

Name

**Term:**

Allusion - A reference to an historical symbol, theme, or event understood through time.

**Example:**

*"Oh, cupid, you foolish boy/You should take better aim with your brand new toy . . ." (Melissa Etheridge, Angels: Brave and Crazy, v. 7)*

**Function:**

Melissa Etheridge, in her song *Angels*, alludes to heaven and mythology to blame her disgruntled love on supernatural powers beyond her control. Her references to cupid, a child's prayer, and her suggestion that "the angels won't have it" (v. 10) creates conflict between her desires and her eternal destiny. Using allusion, Etheridge discusses the eternal impact of her choices; she refers to dying "before I wake" (v. 12) and not having enough soul "left to sell" (v. 8), as she considers pursuing a presumably forbidden relationship. She also uses cupid to allude to the childish nature of her love; his "brand new toy" is the instrument of her doom; in this case, cupid's impetuous games leave the author with a dry soul that cannot be quenched (v. 9). Finally, Etheridge directs her anger toward the angels, saying her love will evict her from Heaven: "I won't be gone for long/'cause the angels won't have it." (v.12). Etheridge's use of allusion shows the power of archetypes in literature. Understanding allusion allows the author freedom to connect with historically understood ideas, creating economy in their writing and leaving a depth of meaning to be decoded by the reader.