

Allusion

Definition:

- An allusion is a short reference to another person, place, thing or idea of literature, political, religious, or cultural importance.
 - It is rarely more than a small comment.
 - It is often lost if people do not know to what it is referring.
 - It is expected that the reader know to what the speaker/narrator/writer is alluding.
 - Many are as simple as referencing a song in a novel.
 - It is used to compare one thing or person within the story to another thing or person outside of the story or to make the speaker sound more knowledgeable.

Examples:

from Dante's Inferno

I doubt if Phaethon feared more - that time
he dropped the sun-reins of his father's chariot
and burned the streak of sky we see today -
or if poor Icarus did - feeling his sides
unfeathering as the wax began to melt,
his father shouting: "Wrong, your course is wrong" (Canto XVII: 106-111).

Dante uses allusions to Greek mythology to compare the fear felt in his novel to the fear felt by Phaethon and Icarus, who fell from the sky.

from Edgar Allen Poe's The Raven

[Note: Pallas is another name for Athena]

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door— Perched, and sat, and
nothing more.

By mentioning Pallas in this poem, Poe lets the reader know that the narrator is an intelligent and knowledgeable person.

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