

# Module 5: Poetry


## Topic 3 Content: Common Allusions in Poetry Notes

### Introduction

#### Common Allusions in Poetry

##### Introduction

An allusion is a reference to a well-known event, person, place, or object from history, pop culture, or literature. Recognizing allusions in literature and in your daily life can help you better understand an intended message. Take a moment to explore some common allusions in this interactivity by clicking on each of the thumbnail images.



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#### Art

#### Common Allusions in Poetry

#### Art

Poets can use allusions to famous works of art, especially when referencing beauty. Shown in this image is *The Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel, by Michelangelo. Works of art created by Renaissance painters and sculptors provide the foundation for many art allusions. Allusions to art may include:

- *The Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci;
- The works of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel;
- *The Scream* by Edvard Munch;
- *The Thinker* (statue) by Auguste Rodin;
- *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh; or
- Other famous works of art.



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### Literature

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##### Literature

Poets can even reference other writers and works of literature. Typically, poets use literary allusions to draw comparisons between the themes, tones, or symbols of other works of literature and their works. This image shows the poet Dante at the entrance to Hell. Allusions to literature may include:

- The plays and sonnets of William Shakespeare;
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante;
- The writings of the philosopher Voltaire;
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley;
- *Don Quixote* by Cervantes; or
- Other famous works of literature.



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### History

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##### History

Poets use allusions to historical events and figures to draw comparisons between their writing and the acts of people long ago. This image shows Benedict Arnold, a traitor to America during the American Revolution. Allusions to history and historical figures may include:

- Draco, the strict 7th century B.C. ruler;
- Nostradamus, a French fortune teller;
- Machiavellian, being cunning or tricky in politics;
- The Battle of Waterloo lost by Napoleon; or
- Other famous events or people.



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### Places


#### Common Allusions in Poetry

##### Places

Poets may use allusions to famous locations and architectural features to draw attention to the age, design, or size of something in their poem. This image shows the Colosseum in Rome, an enormous, ancient amphitheater for games and contests. Allusions to locations and architecture may include:

- The Sphinx of Giza in Egypt;
- The Eiffel Tower in Paris;
- Stonehenge in England;
- The Empire State Building in New York; or
- Other famous locations and places.





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### Mythology

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##### Mythology

Greek and Roman mythology provide the basis for many poetic allusions. The stories of the gods, goddesses, and related mortals are well-known. This image shows a statue of Zeus, the powerful king of the gods. Allusions to mythology may include:

- Achilles' heel, a weak spot on a warrior;
- Cassandra, a truth teller who is ignored;
- Helen of Troy, a beautiful woman;
- Apollo, the god of the Sun and poetry; or
- Other famous mythological references.



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### The Bible

#### Common Allusions in Poetry

##### The Bible

Well-known texts and characters from both the Bible, sacred to Christianity, and Judaism's Torah provide allusions for poets. This image shows Adam and Eve, those responsible for original sin. Allusions to the Bible may include:

- The Good Samaritan, a person who helps another person;
- David and Goliath, a battle between a shepherd and a giant;
- Cain, a man who killed his own brother;
- Judas, a man who betrayed Jesus; or
- Other famous biblical references.



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