Name & Surname: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Hidden Meanings in Words



Spot allusions and figures of speech in context

About 60 minutes Level ★★★☆☆

What Is an Allusion?

An **allusion** is a quick, indirect reference to a well-known story, person, or idea. Writers expect you to use the **context** around it to figure out the hidden meaning.

- Literary allusion: refers to a famous book or play, like a lonely island adventure.
- Biblical allusion: refers to a story from the Bible, like calling a huge challenge a David and Goliath moment.
- Mythological allusion: refers to an old Greek or Roman myth, like calling a weak spot an Achilles' heel.
- Always reread the sentence before and after to find the **clue** to what it means.



Task A

Build a chain from the start word. Each new word must connect to the one before it. Explain the link in a few words.

hero	→ because… _____	Achilles -> Achilles' heel (his one weak spot)	→ because… _____	
	→ because… _____		→ because… _____	

Same or Different?

Compare words that are easy to mix up.

Key words

allusion: a quick, indirect reference to a known story

context: the words around a phrase that explain it

simile: a comparison using like or as

metaphor: a comparison saying one thing is another

hyperbole: a big exaggeration for effect

mythological: from old Greek or Roman myths

biblical: from stories in the Bible

⚖ Task B

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Explain the difference for each pair in one full sentence. Starter: The difference is that A is… while B is…

allusion vs **illusion**

The difference is…

simile vs **metaphor**

The difference is…

biblical allusion vs **mythological allusion**

The difference is…

literal meaning vs **figurative meaning**

The difference is…

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Match the Meaning

Pair famous allusions with what they really mean.

✂ Task C

Cut out the cards, turn them over, and match each phrase to its meaning. Say how context shows the meaning.

✂ Cut out the cards.

 **Achilles' heel**	**a Trojan horse**	something that causes many problems once opened	 **David and Goliath**
a small underdog facing a much bigger opponent	a huge flood of something, like work or rain	a job that takes huge strength or effort	a gift that hides a secret danger
a small weakness in someone strong	 **Pandora's box**	 **like Noah's flood**	**a Herculean task**

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Allusion Bingo Game

Listen, match clues, and win with words.

⊙ Task D

Listen as the caller reads each clue. Cover the matching word. Get three in a row to win!

BINGO 1

 Pandora	simile	 clue
 personification	context	allusion
 Bible	hyperbole	 Goliath

BINGO 2

 Goliath	 Pandora	simile
 personification	 clue	hyperbole
 Achilles	allusion	 Bible

BINGO 3

 personification	context	 Bible
 clue	hyperbole	 Goliath
 Pandora	metaphor	allusion

BINGO 4

allusion	metaphor	 Achilles
 Goliath	 Bible	 clue
simile	hyperbole	 Pandora

Caller: allusion · context · simile · metaphor · hyperbole · personification · myth · Bible · Achilles · Pandora · Goliath · clue

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Talk It Out

Practice explaining allusions with a partner.

Task E

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Complete the conversation about an allusion in class. Write what Student B says in the empty bubbles.

Student A Our quiz said, The new quiz was a Herculean task! What does that mean?

Student B .....

.....

Student A How did you figure that out from the context?

Student B .....

.....

Student A Nice! Can you rewrite it without the allusion?

Student B .....

.....

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Hidden Meanings in Words

Task F

Describe the word on each card for your partner to guess. Do not say any banned words.

Cut out the cards.

allusion

Don't say:

reference
indirect
story
mention
hint

simile

Don't say:

like
as
compare
metaphor
comparison



Achilles' heel

Don't say:

weakness
weak
heel
hero
spot



Pandora's box

Don't say:

box
open
problems
trouble
myth

How did I do?

Circle a face for each line.

I can explain what an allusion is and name its three types.

I can use context clues to interpret figures of speech.

I can tell the difference between pairs like allusion and illusion.

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Answer sheet: Hidden Meanings in Words

Task A

Answers will vary, e.g. hero → Achilles (a mythological hero) → Achilles → Achilles' heel (his one weak spot) → Achilles' heel → weakness (what the phrase means today) → weakness → challenge (what a hero must face)

Task B

1. An allusion is an indirect reference to a story; an illusion is a trick that fools the eye.
2. A simile compares using like or as; a metaphor compares by saying one thing is another.
3. A biblical allusion points to a story from the Bible; a mythological allusion points to a story from old myths.
4. Literal meaning is exactly what the words say; figurative meaning is the hidden idea the words suggest in context.

Task C

Achilles' heel = a small weakness in someone strong
Pandora's box = something that causes many problems once opened
David and Goliath = a small underdog facing a much bigger opponent
a Herculean task = a job that takes huge strength or effort
a Trojan horse = a gift that hides a secret danger
like Noah's flood = a huge flood of something, like work or rain

Task D

A game: no written answers.

Task E

1. Student B: It means the quiz was super hard and took huge effort, like the strong hero Hercules.
2. Student B: The words quiz and task show it is about schoolwork, and Herculean points to huge strength.
3. Student B: Sure: The new quiz was extremely difficult and took a lot of effort.

Task F

A speaking game: no written answers.

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