DEFINITION: An Allusion is a brief, indirect reference to a person, place, object or event, assumed to be known to the reader. The writer does not explain the background information, but assumes the knowledge on the part of the reader.

“The guy is a real Shakespeare” is an allusion because it is indirect, presumes the reader knows who Shakespeare is, and implies an abstract thought, namely, that ‘the guy is a real poet.’ But just referring to an author by name, e.g., “Thomas Aquinas wrote an average of forty pages a day for thirty years,” while it presumes we know who Aquinas was, is a direct reference; as such, it is not an allusion.

There are several ways that an allusion can help a reader and a writer:

* Allusions engage the reader and will often help the reader remember the message or theme of the passage or understand a character better.
* Allusions allow the writer to give an example or get a point across without going into too much detail.

Here are some examples that allude to people or events in literature or the bible:

* “When Suzie lost her job, she acted like a Scrooge, and refused to buy anything that wasn’t necessary.”
* Scrooge is an extremely stingy character from Charles Dickens’, A Christmas Carol.
* Therefore, readers can infer that Suzie is thrifty.
* “Romeo would be proud of how Andy is with the ladies.” Romeo is very romantic in expressing his love for Juliet.
  + - Therefore…
* “Virginia enters a Garden of Edenwhenever she goes into her backyard.”
  + - The Garden of Eden was the paradise God made for Adam and Eve.
    - Therefore…

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In the short story, *The Indisputable Weight of the Ocean* there are several allusions. A grasp of these allusions will help you to better understand the main character Edmund and why he does what he does.

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| Tutankahman’s tomb | Winston Churchill | Et tu, Brute? |
| Napoleon’s last campaign at Waterloo | Berlin wall | Roman coliseum |
| gladiators | pagan rituals | Encyclopedia Britannica |