

# It's Only an Allusion...

An **ALLUSION** is a reference to an outside work. For example, when a character on a TV show exclaims, "You astound me, Holmes!", it is an allusion to *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. On a less literary level, if you stub your toe and yell, "D'oh!", you're making an allusion to *The Simpsons*. An allusion can be made to a book, a song, or a poem. Even visual allusions can be made to art or film. Movies that are parodies are filled with allusions. For them to be true parodies, they have to imitate (through allusion) the movies they are spoofing. It's really much more complicated to explain than do.



**PART I:** Take a few minutes and come up with an allusion to a commonly known work (book, poem, movie, song, speech, etc.). Taking turns, tell your allusion and let the others around you guess the source. Can you make an allusion to each: book, poem, movie, song, and speech?

**BOOK**

**POEM**

**FILM**

**SONG**

**SPEECH**

**PART II:** Artists and writers use allusions to create meaning. Comparisons (metaphors, similes, analogies) help the reader or listener relate to the material. Comedians rely on allusions. They allude to current events in a humorous matter. But, there's one thing that is completely imperative to an allusion's success: the knowledge base of your audience.

Since you've completed a unit on Greek mythology, your knowledge base has swollen to an all-time high. Mythology is referenced all over the place: advertising, literature, music, and even video games. So, now, you officially *get it*.

**MATCH-UP** *Thinking back on what you've learned, provide some characters from Greek mythology that would fit the description. Briefly jot some reasons why the character fits.*

**THIS CHARACTER...**

**REASON**

**Stood Up For a Principle**

**Made a Big Mistake**

**Risked Everything He or She Had**

**Was a Victim of Fate**

**Took Revenge**

**Became Too Cocky**

**Put Others First**

**Gave Unheeded Advice**

**Showed Great Cowardice**

**Showed Great Bravery**

**Wronged Someone Close to Him or Her**

**Lost Sight of What Truly Mattered**

**Showed Great Cruelty**

**Believed Strongly in Love**

# Mythological Allusions

**PART III:** For this portion, you will be allowed to work with one other person. You will be assigned a poem. Your job is to follow the steps below:

- 1 • Read Your Poem Out Loud To Your Partner
- 2 • Identify the Allusion in your poem  
*• (There may be **multiple** allusions in your poem. Many of these poems are written about a certain mythological character.)*
- 3 • Determine the Meaning of Your Poem  
*• (What is the author's intent? Why did he or she choose this allusion for the poem? What is the tone? Who is the speaker? Discuss.)*
- 4 • Write Your Poem Out (Exactly As It Is Written) On a Large Sheet of Paper
- 5 • Using a Blue Marker, Underline Words That Give Vivid Description (Figurative Language)  
*• (Read the poem a second time to make sure you have not missed anything.)*
- 6 • Using a Red Marker, Circle Any Words That You Cannot Readily Define. Then Look Them Up.  
*• (This may include new words or mythological characters)*
- 7 • Beside the text of your poem, decorate it by drawing at least three images that stand out to you in the poem  
*• (No stick figures. Push yourself. Make it colorful.)*

## PART IV: PRESENT A POEM

You will receive a grade on your presentation of your poem, so make it as good as you can. Place your completed Poem Poster on the board, and read it aloud to the class. Alternate lines: one person reads one line, the other reads the next.

**ALLUSIONS** You should have researched the allusions in your poem. You will be called upon to explain the significance of the allusions and how they generate meaning in the poem. What is the poem about? Who is the speaker? What is the tone of the poem? If you do not have an answer for these questions, you will lose points.

**QUESTIONS** A prize will be awarded for the highest Poem Poster score. Therefore, your classmates will be out to get you. They will ask you hard questions about words in the poem, characters in the poem, etc. If you are unable to answer a legitimate question, you will lose points.

**COMMENTARY** Give a brief commentary on the poem. What were its strong points? What were its weak points? What kind of TWIST did the poet put on an old story? You're not required to tell whether you "liked" the poem or not. Odds are you're not going to immediately like an assigned poem.



# MYTH-WORDS

The planets are not the only things that owe their names to mythology. Hundreds of words that we use every day are allusions to the ancient gods and goddesses. Look at the list of characters and creatures from Greek and Roman mythology listed below. In your group, think of common words that could have come from these names. You will receive one point for each word you guess correctly. The city-state with the most points will (obviously) be the winners.

**GAEA (Greek Mother Earth)**

**TERRA (Roman Mother Earth)**

**GIANT**

**TITAN**

**ATLAS the TITAN**

**COSMOS (Created Universe "In Good Order")**

**HELIOS**

**EOS (Goddess of Dawn)**

**SOL (Roman God of Sun)**

**LUNA (Roman Goddess of Moon)**

**ATLANTIDES (Daughter of Atlas)**

**HYPNOS (Greek God of Sleep)**

**SOMONUS (Roman God of Sleep)**

**MORPHEUS (Greek God of Dreams)**

**the FATES**

**LETHE (River of Forgetfulness)**

**MYSTES (Priestesses of Demeter "Closed Mouths")**

**JUNO**

**MAIA (Mother of Hermes)**

## Mythological Allusions

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**PHOBUS (Son of Ares, Personification of Fear)**

**MARS**

**HERMES**

**MUSES**

**SYRINX (Nymph Loved by Pan, Turned into a Reed)**

**JANUS (Roman God of Doorways)**

**POLYHYMNIA (Muse of Music)**

**HYGEIA (Greek Goddess of Health)**

**SALUS (Roman Goddess of Health)**

**FURIES**

**TANTALUS (Soul Tortured in the Underworld)**

**EROS**

**PAN**

**SON of HERMES and APHRODITE**

**GEMINI TWINS (Brothers of Helen of Sparta)**

**JOVE (Roman Name for Zeus)**

**IRIS**

**FORTUNA (Roman Goddess of Luck)**

**MEDEA (Witch Lover of Jason)**

**FLORA (Roman Goddess)**

**FAUNA (Roman Goddess)**

**CITY-STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_



*The Birth of Venus* by Sandro Botticelli, 1480

## THE ART OF ALLUSION

Mythology has been an inexhaustible source of artistic inspiration since the stories comprised therein were first told. Even in ancient Greece, the gods provided the perfect subject for a sculpture or a pottery painting.

For this section, you may work with a partner.

Log onto a computer and visit <http://www.artcyclopedia.com>

Using the ARTWORKS BY TITLE button, search for a painting depicting a scene from Greek or Roman mythology

*TIPS: Enter the name of a character you remember quite a bit about. Also remember that many of the great artistic masters referred to the gods by their Latin names.*

Some of the links may be broken since the encyclopedia searches outside databases such as museums and galleries.

Don't just choose the first piece of artwork you find. Look for one that you think is interesting.

When you have chosen your painting, print out two copies: one for you and one for your partner.

**WRITE** at least half a paragraph about this painting. If it references a specific scene from mythology, describe the scene. If you chose a painting, discuss the colors in the picture. Discuss the artist's interpretation of the character. (Example: Does Venus look different than you imagined her?) Explain why you picked this piece of artwork. Hypothesize why the artist chose this scene as the subject for a piece of artwork. Explain how you would have created it differently. Make sure you include the artist's name and the title of the artwork.

When you have finished your paragraph, attach the printed copy of the painting to the back and turn it in.

**M**ythological allusions are not only invaluable when inspiring new words, poetry, and art, but they also come in handy when inspiring customers to buy a product. References to mythology pop up in magazines and on billboards with only one purpose: to help you identify with a



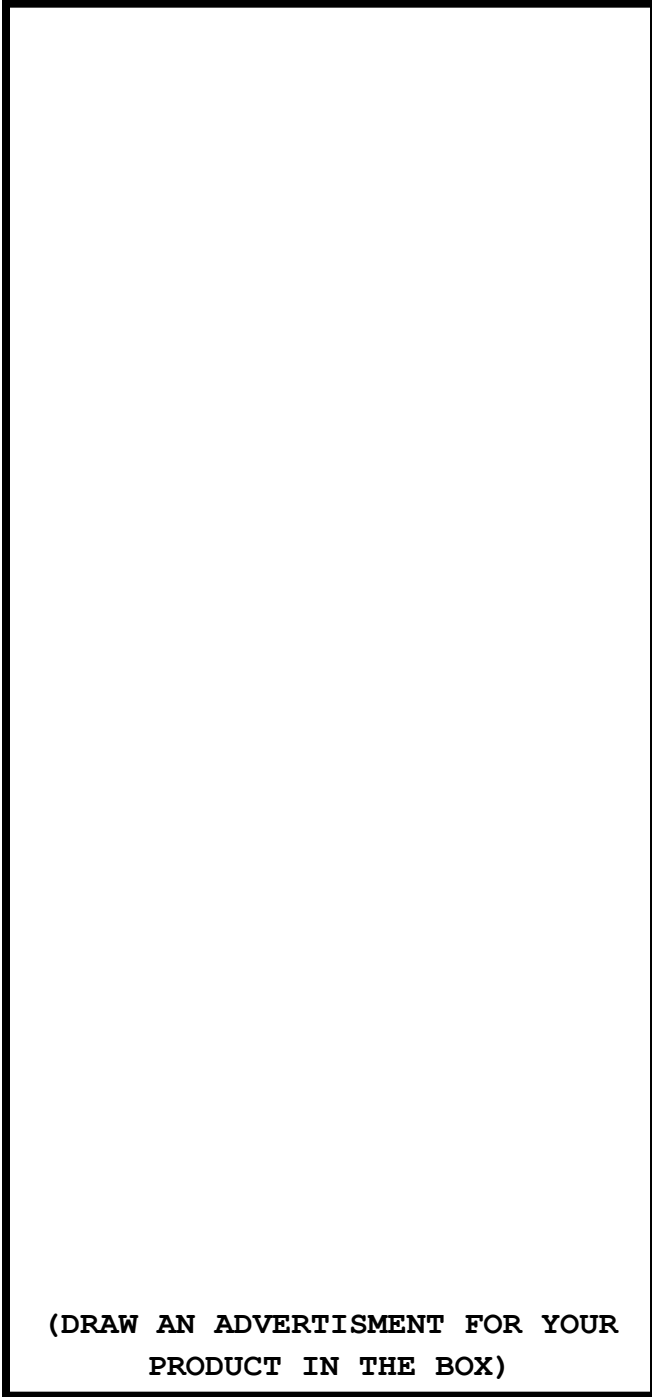
product. Track shoes use the winged feet of Hermes as a symbol. The *Odyssey* mini-van lets you know that it's capable of going on a very long journey. And *Nike*—well, that wasn't originally the name of a shoe company. It was the Greek goddess of victory.

**YOUR JOB** is to create a new product based around a mythological allusion. Think of a product that would closely align with a character or symbol from mythology. There should be a strong connection between the two, which you will be asked to explain.

**DRAW** an advertisement (using color) in the box provided, and answer all the questions pertaining to your product.

**POINTS** will be awarded for the top three products created.





(DRAW AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR YOUR  
PRODUCT IN THE BOX)

A PRODUCT  
of MYTHOLOGY

PRODUCT NAME:

MYTHOLOGICAL  
ALLUSION:

DESCRIPTION  
of PRODUCT:  
(WHAT DOES IT DO?)

HOW DOES THIS TIE IN  
with the ALLUSION?