

Allusion Practice

Directions: Using Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail", find three examples of allusion (historical events, famous people, the Bible, or mythology). Write out each allusion and explain why Dr. King used it.

Note: Dr. King's letter "can be considered a persuasive essay in the form of a letter. A persuasive essay is a short nonfiction work in which a writer seeks to convince the reader to think or act in a certain way. Persuasive writers often use rhetorical devices, or special patterns of language that help to clarify ideas and evoke emotions."—*My Perspectives* (Volume One) © 2017 by Savvas Learning LLC.

Example of allusion: (Please do not use this for your answer.)

"But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."

Explanation: Dr. King wrote his letter in response to White clergymen criticizing him for leaving Atlanta and coming to Birmingham to protest against racial injustice, violence, and discrimination. He alludes to Biblical stories because they are religious leaders (It is assumed that they have read the Bible and know scriptures). He compares his actions to the Apostle Paul who left his home to do something good—something God would have expected him to do because it was right; Paul carried the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world and King says that he is carrying the "gospel of freedom" to Birmingham because the Black people there need his "aid" due to the pervasive injustice.

Reference: [Letter from Birmingham Jail, by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. \(letterfromjail.com\)](http://letterfromjail.com)