

Biblical Allusion Out of Class Assignment

Adapted from Norma Wilkerson—College Board Presenter

November 19, 2009

I. Objective

Our objectives are to understand one of the most important sources of allusions in the world today. The Old Testament is the sacred Bible of Judaism. Along with the New Testament, it is included in the Bible of Christianity. Along with the Koran, both the Old and New Testaments are accepted as holy writings by the followers of Mohammed. The Bible continues to affect the moral and political ideas of much of the world. It is also one of the greatest influences on western literature. Much of the western literature cannot be fully understood or appreciated without a familiarity with the Bible. With stories from the Old and New Testaments in your literary repertory, reading should become an even richer and more rewarding experience.

II. Critical Responses:

In a well-developed word-processed double-spaced paragraph or paragraphs, write a critical response to seven allusions of your choice using the information you received in class. Each of these critical responses should begin with a well-constructed topic sentence; each topic sentence should accomplish two goals:

- a. Identify the biblical character, story, or incident alluded to
- b. Identify—in your critical opinion—the purpose behind the author/poet/artist's use of the particular allusion.

These critical responses are not EXPOSITORY in nature. They should persuade, not merely summarize. The topic sentence, therefore, should serve as the basis for an analytical argument.

After you establish the author/poet/artist's purpose, you should complete the paragraph by identifying the source of the biblical allusion by providing relevant concrete details from that source, and by explaining what the

author/poet/artist accomplished (or failed to accomplish) by including (or modifying) the biblical source.

IMPORTANT: you must address the effectiveness of the allusion: in order to judge the effectiveness you will have to argue that the biblical allusion either contributed or detracted from the purpose of the author/poet/artist. Finally, as you write your paragraphs, you should bring into play all other relevant literature, history, and/or current events.

Please print each double-space paragraph on a separate sheet of paper and include the phrase "With honor" and your signature after each paragraph to indicate that your work is yours alone and that you have not used any unauthorized information in completing this assignment.

To help you with this assignment, I have included a sample response with important notes at the end.

Note: Political cartoons, which can be found on the Internet, are a great source for you to use for this assignment. Below are some sites you might consider. Remember your allusions must be school appropriate.

<http://www.politicalcartoons.com/>

<http://www.cagle.com/>

<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>

***Sample allusion:** you must include a copy of the allusion (political cartoon, advertisement, or quote from literature.*

Potential Topic Sentences:

- 1) The cartoonist satirizes contemporary Israeli aggression against Palestinians over the Golan Heights.
- 2) The artist criticizes the use of four thousand year old biblical texts to resolve modern land disputes.
- 3) The cartoonist attacks Israel's use of its military forces to impose their religious beliefs on others.

Sample Response:

Source: Genesis 15:17-21

In a not altogether sympathetic allusion to the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, this cartoonist criticizes Israel's use of four thousand year old biblical texts to resolve modern land disputes; specifically, the artist mocks modern Israel's biblical claim to the Golan Heights. This much disputed region was among the lands **God promised Abraham and his descendants. It is part of the territory captured by the Israelis in the 1967 war.** The pilot visible in the plane is Menachern Begin, the Prime Minister of Israel when the cartoon was published. Begin, along with other conservative Israelis, argued that the Golan Heights offered its occupants a strategic position from which to monitor the Aab countries bordering part of modern Israel. On these grounds and on the grounds that the God gave the Golan Heights to their ancestors, as recorded in Genesis, Begin and others argued against returning this land to the Palestinians. The potentially uncomplimentary aspect of the cartoon is the fact that the Japanese pilots who wrecked havoc on Pearl Harbor reportedly cried, "Tora! Tora! Tora!" during their raid. This additional element increases the effectiveness of the cartoon, especially for Americans who might not otherwise be concerned with conflicts in the Middle East. With this element, the cartoonist implies an imperialistic bent in the conservative factions of the Israeli government who use the Torah as part of their justification for refusing to return any of the land Israel captured during the '67 war. While the cartoon may be amusing to some, anyone sympathetic to Israel's claim to the Golan Heights could take umbrage. No

doubt the cartoonist played on both these possibilities, with success.

Important Note 1: The boldfaced sentences include clear statements of critical opinion and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the biblical allusion. Each of your paragraphs must include comparable sentences.

Important Note 2: This paragraph is nineteen lines and about 230 words long.. Your paragraphs should be of comparable length. If your Critical Response is closer to 300 words or more, you should write it in two paragraphs.

Important Note 3: DO NOT suggest or argue that an allusion supports or attacks the Bible, its stories, or its doctrines. None of the biblical allusions included in your quizzes is a critique of its biblical source. All are appeals to the audience to use a common literary tradition to understand an author/poet/artist's purpose.