An allusion is a reference to some well-known thing or idea. In our society, for example, people often allude to sports phenomena: “This project is the Super Bowl for us.” Common allusions often take their reference from the surrounding society, so it’s little wonder that the Salem Puritans allude to their religion as knowledgeably and as frequently as we allude to sports.

**DIRECTIONS:** Use a dictionary or other reference work to explain the italicized allusion in each of the following items.

1. At the beginning of Act II, a kind of cold war exists between John and Elizabeth because of past events.

2. Although an honest and strong man, John Proctor has an *Achilles heel*—his relationship to Abigail.

3. Something between a *siren* and a *harpy*, Abigail proves to be Proctor’s undoing.

4. Reverend Hale brings an *ivory-tower* approach to his examination that ill fits the world he finds.

5. With the *sword of Damocles* above his head, Proctor flusters and cannot remember the Ten Commandments.

6. Even a person with the *patience of Job*, however, would grow angry at the injustice of innuendo as evidence.
Literary Analysis: Comparing the Use of Allusion

An allusion is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art. Writers often make allusions to stories from the Bible, to Greek and Roman myths, to Shakespearean plays, and to political and historical events. With an allusion, a writer can bring to mind a complex idea clearly and simply.

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer these questions to compare and contrast two writers’ use of the element of allusion.

1. What poem that you read in Unit 6, Part 3, has an allusion in its title?

2. What type of allusion is it?

3. Explain the meaning of the allusion.

4. Would a biblical or Roman or Shakespearean allusion also have been appropriate for the poet to use? Explain your answer.

5. What type of allusion is found in *The Crucible*?

6. Why do you think Miller used this type of allusion for the characters in *The Crucible* to speak?

7. Would Greek or Roman or Shakespearean allusions been appropriate in *The Crucible? Explain your answer.