove to check how well I dusted!"
5. "Ugh. I really want to hang out with you guys tonight but I *have* to do well on my test tomorrow. Hmmm, to go out or not to go out; that is the question."
6. "Chocolate was her Achilles' heel."
7. "It was so obvious he was lying—in fact, it couldn't have been more obvious unless his nose started growing like Pinocchio."
8. "When she lost her job, she acted like a Scrooge, and refused to buy anything that wasn't necessary."
9. "He was a real Romeo with the ladies."
10. "This place is like a Garden of Eden."
11. What background knowledge is necessary to fully understand (and appreciate) these individual comics?

