

5.7 The function of an allusion

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 13 marks**

KEY WORDS allusion 典故

Objective

Build the skills to explain an **allusion** 典故.

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

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ 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.

■ 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.

■ 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.

■ 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.

2 Practice

2.1 Name the three categories an allusion can reference. [3]

2.2 Explain what an allusion asks of a reader. [2]

2.3 A missed allusion has a cost.

(a) State it. [1]

(b) State the question to ask when analysing one. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Allusions may reference literary works, other works of art, and [1]

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

3.2 A missed allusion makes a line [1]

- | | |
|---|---|
| A | B |
| C | D |
- A meaningless
B mean less
C longer
D unreadable

3.3 A poem calls a garden “an Eden”.

(a) State what is imported. [1]

(b) Explain which part of the reference the poem is likely to want. [2]
