

Exercise walk-through

The function of an allusion ■ 5.7

eXercise

You must be able to

- name the three categories of thing an allusion can reference
- explain what an allusion asks of a reader
- explain what happens when a reader misses one
- analyse an allusion by what it imports

Method — Three categories

Allusions in a text can reference literary works including myths and sacred texts; other works of art including paintings and music; or people, places, or events outside the text.

Method — What it asks

An allusion asks the reader to bring something in from outside. The poem gets, in a word or two, everything the referenced thing carries.

Method — Missing one

A missed allusion does not stop the line making sense — it makes it make *less*. That is why identifying one and looking it up is real analytical work rather than trivia.

Method — What it imports

Ask what the referenced thing is known for, and which part of that the poem wants.
An allusion to a famous betrayal imports the betrayal, not the whole story.

Practice 2.1 ■ 3 marks

Name the three categories an allusion can reference.

Solution 2.1

Method: Three categories

Worked steps

literary works including myths and sacred texts **B1**; other works of art including paintings and music **B1**; people, places or events outside the text **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 2 marks

Explain what an allusion asks of a reader.

Solution 2.2

Method: What it asks

Worked steps

to bring in what the referenced thing carries **B1**, so the poem gains it in a word or two **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

A missed allusion has a cost.

- (a) State it.
- (b) State the question to ask when analysing one.

Solution 2.3

Method: Missing one

Worked steps

(a) the line makes less, though it still makes sense **B1**. (b) what the referenced thing is known for **B1** and which part of that the poem wants **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

Allusions may reference literary works, other works of art, and

- A** people, places or events outside the text
- B** page numbers
- C** the reader's name
- D** nothing further

Solution 3.1

Method: Three categories

A people, places or events outside the text



B page numbers

C the reader's name

D nothing further

Worked steps

A. the CED's third category.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

A missed allusion makes a line

A meaningless

B mean less

C longer

D unreadable

Solution 3.2

Method: Missing one

A meaningless

B mean less 

C longer

D unreadable

Worked steps

B. it means less.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 1 mark

A poem calls a garden “an Eden”.

- (a) State what is imported.
- (b) Explain which part of the reference the poem is likely to want.

Solution 3.3

Method: What it imports

Worked steps

(a) the associations of a first, perfect garden **B1**. (b) probably the loss rather than the perfection **B1**, since Eden is best known for being forfeited **B1**.