

What is Allusion?

Worksheet

Allusion is an indirect reference to another text, person, event or work that adds layers of meaning to a piece of writing. It relies on the reader recognising the reference.

Questions

1. What is an allusion?
 - A) A direct statement of a fact
 - B) An indirect reference to another work or person
 - C) A metaphor comparing two objects
 - D) A false claim in a text
2. 'He was Casanova with the ladies.' What is this allusion?
 - A) Reference to a historical lover and seducer
 - B) Direct description of behaviour
 - C) A simile about ladybugs
 - D) A pun on a name
3. Why must a reader know the source of an allusion?
 - A) To impress the writer
 - B) To understand the full meaning and richness of the reference
 - C) Because the writer explains it
 - D) It is not necessary
4. Which is NOT a common source of allusions?
 - A) The Bible
 - B) Mythology
 - C) Scientific equations
 - D) Classic literature
5. She met her Waterloo in that chess tournament.
6. He was no Sherlock Holmes when it came to solving the mystery.
7. Her life became Kafkaesque after the court ruling.
8. Define: What is an allusion?
9. Define: Why do writers use allusions?
10. Define: Difference between allusion and reference?

Answer Key

1. B) An indirect reference to another work or person — Allusion is an indirect reference that relies on the reader recognising it.
2. A) Reference to a historical lover and seducer — Casanova was a famous 18th-century lover; allusion compares him to Casanova.
3. B) To understand the full meaning and richness of the reference — Allusions rely on reader knowledge; without it, the depth is lost.
4. C) Scientific equations — Scientific equations are rarely used as allusion sources in literature.
5. Waterloo = Napoleon's defeat, historical reference. Allusion: comparing the chess loss to a famous military defeat. Adds weight and drama to the loss.
6. Sherlock Holmes = famous detective for brilliant deduction. Allusion: comparing him unfavourably to the literary character. Reader must know Holmes to grasp the comparison.
7. Kafkaesque = reference to Franz Kafka's absurdist writings. Allusion: her life took on surreal, nightmarish, bureaucratic qualities. Depth added for readers familiar with Kafka.
8. An indirect reference to a person, book, event or work that enriches meaning by assuming reader knowledge.
9. To add depth, create connections, build on shared cultural knowledge, and make writing more economical.
10. Allusion is indirect and assumes reader knowledge; reference is direct and explicit.

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