

## 8. Allusion

→ is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place or event, or to another literary work or passage.

(sometimes confused with the term illusion)

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Examples: (i) Elizabethan Thomas Nashe's "Litany in Time of Plague"

Brightness falls from the air,  
Queens have died young and fair,  
Dust hath closed Helen's eye.

(here the unidentified Helen in the last line alludes to Helen of Troy)

(ii) T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922) is also a great example of allusion.

✓ Some books written on Literary Allusion: (for deep understanding)

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(i) Alexander Pope:  
The Poetry of Allusion

(by R.A. Brower, in 1959)

(ii) The Figure of Echo:  
A Mode of Allusion  
in Milton and After

(by John Hollander, in 1981)

(iii) Wordsworth's Art  
of Allusion (1988)

— by Edwin Stein

(iv) Allusion to the  
Poets (2002)

— by Christopher Ricks

→ Since allusions are not explicitly identified, they imply a fund of knowledge that is shared by an author.

→ Most literary allusions are intended to be recognized by generally educated readers of the author's time.