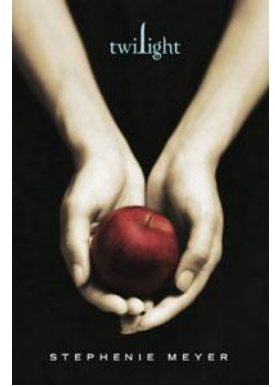

Popular Allusions and References



Name : _____
Period: _____ Mr. Williams' Advanced Placement English Literature Class

- * Miami Northwestern Senior High
- * Design and Architecture Senior High
- * Miami Jackson Senior High

The following characters and events are common allusions in poetry and prose. Knowing them well will help you raise your AP score.

Abraham & Isaac:

In Genesis, Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. Abraham got ready to obey. At the last moment, his hand was stayed by an angel of the Lord. Isaac was spared and Abraham received the Lord's blessing. **This story is symbolic of man's willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice to demonstrate his faith and trust in God. It is also symbolic of the idea that faith shall be rewarded.**

Absalom:

In Samuel II, Absalom was David's favorite son who was killed in battle while attempting to usurp his father's throne. David grieved: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" **The word alludes to paternal grief, and to a lost and faithless son.** William Faulkner used *Absalom!* as the title of the novel.

Achilles:

In Greek legend, Achilles was the hero of Homer's *Iliad* who was the model of valor and beauty. He slew the Trojan hero Hector but was himself invulnerable to wounds because his mother Thetis had held him by the heel and dipped him in the river Styx. Later he was slain by Paris who shot an arrow into his heel, which had not gotten wet. **Today the term, "Achilles' heel" refers to the vulnerable part of a person's character.**

Adonis:

In Greek mythology, at Byblos in Lebanon a beautiful baby boy was born and left without parents to care for him. [Aphrodite](#) fell in love with him, and placed him in the care of the goddess of the underworld for safekeeping. Unfortunately when she went back to claim the boy, the other woman had also fallen in love with him and would not give him up. As a compromise it was agreed the boy would live half of the year with each of them. Nurtured by the love of these two women, he grew into a handsome and influential young man in the hills above Byblos. He became known as *adon*, which meant "lord," and then as Adonis. Tragically, one of the male gods became jealous of Adonis. The rival changed himself into a wild boar and fatally gored the handsome young man. As Adonis lay dying in the arms of Aphrodite, drops of his blood spilled out and stained the anemone flower crimson red. **This symbolizes death and resurrection; the ills of youth and beauty, and the ills of jealousy.**

Agamemnon:

In Greek mythology, he was the king who sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to win the gods' favor for his war against Troy. Also of Orestes and Electra and unfaithful husband of Clytemnestra.

Albatross:

Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge first used this in *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, where an albatross indicated the sailor's demise, weight and struggle. **Something that causes persistent deep concern or anxiety or that in an encumbrance.**

Alice In Wonderland:

Little Alice follows a rabbit down a rabbit hole and finds herself in a strange country with a collection of humans and animal characters who act with insane illogic. **Her story can be used to describe surreal situations in which people and behavior are comically strange, whimsical, contradictory, and bizarre.**

anal retentive:

Someone who is orderly, punctual, obsessed with detail, overly conscientious, and excessively frugal.

Antigone:

Daughter of Oedipus who performed funeral rites over her brother Polynices in defiance of Creon's order. **Her story can be seen as symbolic of the choice between the gods' authority and civil authority, or the choice between justice and law.**

Armageddon:

In Revelation, which predicts apocalypse, Armageddon is the location of the final cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil. **The term is often used in literature to refer to an apocalyptic climax, or a time of judgment.**

Atalanta:

In Greek mythology, she was a huntress who promised to marry any man who could outrun her in a footrace. She was defeated by Hippomenes, who threw three golden apples to distract her as she ran. **She is the archetype of speed, strength, and daring foiled by a trick of the intellect.**

Atlas:

In Greek mythology, Atlas was one of the Titans who rebelled against Zeus. As punishment for his actions, he was condemned to forever hold up the heavens on his shoulder (**literally "has the weight of the world on his shoulders"**). **Symbolically he represents someone who takes on a lot of responsibility.**

Apollonian:

Having of pertaining to the characteristics of the Greek god, Apollo; rationality, intellect, a spirit of justice, creativity. Opposite of Dionysian, which is instinctive, irrational, uninhibited, and destructive.

Augean stables:

A condition or place marked by great accumulation of filth or corruption.

The stables in which King Augeas kept 3000 oxen, and which had not been cleaned for 30 years. The cleaning of these stables was accomplished by Hercules, who diverted the river Alpheus through them.

best-laid plans:

A warning that even the most careful plans can be confounded by events.

Blind leading Blind:

"And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." In the Bible, blindness frequently represents a lack of spiritual enlightenment. **This particular reference from Matthew implies that wisdom cannot be attained through the teachings of the unenlightened.**

Burning Bush:

In Exodus, God used this device to catch Moses' attention when he wished to assign him the task of bringing the Israelites out of Egypt. **Because the bush burns but is not consumed, this tale is symbolic of initial reluctance, followed by proof of authoritative truth. The burning bush also represents physical proof of divinity.**

By Bread Alone:

In Matthew, Christ said "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word...of God." In other words, not all human needs are met by food; human kindness is important too. (An example is Lear's "O! Reason not the need" speech.) **Also refers to the idea that faith can provide spiritual sustenance.**

Benedict Arnold:

(January 14, 1741 [O.S. January 3, 1740]^{[1][2]} – June 14, 1801) was a general during the American Revolutionary War who originally fought for the American Continental Army but defected to the British Army. **A traitor.**

Cain and Abel:

In Genesis, Cain murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy. **This became a theological reference to innocent blood, and the archetypal brother-versus-brother conflict.**

Camel through a needle's eye:

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for striving to strain out a gnat, yet being willing to swallow a camel. In Matthew and Luke he stated it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.

Cassandra:

In Greek mythology, Cassandra was a daughter of Priam, king of Troy, who possessed the gift of prophecy but was fated by Apollo never to be believed. **As an allusion, she represents an accurate but unheeded prophet of doom.**

Cast the first stone:

In John, a woman caught in adultery was to be publicly stoned. But Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her..." **This is a warning against hypocrisy.**

Cast thy bread upon the waters:

From Ecclesiastes, this injunction advises us to share our wealth with those who need it and says that it shall be returned to us.

Conversion of Saul:

In Acts, Saul, a Roman citizen, actively persecuted the Christian believers. While on the road to Damascus, Saul was **blinded** by a "light from heaven" and heard the words of God. **Three** days later, he accepted baptism and "the scales" fell from his **eyes**. Saul is known as St. Paul, one of the major figures in the early Christian church.

Crucifixion:

The death of Christ on the cross, believed by Christians to be the **sacrifice** that redeemed fallen humankind.

Cat's Paw:

A person used to serve the purpose of another; a toll for someone else's activities, usually mischief or evil doing.

Cinderella

One who gains affluence or recognition after obscurity and neglect, a person or thing whose beauty or worth remains unrecognized (after the fairy tale character who gains a prince and recognition after a life of pain and hardship).

catch-22:

A problematic situation for which the only solution is denied by a circumstance inherent in the problem or by a rule; an illogical, unreasonable, or senseless situation.

Camelot:

The site of King Arthur's palace and court, and thus **a time, place, or atmosphere of idyllic happiness.**

canary in a mine shaft/coal mine:

First warning of danger.

Daedalus & Icarus:

In Greek mythology, Daedalus, the great architect, designed the labyrinth that held captive the Minotaur of Crete. Imprisoned along with his son Icarus, he designed wings of wax and feathers that would allow them to escape. Despite warnings not to fly too high, Icarus soared too close to the sun god Apollo. The wax on his wings melted, and he plunged to his death. **It is symbolic of the danger involved in daring to enter "the realms of the gods."** James Joyce's protagonist Stephen Daedalus, in *Portrait of the artist as a Young Man*, dared to question the strict teachings of his

Catholic upbringing. **Also, it shows the dangers of defying authority, specifically parents.**

Damocles, sword of:

A symbol of impending peril in Greek mythology. Damocles was seated at a sumptuous banquet only to look up to see a sword suspended by a thread over his head. This spoiled his pleasure. **In modern literary usage, the term indicates impending disaster.**

Damon and Pythias:

In Greek mythology, these were two inseparable friends who would lay down their lives for one another.

They symbolizes lasting friendship.

Daniel:

This biblical hero was cast into the lions' den to punish him for his fidelity to his Christian God; he was divinely delivered. The tale of Daniel in the lions' den is representative of extreme bravery and unwavering faith in the face of adversity. Daniel also interrupted Nebuchadnezzar's dream; **thus an allusion to Daniel in literature may also be interpreted as referring to an uncanny ability to "read the handwriting on the wall."**

Daphne:

In Greek mythology, a nymph; her father was a river god; Apollo sees and falls in love with her. She runs away because god and nymphs can't marry; her father turns her into a laurel wreath to save her. She represents **purity and chastity; reverence of the laws; innocence.**

David and Bathsheba:

In Samuel, David had an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. When she became pregnant, David sent her husband, Uriah, into battle where he was killed. David and Bathsheba married. The child conceived during their affair died, but Bathsheba later gave birth to Solomon.

David and Goliath:

As a young man, David slew the "giant" (6 feet 9 inches!) Philistine champion, Goliath. **The battle and victory become symbolic of the just defeating the unjust, despite the latter's superior strength.** Modern example, "Jack & the Beanstalk."

Dirty Harry:

A tough guy who tends to overreact in stressful situations, never hesitating to break the rules. Depicted from a 1971 action movie starring Clint Eastwood.

Dionysus or Bacchus:

Greek and Roman name, respectively, of the god of wine, revelry, the power of nature, fertility, and emotional ecstasy. He is usually thought of in terms of overuse or excess. Ancient drama festivals were dedicated to him. Today he is representative of the Nietzschean philosophy, the creative-intuitive principle. Modern example: the movie *Animal House*.

divide the sheep from the goats:

This phrase refers to the bibliographical parable explaining the time of judgment, when the faithful (good and saved) would be separated from the unfaithful (condemned). **It alludes to the division of the true from the false, the worthy and the unworthy.**

doublespeak:

Language used to deceive usually through concealment or misrepresentation of truth; also gobbledygook.

Elisha and Elijah:

In I and II Kings, God chose a man named Elisha to follow Elijah and they became good friends. Elisha served Elijah faithfully. But one day, Elijah said, "Elisha, you stay here. God is sending me away." "As God lives, I will never leave you," said **Elisha**, and he continued to stay with Elijah. Each time Elijah told Elisha to stay behind, Elisha refused to leave his friend. "What can I do for you before I go?" asked Elijah. "I want a double share of your spirit," said Elisha. Then a chariot of fire swept down from heaven and took **Elijah** away. But God answered Elisha's request, and like his friend, Elisha became a powerful prophet too. When Elisha asked for twice as much of Elijah's power, he was asking to be the one who would continue Elijah's work as a leader of prophets. This request was similar to the custom in which the first-born son received a double portion of the father's inheritance.

Elisha did not want to outdo Elijah for his own pride; Elisha wanted to do great things for God. And God granted Elisha's request. During his lifetime, Elisha did nearly twice as many miracles as Elijah. **A story of friendship, loyalty, and the positives of obstinacy; reverence to God's word.**

Eye for an Eye:

In Leviticus, the passage "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" recommends the practice of exacting specific and equal punishment for a transgression or injury; for example, killing a murderer for his crime of killing another. (This was later revised in Matthew: "...whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.")

"Et tu, Brute?":

Words of Julius Caesar when he recognized his friend Marcus Junius Brutus among his assassins. **This is a reproach for an act of treachery or betrayal by a friend or ally.**

4 horsemen of the apocalypse:

In Revelation, John prophesies the end of the world, the final struggle between good and evil. **He uses the metaphor of four enormously powerful horsemen as the ultimate destructive forces of divine retribution: war, death, plague, and famine. In literature, the four horsemen remain symbolic of powerful destructive forces.**

fall on one's sword:

Sacrifice Oneself. Voluntarily take full responsibility—and voluntarily pay the price—for a disastrous turn of events.

far from the madding crowd:

A peaceful locale, away from the frenzied hurly-burly of normal existence.

fire and brimstone:

Taken from the New Testament Book of Revelation, when preachers preach a “fire and brimstone” sermon is to threaten the congregation or others with damnation in hell for their sins, or to **send such a message in a passionate, fiery style.**

garden of Gethsemane:

This is the garden outside of Jerusalem where the agony and betrayal of Jesus took place. **Symbolically, a place of great physical or psychological suffering.**

good Samaritan:

In spite of a long standing mutual hatred between Jews and Samaritans, a good Samaritan stopped to help a Jew who had been waylaid by thieves, thereby becoming the prototype of a good neighbor. **The term has come to mean anyone who stops to help a stranger in need.**

Grail or Holy Grail:

Subject of multiple legends, most prominently as the chalice or cup that caught the blood from Christ's side and which he had used at the Last Supper; probably of even more ancient origin as a fertility symbol. In Arthurian legend, it is the object of a quest on the parts of the Knights of the Round Table. **The Holy Grail brings health and sustenance to those who hold it and may be found only by the pure of heart.** Modern examples: Indian Jones and Monty Python.

gilded youth:

Wealthy, privilege youth—those touched with gold; often meaning young wastrel, or those who do not wear their privileges with grace or restraint.

gild the lily:

Also, **“to paint the lily”.** To add unnecessary ornamentation to something already beautiful, and thus to detract from, cheapen, or spoil its beauty; to excessively embellish an object, making it gaudy, vulgar, or overdone.

heap coals of fire:

In Proverbs, it is said that if you treat your enemy with kindness, it will sting him as though you had “heap[ed] coals of fire” upon him. **Teaches a lesson in mercy and cautions “be kind to your enemy.”**

Herod:

King of the Jews who ruled Judea at the time of Jesus' birth. In order to assure his reign, he is reputed to have ordered the massacre of Bethlehem's male children born within a year of Christ's birth. (“To author Herod” is to surpass the evil of the worst tyrant.)

house has many mansions:

In John, Christ assured Peter that his father's house (i.e. heaven) has many mansions. In other words, there is room in heaven for all who believe.

Iphigenia:

In Greek mythology, she was the eldest child of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. She was sacrificed by her father in exchange for a guarantee of fair winds for the Greek fleet on its way to Troy. (**Compare to Abraham and Isaac.**)

Isaac:

In Genesis, Isaac's son Jacob was a recipient of the promise or covenant with God.

Iron sharpens iron:

The phrase “iron sharpens iron” is found in [Proverbs 27:17](#): **“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”** There is mutual benefit in the rubbing of two iron blades together; the edges become sharper, making the knives more efficient in their task to cut and slice

Jacob:

The biblical patriarch whose twelve sons were the founders of the 12 tribes of Judah/Israel; his name was later changed to Israel.

Jacob's Ladder:

In Genesis, Jacob dreamed of a ladder from Earth to heaven and heard the voice of God promise land and favor to his descendants. He awoke to place the stone on which he had been sleeping as the first stone of a future temple of God. **The ladder is symbolic of the path to God and to heaven.** The dream also contains references to the Promised Land and to the covenant with the “chosen people.”

Jacob and Esau:

In Genesis, Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau, who born first, was stronger than his brother, but Jacob was the more clever of the two. Esau sold Jacob his birthright in a moment of weakness; later, through artful manipulation, Jacob received his father's blessing, originally meant for Esau. A literal reference to the pair may allude to

discord between siblings, to the politics of the birthright, or to the idea of the fortunate or favored son.

Jephthah's daughter:

In Judges, this is the story of another father's sacrifice of a daughter to keep a vow. Jephthah vowed to sacrifice whatever living creature emerged first from his house in return for victory over the Ammonites. His daughter, who was the first to leave the house, would not let him break his vow but asked for two months' respite to walk the mountains and mourn her virginity—which she retained. **He is the model for later Christian saints who died to protect their virginity.** Modern examples: Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes."

Jezebel:

In Kings, she was a Phoenician princess who married King Ahab and urged him to sin; she became a formidable enemy of the prophet Elijah. In Revelation, Jezebel is the name given to a false prophet. **In literature, the term usually refers to a seductive woman who leads the hero astray.** Modern example: Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Jekyll and Hyde:

One having a two-sided personality, one side of which is good and the other evil; the good and evil sides of an individual, and, by extension, of a group, an organization, or a class.

John the Baptist:

The prophet who prepared the way for his cousin Jesus as Messiah; the forerunner of Christ's ministry. He was beheaded by Herod at the request of Salome.

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife:

In Genesis, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. When he refused, she accused him of attempted rape, and he was imprisoned. He was released by the pharaoh in order to interpret his dreams.

Joseph and his Brother:

In Genesis, Joseph was the 11th of Jacob's sons. His brothers became jealous of him and sold him into slavery. He accurately interpreted the pharaoh's dream of seven lean cattle swallowing up seven fat cattle to mean that famine would follow years of plenty. The pharaoh heeded his warning, grain was stored, and Egypt was saved. Joseph ultimately forgave his brothers and shared grain with their tribes.

Joseph in Egypt:

Joseph was made governor of all the lands of Egypt, shared grain with his brother's tribes, and brought about the migration of Jacob and all his family to Egypt.

Jonah:

Old Testament prophet commanded by God to warn Nineveh of its sinful condition. Instead, he took his ship in the opposite direction. God struck the ship with a terrible storm, and the crew threw Jonah overboard. God caused Jonah to be swallowed by a huge whale. Jonah prayed and repented,

and after three days the whale deposited Jonah safely onto dry land. **This event is thought to prefigure Christ's death, three days in the tomb, and resurrection.** Modern example: Pinocchio.

Judas Iscariot:

One of the original 12 Apostles, he betrayed Jesus by selling him out for 30 pieces of silver and identifying him with a kiss. Later he committed suicide, by hanging himself. **Regarded as the prototype of the ultimate betrayer.**

Judgment of Paris:

In Greek mythology, a beauty contest was held to determine the fairest of the goddesses. Paris, the handsomest man in the world, was the judge; the contestants were Hera, Athena, Athena, and Aphrodite (representative of greatness, prowess in battle, and love, respectively). Angered at not being invited to Thetis' wedding, Eris, the goddess of discord, threw an apple marked "To the Fairest" into the gathering, provoking the goddesses to fight over it. Paris ultimately chose Aphrodite and was promised the love of Helen in return. This sparked the vents that led to the Trojan War. **Consider similar elements in "Snow White" ("Mirror, mirror, who is the fairest?"); the apple as fruit of discord; the disastrous choice of love and beauty over less ephemeral attributes.** Consider also the following similarities between Paris and Oedipus: both were exposed on a hillside as infants to protect their fathers; both were rescued by shepherds; and both were cursed by fate.

kindness of strangers:

Being given help and assistance from those one may not know. It lends itself to the good side of man's nature and shows our humanity.

kill/shoot the messenger:

To punish the bearer of bad news, even though the person has done no more than deliver the information. Taken from Sophocles' *Antigone*, "None love the messenger who brings bad tidings."

know them by their fruits:

In Matthew, Christ warns against wolves in sheep's clothing. He instructs his followers to know them by their fruits: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." **This injunction entreats us to judge others by their actions, rather than by appearances.**

labors of Hercules:

In Greek mythology, Hercules had to perform 12 fabulous tasks of enormous difficulty before becoming immortal:

- i. killing the Nemean lion,
- ii. killing the Hydra,
- iii. capturing the hind of Artemis.
- iv. Killing the man-eating Stymphalian birds,

- v. Capturing the oxen of Geryon,
- vi. Cleaning the Augean stables,
- vii. Capturing the Cretan bull,
- viii. Capturing the horses of Diomedes,
- ix. Capturing the girdle of Hippolyta (queen of the Amazons)
- x. killing the monster Gorgon,
- xi. capturing Cerberus,
- xii. and taking the golden apples of Hesperides.

Laius:

In Greek mythology, Laius was the father of Oedipus and the original husband of Jocasta. Killed by Oedipus in fulfillment of the oracle, Laius is a major figure in the Laius-Jacosta-Oedipus myth in which son kills his father and takes his place as both king and husband. **The tale is symbolic of the, a familiar theme in folklore.**

lamb to the slaughter:

Originally, in Isaiah's prophecy, this was the servant of the Lord who took the sins of his people on himself and sacrificed himself for their expiation, much as actual goats or lambs were sacrificed. In the New Testament, Christ is frequently referred to as the sacrificial lamb. **The Christian belief is that he atoned for the sins of all men taking them upon himself and sacrificing his life in fulfillment of Isaiah's very specific prophecy.**

Last Supper:

The Last Supper was Jesus' last meal with his disciples before his crucifixion. Virtually, every aspect of the story has both literal and symbolic associations. During this dinner, Christ instituted a number of sacraments, especially **Communion**, in which bread and wine after transubstantiation become the "body and blood" of Christ. **In consuming the bread and wine, followers of Christ accept him as their savior.**

Lazarus:

In the New Testament, he is the brother of Martha and Mary of Bethany, whom Jesus raised from the dead after four days, prefiguring the resurrection. **Lazarus is symbolic of one who lives after a declared death. (Compare to Sisyphus).**

Leda:

In Greek mythology, Zeus is said to have come to Leda in the shape of a swan to father four legendary children: Castor, Clytemnestra, Pollux, and Helen. The story of Leda and the swan is a favorite theme of artists from Michelangelo to Dali.

lilies of the field:

In Matthew, this is used as an example of the way God cares for the faithful. **If he "dresses" the lilies so beautifully, surely he will provide raiment for his children.**

Lilliputian:

Descriptive of a very small person or of something diminutive, trivial or petty – after the Lilliputians, tiny people in *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathon Swift.

lion in winter:

A proud, prominent, strong man whose great strength and dignity have been eroded by age and adversity, shown quintessentially through King Henry II in James Goldman's play *The Lion in Winter*.

lion lies down with the lamb:

In Isaiah, this is the classic image of the idyllic harmony and universal peace of the earthly paradise that will come into being when the Messiah arrives.

loaves and fishes:

In Matthew, Christ multiplied five loaves of bread and two fishes into sufficient amounts to feed a crowd of 5000 (not counting women and children). When all had eaten their fill, there were still **12** baskets of scraps left.

Lolita:

The title and central character of a 1955 novel by Vladimir Nabokov; **a precociously seductive girl.** Generally applied to preadolescent girls who knowingly seductive, or are displayed seductively in advertising or fashion, or who are the object of the sexual fantasies of older men.

Lorelei:

A woman of irresistible allure; Heinrich Heine's Die Lorelei (1827) established the idea of a supernatural siren who combs her blonde tresses and lures sailors to their doom with her song.

Lot/Lot's Wife:

In Genesis, Lot was a moral inhabitant of the sinful city of Sodom. A nephew of Abraham, Lot escaped the destruction of the city by angels of the Lord. Abraham had argued with the Lord over his intended destruction of the innocent along with the guilty. Lot and his family were warned of their impending doom, but his sons-in-law "thought he were joking." Lot took his wife and daughters and fled. God warned them not to look back, but Lot's wife could not resist, and was turned into a pillar of salt. **The tale of Lot's wife is illustrative of the idea that God punishes those who are disobedient.**

magi:

Latin plural for *magnus*, "wise man." Traditionally, they have the names Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar. The gifts the magi brought to the Christ child were gold (symbolic of royalty); frankincense (the emblem of divinity); and myrrh (the symbol of death). **The Christmas story of the 3 wise men visiting the manger represents the "showing forth" of the newborn Christ child to the Gentiles (non[Jews]. This moment of awareness is known liturgically as "the Epiphany,"** the term James Joyce used for his and his characters' moments of enlightenment. Modern example: O. Henry's short story "The Gift of the Magi."

mammon:

From the Aramaic word for *wealth*, as used in the Bible. Mammon became the evil personification of riches and worldliness and the god of avarice. Modern examples: In Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Mammon personifies the evils of greed and wealth.

Mary (the Virgin):

In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Mary is the mother of Jesus and wife of Joseph. Symbolic of purity, virginity, and maternal love, she is the object of special devotion in the Roman Catholic church and the major subject, along with her son, of thousands of works of art, especially the art of the Renaissance. **(Compare to the Greek/Roman goddess Artemis/Diana, known variously as goddess of the hunt, virginity, and motherhood.)**

Mary Magdalene:

She is the reformed prostitute who may have been the woman saved from the mob in the "let him cast the first stone" story. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. She was present at the Crucifixion and is said to have been one of the first to see the tomb open 3 days later (Easter Sunday). **She represents the meaning of true contrition and the power of forgiveness.**

man Friday:

An efficient and devoted aide or employee; a right-hand man.

Milquetoast:

A timid, weak, or unassertive person; from Casper Milquetoast, who was a comic strip character created by H.T. Webster.

massacre of the innocents:

At the time of the birth of Jesus, Herod, the king of Judea, hoping to squelch any possible threat to his throne, ordered the death of all male babies born in Bethlehem during a two-year period determined by the appearance of an extraordinary "star in the East." Joseph, warned in a dream, took Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt, thus escaping the massacre. (See Herod.)

Medusa:

In Greek mythology, Medusa was the chief of the 3 Gorgons—monsters who had snakes for hair, and faces so horrifying that just one sight of them turned men into stone. She was killed by Perseus, who took her head with a sword given to him by Hermes. Pegasus, the winged horse, sprang from her blood.

Minotaur:

In Greek mythology, this was a monster with a bull's head and a man's body. Poseidon sent a bull from the sea as a signal of favor to Minos. As a result, Minos was crowned king of Crete, but he neglected to sacrifice the bull to Poseidon. Angered, Poseidon caused Minos' wife, Pasiphae, to become

enamored with the bull. The offspring of their union was the Minotaur, which was imprisoned by Minos in the labyrinth designed by Daedalus. Modern examples: Mary Renault's novels *Bull From the Sea* and *The King Must Die*.

moses:

He received the Ten Commandments from Jehovah on Mt. Sinai. Following the pattern of the archetypal hero's life, Moses was a foundling child rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and raised to be a prince of Egypt. As an adult, he led his own people, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, through the Red Sea on dry land, and on a 40-year journey searching for the Promised Land. Because he committed one arrogant sin—striking a rock to bring forth needed water—he himself was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. **(Compare to all cautionary tales from mythology that warned heroes not to fly too high, or to assume godlike powers. Like Moses, Icarus, Prometheus, and Bellerophon also suffered from their arrogance.)**

mother of all:

The ultimate, the biggest of something, of anything, the standard by which all others are gauged. Used frequently with a tone of irony or mockery.

Myrmidons:

In Greek mythology, these were people from Thessaly who accompanied Achilles at the siege of Troy. They were known for their brutality and savagery. According to legend, they were originally ants who were turned into human beings to populate one of the Greek islands.

never-never land:

J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan introduces this idea. A fantastical place where no child has to grow up.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream:

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful and longest-reigning king of Mesopotamia. He brought Babylon to the heights of its power during the sixth century B.C. and is credited with creating the fabled Hanging Gardens of Babylon. He conquered Jerusalem, burned the Temple of Solomon, and exiled the Israelites to Babylon. During his reign, he had a series of prophetic dreams and visions, which he was unable to interpret. He questioned all the wise men of his kingdom and condemned them to death because they could not interpret his dreams. Then Daniel came forward and explained that the dream of a statue with a head of gold, chest, and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay foretold the succession of kingdoms that would follow Nebuchadnezzar's—each less glorious than the last. Daniel also foretold the emergence of an indestructible kingdom of God. Daniel was rewarded with a high position.

Nemesis:

In Greek mythology, she was the personification of righteous anger. Nemesis punished those who transgressed upon the natural order of things, either through hubris or through

excessive love of material goods. Currently, the word usually refers to an unbeatable enemy.

nirvana:

This Sanskrit word means “going out” like a light. Buddhists believe that in this doctrine of release, a state of perfect bliss is attained in life through the negation of all desires and the extinction of self. Nirvana is union with the Buddha, an ideal condition of harmony.

Noah and the flood:

In Genesis, when God decided to punish the wicked of the world with a terrific flood, he chose Noah, a good man, to build an ark. Noah, his family, and pairs of the animals of the world lived on the ark during the 40 days and 40 nights of the deluge, while everyone and everything else perished. After the ark came to rest on the top of Mt. Ararat, Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives, and the animals emerged to repopulate Earth. The rainbow that appeared represents God’s promise that never again would he destroy Earth by flood. Flood themes appear frequently in mythology. Examples: the epic of Gilgamesh in Sumerian legend; Vishnu in Hindu mythology, Deucalion in Greek mythology.

not with a bang but with a whimper:

A half-hearted, ignominious, or anticlimactic end, a fizzle rather than an explosion.

Nuremberg defense:

The defense— “I am just following orders”—which was unsuccessfully offered by Nazis who were put on trial for war crimes following World War II at Nuremberg, Germany. **Now the term is used when offered by someone who has carried out orders to perform what he knows to be a criminal or reprehensible act.**

noble savage:

a representative of primitive humankind as idealized in Romantic literature, **symbolizing the innate goodness of humanity when free from the corrupting influence of civilization.**

Odyssey:

9th-century B.C. epic poem, attributed to Homer, which recounts the story of the 10-year-long homeward journey of Odysseus and his men after the Trojan War. The *Odyssey* is a source of our knowledge of many of the major Greek myths and legends, as well as the basis for many modern works. The most outstanding of these is James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. More recently, the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Was based loosely on the *Odyssey*. **A great journey, especially a long and complicated one. Such a journey may be physical, but this word is often applied to mental, emotional, or spiritual searches.**

Oedipus:

In Greek mythology, Oedipus was the son of Laius and Jocasta. In response to an oracle, Oedipus was abandoned at birth and raised as the son of Polybus and Merope, king and queen of Corinth. When grown, Oedipus learned of the prophecy that foretold that he would kill his father and marry his mother—two of the worst taboos in human civilization. In an attempt to avoid fulfilling the prophecy, he left his adopted land, Corinth, and fled to Thebes, his actual birthplace. En route, he encountered – and in his pride and ignorance slew – Laius, the king of Thebes. He also answered the riddle of the sphinx, saving Thebes from paying the annual tribute of its best youth to the monster. As a reward, he was made king of Thebes and he married Jocasta, the queen and his mother, thus fulfilling the prophecy and continuing the curse of the House of Atreus. Freud based his well-known theory of the “Oedipus complex” on this myth. **Relating to a child’s positive sexual feelings toward the parent of the opposite sex and jealous or hostile feelings toward the parent of the same sex.**

O.K. Corral:

Referencing the notorious gunfight between the Clanton gang and the Earp Brothers in October 26, 1881, in Tombstone, Arizona. **The site of a showdown or of a dramatic, probably violent confrontation. Also, the confrontation itself.**

on little cat feet:

Silently, delicately, almost undetectably. The phrase is taken from “Fog,” a poem by American Carl Sandburg (1878-1967).

original sin:

The state of sin that, according to Christian teaching, characterizes humans as a result of Adam’s fall. **The idea is this: humankind is inherently corrupt, from the moment of conception, because we are all descended from Adam and therefore tainted with his sin.** Redemption is only possible only through baptism, the ceremonial initiation into Christianity through purification by water.

Ozzie and Harriet:

The paradigm of the 1950s white-bread nuclear family; the norm of NORMALCY. **An oversimplified, idealized view of the era.** Mom was always home (and well dressed), Dad was an amiable presence, although nobody really knew what he did for a living. Most Americans quixotically remember the 50s like this television comedy series *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

Ozymandian:

Something huge or grandiose but ultimately devoid of meaning. An ironic commentary on the fleeting nature or power and the enduring power of human egotism.

Orwellian:

an adjective describing a situation, idea, or societal condition that George *Orwell* identified as being destructive to the welfare of a free and open society.

out, damned spot!

A sentence from the play *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, spoken by Lady Macbeth, the wife of the title character. Her husband has killed the king of Scotland at her urging, but her guilt over the murder gradually drives her insane. When she speaks this line she is sleepwalking, and she imagines that a spot of the king's blood stains her hand. **Referencing a situation or issue that is hard to get rid of.**

Proteus:

In Greek mythology, Proteus was Poseidon's herdsman and a prophet. He was a sea god who could assume any form or shape he wished. In current usage, *protean* means *versatile*.

phoenix:

This mythical bird lived for 500 years, burned to death, and then rose from its own ashes to begin life anew. **For this reason, the phoenix frequently symbolizes death and resurrection, or eternal life.**

Pandora:

In Greek mythology, she was the first woman, comparable to Eve in biblical allusion. Like Eve, Pandora, whose name means "all gifts," was given the power to bring about the ruin of mankind. Zeus gave her a closed box filled with all the evils of the world and warned her not to open it. Her curiosity got the better of her, when she opened the box, all the evils flew out, and they have continued to harm human beings ever since. **Today, Pandora's box refers to a gift that turns out to be a curse. It also refers to the unanticipated consequences of one's actions, as in "opening a can of worms."**

Paradise Lost:

A lost or ruined EDEN or UTOPIA, a place of bliss, felicity, or delight destroyed by human greed or foolishness; the title of John Milton's 1667 poem – it tells the story of Adam and Eve's loss of Eden through their disobedience to God.

Persephone:

(Roman name: Proserpine) In Greek and Roman mythology she was the goddess of fertility and queen of the underworld. The daughter of Zeus and Demeter (Ceres), she was kidnapped by Pluto (Hades). Her mother grieved so deeply that all earthly crops died and perpetual winter threatened. **A bargain was struck: Persephone would spend half the year with Hades—hence autumn and winter—and return to her mother for the half the year, allowing the revival of the crops during spring and summer. The myth of Persephone is the classical explanation for the seasons.**

Peter Pan:

A young man who resists adult responsibilities; a perpetual adolescent. J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* introduces this idea.

Peyton Place:

A town that appears quiet and innocent but turns out to have lots of steamy goings-on and dark secrets beneath the surface. Grace Metalious' bestselling 1956 novel *Peyton Place* introduces this idea.

pharisees:

In Matthew, these were members of an ancient Jewish sect that emphasized strict observance of the Law. Self-righteous and separatist, they refused contact with any not of their kind. Consequently, the term *Pharisees* developed a negative connotation, and is usually interpreted to mean *hypocrites*.

Philistines:

These traditional enemies of the Israelites fought against Samson, David, and other major Jewish heroes. **In contemporary usage, the term connotes an ignorant, crude, and rude person lacking in culture and artistic appreciation and characterized by materialistic values.**

Pollyanna

The protagonist from Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna*. **This is a person characterized by impermissible optimism and a tendency to find the good in everything, a foolishly or blindly optimistic person.**

Pontius Pilate:

The Roman governor before whom Jesus was tried. When he could not convince the mobs to release Jesus, he washed his hands, symbolically cleansing himself of what was to follow, and turned Jesus over for crucifixion. **In contemporary usage, a Pontius Pilate is one who betrays his own moral convictions and submits to the pressures of others, "washing his hands of the matter."**

Pooh-Bah

A pompous, ostentatious official, especially one who, holding many offices, fulfills none of them; a person who holds high office.

primrose path:

A path of ease, or of least resistance, or pleasure—especially sensual pleasure—which leads to probable downfall or ruin. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* depicts this.

Procrustes:

In Greek mythology, Procrustes was a thief of Attica who placed anyone he captured in an iron bed. If the person was too tall, he cut off whatever hung over; if too short, he stretched the person until he fit. **The term "Procrustean bed" connotes a rigid standard to which exact conformity is enforced.**

Prodigal Son:

In one of Jesus' parables, this is the younger son who wastes his "portion," or his inheritance. His father forgives him and celebrates his homecoming over his older brother's protests. Modern examples: Prince Hal in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part II*; the children's tale "Peter Cottontail."

Prometheus:

(Greek for “forethought”) A Titan and the champion of men against gods, Prometheus stole fire from Mount Olympus and gave the precious gift to humans. As punishment for his transgression, Zeus had him chained (or nailed) to a mountain where an eagle tore out his entrails each day. The organs regenerated over night. He was eventually freed by either Hercules or Zeus (accounts differ). He is the hero of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Unbound* and Shelley’s poem “Prometheus Unbound.” He is also the subject of the golden statue above the skating rink at Rockefeller Center in New York City.

Pygmalion:

In Greek mythology, Pygmalion was a sculptor and king of Cyprus who created a statue of Aphrodite. He fell in love with his own creation, and Aphrodite herself answered his prayer: the statue came to life, and he married her. The statue is named Galatea in other versions of the story. George Bernard Shaw’s play *Pygmalion* and the musical *My Fair Lady*—the story of Professor Higgins and his “creation” Eliza Doolittle—are based on this myth.

Pyrrhus:

King of Epirus in ancient Greece. For 25 years he waged a series of wars. He often won, but lost too many soldiers in the process. At the time of his death, he had succeeded only in bringing Epirus to ruin. **A pyrrhic victory is one that was won at much too high a price.**

Pas de deux:

a dance for two people, typically a man and a woman. **An intricate relationship or activity involving two parties.**

pound of flesh:

Something that one is strictly or legally entitled to, but that it is ruthless or inhuman to demand.

poetic justice:

An outcome in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded, usually in a manner ironically appropriate.

Quantum Leap/Jump:

An abrupt transition from one level to another; it suggests a mammoth change.

Quixote, Don:

Don Quixote, the 17th century novel by Miguel de Cervantes, whose character is so memorable that his name gave birth to an adjective: **quixotic**. The word means “romantically impractical,” “unrealistically idealistic,” and often “extravagantly chivalrous.” Being overly idealistic and dangerously hopeful.

Rachel and Leah:

In Genesis, these are the two wives of Jacob. Jacob had been promised Rachel in marriage if he worked seven years for her

father. He was tricked into marrying Leah, Rachel’s older sister. After promising to work another seven years for Laban, the girls’ father, he also married Rachel. Rachel and Leah are referred to together as the matriarchs of Israel.

rainmaker:

Someone who brings clients or business to a firm, especially a law firm; in a larger sense, someone who makes things happen.

read the riot act:

Deliver a rigorous reprimand or warning. The context could range from an exasperated teacher telling noisy children to sit down and be quiet to a head of state reprimanding a foreign ambassador for the actions of the ambassador’s government.

rebel without a cause:

A moody delinquent who rebels more for the sake of rebellion than for any comprehensible reason. The phrasing is often change to the opposite—someone who is a “rebel WITH a cause” is troublesome for a reason. Taken from the title of the 1955 film starring James Dean.

Romulus and Remus:

In Roman mythology, these are legendary twins, sons of Mars and a vestal virgin who was put to death at their birth. The boys were thrown into the Tiber but were washed ashore (compare to Moses) and suckled by a she-wolf. They were found by a herdsman and his wife, who brought them up as their own. As adults, Romulus and Remus decided to found a city (Rome) on the spot where they had been rescued from the Tiber. When an omen declared Romulus to be the true founder of the city, the brothers fought, and Romulus killed Remus. **Note the similarities between this story and the story of Cain and Abel (the demigod status of the founding father) and Oedipus (the coincidental herdsman).** Virgil’s great Roman epic poem, the *Aeneid*, was so titled because the twins were said to be descendants of Aeneas.

Ruth

Ruth was a Moabite widow who refused to abandon her mother-in-law, Naomi. Her lovingly loyal behavior became the model for good women to follow. Eventually, she married Boaz and became the great-grandmother of David. **Her intertribal marriage to Boaz also represents openness in the world.**

rape of Sabine women:

In Roman legend, Romulus “solved” the problem of finding wives for the men in his new settlement by stealing and raping the virgins of the Sabines after luring the men away to a celebration. After a subsequent war, the tribes intermarried by accord, and the settlement thrived.

Salome:

In Matthew, because Salome so pleased Herod, the governor of Judea, by dancing at his birthday feast (legend has it that

it was the "Dance of the Seven Veils"), Herod promised her anything she asked for: Salome's mother had divorced her husband and married Herod. John the Baptist had denounced the marriage and was imprisoned for doing so. Salome asked John the Baptist's head, and she was given it on a platter.

sow dragon's teeth:

To incite strife; to plant the seeds of future conflict. From Greek myth in which the teeth of a dragon, sown in the earth, yielded a crop of armed warriors [see Cadmus].

satyrs:

In Greek mythology, a race of goat-men, sometimes considered woodland demigods, with the tail and ears of a horse and the legs and horns of a goat. They were followers of Dionysus and were best known for chasing wood nymphs. Satyrs were the major feature of the satyr play, which traditionally followed a tragic trilogy. The satyr play treated serious matters in a grotesquely comic way. Shakespeare used vestiges of the form in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Salman Rushdie alludes to the satyr figure in *Satanic Verse*. Also, e.e.cummings' "goat-footed balloon-man."

Scylla and Charybdis:

In Greek mythology, a jealous Circe turned the nymph Scylla into a sea monster with 12 feet, 6 heads on long necks, and menacing rows of teeth with which she devoured sailors. The terrible Charybdis, hurled into the sea by Zeus, hid under rocks and created a whirlpool. Together they were a formidable danger to ships passing through the Straits of Messina. **They came to be understood as metaphors for the dangerous rocks on one side of the passage and a devastating whirlpool on the other. The popular phrase related to the pair is "between a rock and a hard place."**

Solomon:

Traditionally the wisest and grandest of the kings of Israel, Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba. When asked by Jehovah what gift he most wanted, he responded "an understanding heart," and ever after was renowned for his wisdom. The story of the two women who both claimed to be the mother of the same baby remains as the model of the "Solomon-like" decision. Solomon decreed the baby be cut in half to give each woman her "just" due. The false mother agreed, but the true mother was willing to give up her claim so that the baby would live. Solomon returned the baby to the true mother, of course. *He also directed the construction of the greatest temple that bore his name. The romantic verses in the Bible are also credited to him.*

Sermon on the Mount:

This is the sermon given by Jesus (as recorded by Matthew) in which he expresses the essence of his teachings. The sermon begins with the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor," the meek, the sorrowful, etc. **The beatitudes (the word means "happiness") the promise religious happiness for those who lack material goods and are in need of the spiritual blessings of God.** The sermon as a whole

outline rules for behavior according to God's law. The speech is usually interpreted as the fulfillment of the law of the Old Testament.

siren song:

An irresistible appeal; especially a deceptive and dangerous lure. A seductive woman may be called a siren.

Sisyphus:

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus cheated death by telling his wife to forgo the usual burial rites when he died, thus giving him permission to return to the underworld to punish her. This angered Zeus, and when Sisyphus died a second time, many years later, he was condemned to eternally roll a huge rock up a hill, only to have it roll back down as he was about to reach the top. Albert Camus used Sisyphus as the metaphor for the modern man's situation in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. **He serves as a constant metaphor for the never-ending struggle to complete one's task, only to be thwarted by still more hurdles.** A Sisyphian task is a burden or labor that never ends [Sisyphian].

Sodom and Gomorrah:

The two major cities, according to Genesis, which were destroyed by heaven with fire and brimstone (traditional elements of hell) because of their wickedness. **They stand as a symbol of debauchery.**

sound and fury:

Great but meaningless noise and commotion. Usually when this occurs it is "told by an idiot." (William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* or Shakespeare's *Macbeth* Scene 5 where he learns of his wife's death.)

sphinx:

In Greek mythology, the sphinx was a monster with the face of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird. She posed a riddle to the citizens of Thebes and devoured the young men who could not answer it. When Oedipus, en route to Thebes, correctly answered the riddle, the sphinx killed herself in chagrin. The riddle is usually given as "What walks on four legs in the morning, on two at midday, and on three in the evening?" (Answer—Man: he crawls on all four as a baby, walks upright as an adult, and uses a cane in old age.) In Egypt, the sphinx was usually seen as a huge statue with the body of a lion and the head of a man, representing the sun god Ra. The largest remaining sphinx is 2/3 the length of a football field. **The sphinx also represents monumental silence in literary references.**

stealing the apples from the Hesperides:

In Greek mythology, the Hesperides were the daughters of Hesperus whose golden apples were guarded by a dragon. One of Hercules' labors was to slay the dragon and steal the apples. (Compare to the serpent and the tree in the Garden of Eden.)

Styx:

In Greek mythology, the Styx was one of the 5 rivers of hell (the others are Acheron, Cocytus, Phlegethon, and Lethe).

Charon ferried the dead across the river Styx to the underworld. The Styx figures heavily in Dante's *Inferno*. **Lethe turns up frequently in literature as an illusion to forgetfulness.**

swords into ploughshares:

Although the sword appears as a weapon of war or a symbol of wrath more than 400 times in the Bible, this use in Isaiah refers to the hope that a peaceful age will eventually eliminate the needs for weapons of war. Beating swords into farms implements is comparable to the practice of converting munitions factories into home appliance factories after times of war in the 20th century. The phrase is often used by speakers advocating peace.

Svengali:

One who attempts, usually with evil intentions, to persuade or force another to do his bidding. This term originates from a character in George DuMaurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*. Trilby is a beautiful woman who falls under the power of the musician Svengali, a sinister fellow who uses hypnosis to turn her into a great singer.

Swan Song:

This is a metaphorical phrase for a final gesture, effort, or performance given just before death or retirement. The phrase refers to an ancient belief that swans sing a beautiful song in the moment just before death, having been silent (or alternatively, not so musical) during most of their lifetime.

Tantalus:

In Greek mythology, Tantalus was a progenitor of the House of Atreus (source of many of the extended Greek tragedies from Agamemnon to Orestes) who is best known for his punishment in Hades. He suffers eternal hunger and thirst while standing in the middle of a body of clear, cold water that dries up as he reaches for it. The fruit of a heavily laden bough hangs above his head, but remains just out of reach. His name gives us the word *tantalize*.

Tartuffe:

Hypocrite or someone who is hypocritical; central character in a comedy by Moliere.

30 pieces of silver:

This is the amount paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus by identifying him, leading to Jesus' arrest and Crucifixion. Legend has it that he threw it back at the Jewish priests just before he hanged himself. **The phrases "thirty pieces of silver" and "Judas kiss" refer to betrayal and treachery.**

throw down/pick up the gauntlet:

To issue or accept an open challenge. It comes from the conventions of medieval combat. A gauntlet was a glove, part of one's armor. To challenge someone, a knight would throw his glove at another knight's feet. The second knight would take it up if he intended to accept the challenge, in which case a jousting match might ensue.

through a glass darkly:

Writing to the Corinthians on a gift of Christ's perfect love, Paul prophesied a time of perfect love and clarity of knowledge of God, in contrast to the time when people saw God indistinctly or "through a glass darkly." **This passage is used frequently in wedding ceremonies and, conversely, by writers who wish to convey the opposite of perfect love and clear knowledge through irony.**

Tower of Babel:

In Genesis, after the flood, the descendants of Noah built a tower that was meant to reach to heaven. But Jehovah, unhappy with their arrogance and hubris, "confounded" their speech so they could not understand each other, and then he scattered them over the Earth. This is the biblical explanation for the diversity of languages in the world. The Tower of Babel has come to represent a madly visionary scheme, and the word *babel* now means a senseless uproar in which nothing can be understood. It is also related to the word *babble*. **Once again, this is a cautionary tale warning that humankind should not aspire to the heights of the gods.**

Trojan horse:

A large wooden horse designed and built by the Greeks, supposedly as a gift to Athena. Because the Greeks had been unable to take the walled city of Troy during their ten-year siege, they instead tried deception. Placing a troop of soldiers inside the hollow wooden horse, the Greeks pretended that they were sailing homeward. The unsuspecting Trojans brought the horse and opened the gates of the city, letting in their comrades, and they took Troy at last. **The phrase "beware of Greeks bearing gifts" has its origin in this tale.**

trail of tears:

The original Trail of Tears was the journey of the Native American tribes forced to migrate (1829-43) to new homes in Oklahoma Territory. **More generally, a trail of tears is a cruel, unjust ordeal endured by a group that consequently suffers great loss.**

Typhoid Mary:

One who is by force of circumstances a center from which something undesirable spreads. Mary Mallon, an Irish immigrant in the early 20th century was the first documented case of a healthy carrier of typhoid in the U.S., and the only one quarantined for life. She was a cook, which meant that she spread the infection while earning a living. In 1907, She was put in quarantine for three years, after she was found out to be a carrier; she was told to avoid working in the cooking industry. In 1915, she was discovered cooking at a New York maternity hospital after an outbreak was

traced back to the hospital and was she was returned to quarantine, where she remained until her death in 1938.

Uncle Tom:

An epithet applied to blacks who are deemed over-eager to win the approval of whites. Someone thought to have the timid servitude like that of a slave to his owner; from the humble, pious, long-suffering Negro slave in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by abolitionist Harriet Beecher-Stowe; also, Stephen (Samuel L. Jackson) in *Django Unchained*.

Utopia:

In literature, the title of the 1516 book by Sir Thomas More, who gave the name, meaning *nowhere* in Greek, to his imaginary island. More describes the ideal society according to the ideals of the English humanists, who dreamt of a land where ignorance, crime, poverty, and injustice did not exist. Since then the name has been applied to all attempts to describe or establish a society in which these ideals would prevail. Interestingly, many 20th century writers have focused on the anti-utopian, or dystopian, world. Examples of this kind of work include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

unkindest cut:

The cruelest, most personally devastating injury or insult; often inflicted by a person who is thought to be a friend. This phrase comes from William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Mark Antony displays the cuts in Caesar's clothing made by the murderers' dagger, and points to one made by Brutus, Caesar's friend.

waiting for Godot:

To wait endlessly, and in futility, for something to happen. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* introduces this idea.

Waterloo:

The town in Belgium where Napoleon was resoundingly defeated in 1815. **In current usage, the term refers to a crushing and final defeat.**

we're not in Kansas anymore:

A humorous statement implying that circumstances have changed dramatically, usually from the ordinary and familiar to the exotic or weird. The line comes from the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*. As Dorothy emerges from the ordinary house the tornado has carried from dull sepia-toned Kansas into Technicolor brilliance and lush flowers of the Land of Oz, she gazes about in wonder and says to her little dog, "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

white sepulcher:

The expression comes from the Bible; a sepulcher is a tomb constructed of stone or set in a cave. In biblical times, Jewish tombs were whitewashed so that people would know they were there and not approach too closely. **It means someone or something that is inwardly corrupt or wicked but outwardly virtuous.**

white man's burden:

The **alleged duty of white peoples to manage the affairs of the less developed nonwhite peoples.** Used by Rudyard Kipling in an 1899 poem by that title. Today the phrase, unless used ironically, suggest that condescending, racist elitism of the imperial era and the persistence of such attitudes.

white noise:

Moving away from sound waves, by extension, the term "white noise" has come to refer to **a steady stream of meaningless messages that one learns to ignore.**

winter of our discontent:

Period of dark resentment, dissatisfaction, or restless unhappiness. The phrase comes from the opening of Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

witch-hunt:

The searching out for persecution of persons accused of Witchcraft. Also, the searching out and deliberate harassment of those, such as political opponents, with unpopular views. The term often characterized what is considered an unjust, malicious, or hysterical persecution, as with the Salem witch trials, which took place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692.

worship the golden calf:

To sin against God, an action by rebellious Hebrew wanderers who cast the golden calf from their own jewelry and worshipped it. **Thus, to bow to a new god, the false idol of wealth; to sell out one's principles for money.** This expression comes from one of the most famous episodes from Exodus (32:1-6) in the Bible.

Xanadu:

An idyllic, exotic, or luxurious place. It is a poetic idealized version of the city of Xandu, or Shangtu, in Mongolia, which is celebrated in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1797 poem, *Kubla Khan*.

yellow brick road:

The term is from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum's story published in 1900 and made into a movie musical in 1939. **A path that leads to the end of troubles, an end that may not be as expected at the outset.**

yin and yang:

In Chinese philosophy, two cosmic forces that combine to produce all that comes to be. Yin is the passive, feminine principle—dark, cold, wet; yang is the active, masculine principle—light, warm, dry.

Young Turk:

An insurgent in a political party; a radical. One who advocates changes within an established group. Young Turks wanted to reform and modernize the Ottoman Empire. Largely supported by students, this group in 1908 deposed their sultan and replaced him with his brother, and introduced other reforms, hoping to prevent the breakup of the empire.

Zuzu's petals:

This phrase comes from *It's a Wonderful Life*, the 1946 film by Frank Capra. In the film, hero George Bailey is overwhelmed by the difficulties of his life and on Christmas

Eve wishes he had never been born. At this, his guardian angel whisks him into another world as it would have been without him. George's daughter Zuzu had brought a flower home from school under her coat. The flower had dropped some petals, and Zuzu asked him to put them back. He had pretended to do so while stuffing the petals into his pocket. After his encounter with the angel, he discovers that the petals are no longer there and realizes that he has truly been removed from his own life. Shocked by the grim vision of the world without him, George begs to return; he sees that he really did have a wonderful life. He knows he is back when he finds Zuzu's petals in his pocket. Overflowing with joy and relief, he rushes home through the snow, delighted with every familiar face and landmark, and at home he finds that friends from far and wide have rallied to help him. **These petals symbolize the restored contact with reality; a symbol of the real, normal world.**