Advanced Placement Tool Box

Biblical Allusions- a short reference

- Aaron –brother of Moses, first high priest of the Israelites, and head of the Levite priesthood; Moses' spokesman
- Abaddon Hebrew for "abyss" or "destruction"
- Abraham and Isaac-first two patriarchs of the Old Testament, God made a covenant with Abraham: telling him to leave his own country and family and promising to give his future family the land of Canaan or the Promised Land. God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham was obedient and placed Isaac on an altar, but God stopped him and told him to spare his son. Because Abraham had proved his faith, the sacrifice of his son would not be required of him.
- Abraham's bosom –paradise, symbolically
- Absalom, o my son Absalom the ambitious son of King David rebelled against his father and was killed by Joab. Upon
 hearing of his son's death, David said, "O Absalom, my son, my son, would to God that I had died for thee."
- Adam and Eve- the first man and the first woman created by God.
- alpha and omega- the beginning and the ending letters of the Greek alphabet. In the Book of Revelation, god says, "I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last," meaning He is eternal.
- Adam's curse —"In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Part of Adam's punishment for his disobedience to God
 was that he would have to work to eat.
- Ahab –the king of Israel who married Jezebel and converted to the pagan worship of Baal. His name is the byword for wickedness.
- Alpha and Omega –the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet; used metaphorically by Jesus to signify that he was all things
- Am I my brother's keeper?-from the story of Cain and Abel. After Cain had murdered his brother, Abel, God asked him where his brother was. Cain answered, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?"
- angels -spiritual beings created by God who live in heaven with God and among other things serve as messengers to
 mankind
- annunciation –an announcement made by an angel to Mary the mother of Jesus, that she was pregnant and would have a son, even though she was a virgin. She was to call her son Jesus.
- Antichrist –a person mentioned in the New Testament as an enemy of Jesus Christ
- apocalypse the end of the earth or a final catastrophe; also, another name for the Book of Revelation
- Apocrypha –Greek word meaning "obscure" or "hidden," later "unauthoritative" In Biblical literature, those books
 rejected by the Jew as uninspired, and hence excluded from the Old Testament, although they were later accepted by the
 Catholic Church.
- apostles -twelve men chosen by Jesus to follow Him, learn from Him, and spread His teachings (Gospel) after His death.
- Ararat —mountain in eastern Turkey, near the Iranian border, upon which Noah's ark is said to have come to rest after the flood waters receded.
- Ark of the Covenant –a box carried by poles and containing the tablets of the law given by God to Moses. It accompanied the Israelites in their wandering and was regarded as a palladium for protection against their enemies. Charged with the power of God, so that if touched, it brought instant death. It was placed in Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem but was lost to the Babylonians at the time of the exile.
- Armageddon –the site of the final and conclusive battle between good and evil
- Ashtoreth Canaanite and Phoenician goddess of love and fertility
- Baal –the male consort of Ashtoreth and the god of fertility of the Canaanites and Phoenicians
- **Babel, Tower of** –a tower that was intended to reach up to heaven, increase the reputation of the builders, and make them like God; God prevented its completion by confusing their language so that they could no longer understand each other. From that time people spoke different languages.
- **Babylon** –Jews were exiled to Babylon in the sixth century B.C.
- Balaam's ass –a talking ass who retorted in reasonable language when Balaam tried to beat her.
- Barabbas the murderer who was chosen to be freed instead of Jesus. An example of rank injustice, and a "Barabbas" is
 any criminal who escapes unfairly the consequences of his crime.
- Bathsheba –the wife of Uriah, and beloved of King David. After Bathsheba became his mistress and pregnant, King
 David had Uriah killed in battle. David subsequently married her. Solomon was the son of their union.
- **Beatitudes** –eight teachings of Jesus at the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount." Each teaching begins with the word "blessed"
- Beelzebub –another term for the prince of devils
- Benjamin –youngest of the two sons of Jacob and Rachel.
- **Bethel** –In Hebrew "the house of God"
- Bethesda, pool of –a pool in Jerusalem that cured whoever stepped into it of whatever disease he had.
- Bethlehem -place where Jesus was born
- **blind leading the blind** –any misguided leadership or instruction
- bread cast upon waters –be generous without thought of reward, and the reward will come to you.
- **breath of life**—"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7
- burning bush —a burning bush which was not consumed through which God spoke to Moses telling him to go to Egypt's
 pharaoh and tell him to free the Israelites from slavery.
- Caiaphas the Jewish high priest who made sure that Jesus was found guilty at his trial; a type of cold blooded, hypocritical politician.
- Cain and Abel –the first born children of Adam and Eve. Cain slew Abel and hid the offense. See Am I my brother's keeper? Above
- Calvary –the hill on which Jesus was crucified, near Jerusalem.

- **cherubim** –one type of angel
- **chosen people** –the Israelites
- **Christ** –Jesus as the sacrificial lamb
- coat of many colors –a special coat that Jacob gave his beloved son Joseph
- covenant –a contract or agreement between God and his people, in which God makes promises to his people and in return requires certain conduct from them.
- crown of thorns –a mock crown made from thorn branches. Roman soldiers put it on the head of Jesus before the
 crucifixion.
- **crucifixion** –the death of Jesus on a cross
- **Delilah and Samson** –lovers; Delilah betrayed Samson's secret strength by telling his enemies that cutting his hair would make him no more strong than a normal man.
- disciples –twelve men chosen by Jesus to go with Him and learn from Him
- doubting Thomas -the disciple that required physical proof of Jesus' resurrection before he would believe it.
- **Eden** –the beautiful garden created by God in which Adam and Eve lived. They were expelled from the garden when they sinned against God.
- Elijah and Old Testament prophet who opposed the worship of idols and incurred the wrath of Jezebel, the Queen of Israel, who tried to kill him.
- Exodus the second book of the Old Testament which tells of the departure of the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt as a
 result of the ten plagues.
- fall of man -the disobedience of Adam and Eve and their consequent loss of God's grace and the Garden of Eden
- fatted calf –a specially fed calf that was killed for the feast to celebrate the return of the prodigal son
- forbidden fruit the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, which God forbade Adam and Eve to eat; sometimes considered to be an apple
- **four horsemen or Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse** four figures in the book of Revelation who symbolize the evils to come at the end of the world. Conquest rides a white hors; war rides a red horse; famine rides a black horse; and plague rides a white horse.
- **fruits you will know them, by their** –a teaching of Jesus that suggests we are able to distinguish between false and genuine prophets by the things they do and say.
- Gabriel –one of the arch-angels of God
- get behind me, Satan –the reply of Jesus when Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him. Jesus also said this to Peter when he refused to believe that Jesus would be killed
- give than to receive, it is more blessed —a saying quoted by the apostle Paul as a teaching of Jesus. Commonly quoted as, "It is better to give than to receive."
- go the extra mile –an adaptation of a commandment of Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount
- golden calf -a idol made by the Israelites during the Exodus. a false god or anything worshipped undeservedly
- Golgotha –the place of the crucifixion, also called Calvary
- Good Samaritan –in a parable of Jesus, only one of several passers-by to come to the aid of a Jew who had been robbed, beaten, and left to die on the road side. The kindness of the Samaritan was particularly admirable because the Jews and the Samaritans were generally enemies. Figuratively a Good Samaritan is one who goes out his way to perform acts of kindness to strangers in distress.
- Good Shepherd –a title of Jesus
- gospel –The "good news" of salvation through belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God
- Gospels the first four books of the New Testament which tell the life story of Jesus and explain His message
- **gospel truth** –anything that is emphatically true
- handwriting on the wall –a phrase recalling an Old Testament account of Daniel. Figuratively: some misfortune is impending / inevitable
- **heaven**—the dwelling place of God, the angels, and souls (after death) of those who have gained salvation, the heavens—the sky or universe, heavenly—something wonderfully perfect or extremely happy
- hell –the dwelling place of Satan, devils, demons, and wicked souls condemned to eternal punishment after death, also a
 place or situation of pain and torment
- Holy Spirit -one of the three persons of the triune Godhead along with the Father and the Son, also called the Holy Ghost
- In the beginning –the first words of the book of Genesis which contain the account of creation
- **Isaac** –son of Abraham and father of Jacob and Esau
- Israel –name given to Jacob after he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, also the name of the northern kingdom of the Israelites
- Jacob and Esau —sons of Isaac, it was Esau who sold his birthright for a "mess of pottage" when he was too hungry to consider what he was throwing away
- Jacob's ladder -a ladder to heaven that Jacob saw in a dream
- Jehovah –another name for God
- **Jeremiah** –an Old Testament prophet known for his laments; and the name of an Old Testament book that chronicles his life
- **jeremiad** –any long lamentation or angry denunciation
- Jericho, Battle of –city destroyed when God instructed Joshua to have his priests blow their trumpets and all the troops give a great shout. At the sound the city walls crumbled and Joshua's troops rushed in.
- Jerusalem the holy city of the Israelites, the Jews, Christians, and Moslems. The name means "city of peace." Jerusalem
 is also called Zion. "New Jerusalem" is mentioned in the Book of Revelation as the heavenly city, to be established at the
 end of time.
- **Jesus**—to Christians, Jesus Christ, the son of God, a person who was both God and man, the Messiah sent by God to save the human race from the sin it inherited through the fall of man.
- Jews the Israelites, particularly after their return from captivity in Babylon about 500 years before the birth of Jesus.

- **Jezebel** an immoral queen of Israel who attempted to kill Elijah and other prophets of God.
- Job —a prosperous Old Testament man whose faith in God was severely tested by Satan, with God's permission. In order to get Job to curse God Satan destroyed all that Job owned, killed his wife and children, and struck Job with vile sores from head to foot. Job refused to curse God even when his friends counseled him to. God rewarded Job with healing, a new family and twice a much as he had before.
- John -a disciple of Jesus (traditionally called the "beloved" disciple) and a book of the Gospels of the New Testament.
- John the Baptist –a New Testament prophet and relative of Jesus who declared, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord." Christians interpret this to mean that John was sent to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. John was called "The Baptist" because he called on his followers to demonstrate their repentance for sin by going through the ceremony of baptism. He was beheaded by King Herod for objecting to his illicit marriage.
- Jonah and the whale —an Old Testament prophet called by God to preach in Nineveh. He refused the call and fled his home by going on a sea voyage. During a severe storm the sailors threw Jonah overboard suspecting that Jonah had angered God. A big fish swallowed Jonah and saved him from drowning. After the fish vomited Jonah up on the beach, Jonah submitted to God and went to Nineveh to preach.
- Jordan River –a river in Israel that empties into the Dead Sea. The place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus.
- Joseph, the husband of Mary –Jesus' foster father.
- Joseph and his brothers –sons of Jacob. Joseph was the favored son and was given preferred treatment and a special jacket called the coat of many colors. His jealous brothers sold Joseph to slave traders who in turn sold him the pharaoh in Egypt. Joseph was promoted to a high office in the Egyptian government. As a result he was able to save his family from starvation during a famine in Israel.
- Joshua –an Old Testament leader who brought the Israelites into the Promised Land after the death of Moses.
- Judas Iscariot the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the temple authorities for thirty pieces of silver. In order to identify
 Jesus to the temple guards Judas kissed him. Driven by guilt for betraying an innocent person, Judas hanged himself.
- Judgment Day -In the New Testament a day at the end of time when all will have to account for their actions before God.
- Lamb of God –a Christian term for Jesus. It carries out the image of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as a new Passover, and Jesus himself, as the Passover lamb.
- lamb shall lie down with the lion/wolf –part of a description of an earthly paradise in which there will be no more war/hatred.
- land flowing with milk and honey -a poetic name for the promised land, a place of great abundance
- Last Supper –the traditional Passover meal that Jesus ate with his disciples the night before his death. The actions of Jesus at the Last Supper are the basis for the Christian Sacrament of Holy Communion, or the Eucharist, in which the faithful partake of bread and wine.
- Lazarus –a man brought back to life by Jesus after being in a tomb four days.
- **lilies of the field, consider the** –words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount encouraging His followers no to worry about their worldly needs.
- loaves and fishes –a miracle performed by Jesus in which five loaves of bread and two fish were blessed and multiplied to feed a crowd of His followers. After everyone had eaten his fill twelve basket of food remained.
- Lord's Prayer –the prayer that Jesus taught His followers in the Sermon on the Mount. The same prayer is still recited in
 most Christian churches.
- Lot's wife a disobedient woman whom God punished by turning her to a pillar of salt.
- love thy neighbor as thyself –a version of the golden rule
- love your enemies a command of Jesus I the Sermon on the Mount
- Lucifer –another name for Satan
- Luke –one of the four Gospels that record the life of Jesus
- Magi –the four wise men who visited Jesus soon after His birth
- mammon –New Testament expression for material wealth/money
- · manna from heaven -food God miraculously gave the Israelites in the Exodus, any unexpected good happening
- Mark –one of the four gospels that record the life of Jesus
- Mary the mother of Jesus –the Virgin Mary, who conceived Jesus while still a virgin
- Mary Magdalene –a female follower of Jesus from whom devils were driven
- Matthew –one of the four Gospels that record the life of Jesus
- meek shall inherit the earth –a saying from the Sermon on the Mount implying that those who forgo worldly power will be rewarded in the kingdom of Heaven
- Messiah –for Jews and Christians, the promised "anointed one" or Christ; the Savior. Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah who delivered mankind from its sins. Jews believe that the Messiah has not yet come.
- Methuselah the oldest man mentioned in the Bible; according to Genesis he was the grandfather of Noah and lived to be 969 years old.
- Michael –one of the arch-angels of God
- **millennium** –a period of 1000 years foretold in the Book of Revelation. During the millennium those who have been faithful to Jesus and who have not worshipped the Antichrist will reign with Jesus over the earth.
- Moses the great leader, lawgiver, and prophet of the ancient Israelites. According to the Old Testament, Moses was born in Egypt, where the Hebrews were living as slaves. He wads reared in the household of the pharaoh. As a grown man he committed a murder and fled Egypt. While living in exile Moses heard God speak to him from a burning bush, telling him to go to the pharaoh and demand that he release the Hebrews. The pharaoh refuses and as a result God sent ten plagues to afflict the Egyptians. Pharaoh finally let the Hebrews go and Moses led them out of Egypt across the Red Sea on a journey known as the Exodus.
- My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me? -words spoken by Jesus from the cross of his crucifixion
- **nativity** –the birth of Jesus
- Nazareth –Jesus' home town
- New Testament –the second part of the Christian Bible; records a "new covenant"

- Noah and the flood —God led Noah to build a great boat/ark, to take his wife and his son's families, and a pair of each animal as safety from the earth's flood. After the flood he was commanded to repopulate the earth.
- **nothing new under the sun** –a saying adapted from the Book of Ecclesiastes; the author complains frequently about the monotony of life
- Old Testament the first part of the Bible, so called by Christians, who believe that its laws and prophecies are fulfilled in the person of Jesus, whose mission is described in the New Testament
- olive branch –the branch brought by a dove to Noah's ark signifying that the flood was receding. An olive branch is now
 regarded as a sign o peace, as is the dove.
- **original sin**—the eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which led to their expulsion from Eden by God. More generally the original sin has come to refer to sexual relations between men and women.
- parables –stories told by Jesus to convey His religious message; they include the parable of the Good Samaritan and that of the Prodigal Son.
- Passover –deliverances of the Israelites from the worst of the plagues of Egypt (the death of the first born son), and the annual festival kept afterwards in memory of the event.
- patriarchs –in the Old Testament, the founding fathers of the Israelites: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers
- Paul –ancient Christian preacher and teacher; along with the Apostle Peter, one of the foremost leaders of early Christianity
- **pearl of great price** –a phrase from one of the parables of Jesus; he compares the journey to heaven to a search for fine pearls conducted by a merchant, who when he had found one pearl of great price, sold all he had, and bought it.
- **pearls before swine** –an adaptation of a saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount; generally to "cast pearls before swine" is to share something of value with those who will appreciate it.
- Pentecost –in the New Testament, the day that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples of Jesus. Greek for Shavuot, the spring harvest festival of the Israelites
- Peter –chief among the twelve disciples/apostles of Jesus, he was a fisherman, originally named Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter meaning rock. Peter denied being a follower of Jesus three times before the crucifixion. Catholics maintain that he was the first of the popes, and that he was crucified upside down because he refused to be crucified as Jesus had been.
- Pharisees –a group of teachers among the Jews at the time of Jesus; Jesus frequently rebukes them for their hypocrisy.
- Philistines —Old testament enemies of the Israelites; a Philistines has come to mean a person who is ignorant and
 uncultured.
- **physician, heal thyself** –a Biblical proverb meaning that people should take care of their own defects and not just correct the faults of others.
- Pilate, Pontius the Roman governor of the Jews at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus
- **pillar of salt** –see Lot's wife
- **plagues of Egypt** –the traditional name for the set of ten disasters that God inflicted on Egypt before the pharaoh let Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land.
- prodigal son –a character in a parable of Jesus told to illustrate how generous God is in forgiving sinners who repent.
- **Promised Land**—the land that God promised He would give to the descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of Canaan or Palestine. By extension any idyllic place or state of being that a person hopes to reach, especially one that can not be reached except by patience and determination.
- prophet –someone who brings a message from God to people; someone who can foretell the future.
- a prophet is not without honor save in his won country—words spoken by Jesus to the people of Nazareth, his home two. They refused to believe His teaching because they considered him one of themselves and therefore without authority to preach to them. Anyone whose talents and accomplishments are highly regarded by everyone except those at home.
- Psalms, the Book of –An Old Testament book containing 150 prayerful songs and songs of praise, many of them ascribed to King David.
- Queen of Sheba –a queen of Biblical times who was famous for her beauty, splendor, and wealth. She traveled from afar to visit King Solomon.
- Rachel –the second wife of Jacob; the mother of Joseph and Benjamin
- Red Sea, the parting of –an action of God at the time of the Exodus that rescued the Israelites from the pursuing forces of Egypt.
- Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's –the response of Jesus when his enemies tried to trap Him by asking Him if the Jews, whose nation had been taken over by the Roman Empire, should pay taxes to the Roman emperor. More generally, give to worldly authorities the things that belong to them, and to God what belongs to Him.
- Resurrection the rising of Jesus from the tomb after His death; a central and distinctive belief of the Christian faith. Christians celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday.
- Revelation, Book of -the last book of the New Testament, also called the Apocalypse, in which the violent end of the
 world is foretold.
- **Ruth** –the great-grandmother of King David, known for her kindness and faithfulness.
- Sabbath the holy day of rest and reflection observed each Saturday among the Jews, which keeps the third
 commandment. Christians traditionally keep Sunday as a weekly day of rest.
- salt of the earth –words of Jesus to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus implies that if His followers lose their dedication to the Gospel, no one else can give it to them. In popular usage it means a person of admirable character.
- salvation -being "saved" among Christians; salvation is freedom from the effects of the fall of man, through faith in Jesus.
- Satan the devil, Lucifer, the tempter who encourages the fall of Adam and Eve. Satan is the power of darkness opposed to the light of Christ; sometimes called the Prince of Darkness.
- second coming –the return of Jesus prophesied in the New Testament, to judge the living and the dead and bring about the final triumph of good over evil.
- **Seraphim** –one type of angel
- Sermon on the Mount –the first Sermon of Jesus, which is the central expression of His teachings.

- serpent –the creature in the book of Genesis that tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, thus committing the first act of the fall of man. In the New Testament the serpent is identified as Satan.
- **shibboleth** –in the Old Testament, shibboleth was a password used by the Israelites. It was chosen because their enemies could not pronounce it. By extension, a "shibboleth" is an often-repeated slogan. It also means an arbitrary test to prove membership in a group.
- Sinai –the mountain that Moses ascended to receive the Ten Commandments from God.
- Sodom and Gomorrah –in Genesis two evil cities that God destroyed with fire and brimstone. Sodomy is the sexual perversion practiced in the wicked city of Sodom.
- Solomon –son of David who was king of Israel. The wisdom of Solomon is proverbial. Solomon is also known for his wealth, many wives, his splendor and for building the Temple at Jerusalem.
- Ten Commandments –ten Old Testament laws of God given to Moses by God on stone tablets on Mount Sinai.
- thirty pieces of silver—the money Judas Iscariot received for betraying Jesus to the authorities. Referred to as "blood money"—money received for the life of another, and anything paid or given for a treacherous act.
- Thomas, the doubting disciple —an apostle who first doubted the resurrection of Jesus and then believed.
- through a glass darkly -to have an obscure or imperfect vision of reality
- **time to be born and a time to die**—a phrase from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. The passage begins, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven"—that is there is a right moment for all actions.
- **tithe** –a tenth part of one's annual income contributed to support the clergy or a church. The Mosaic Law required the Israelites to pay a tithe for the support of worship.
- tree of knowledge of good and evil -a tree in the Garden of Eden, the fruit of which God forbade Adam and Eve to eat.
- Turn the other cheek. –an adaptation of a command of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. To "turn the other cheek" is to accept injuries and not to seek revenge.
- Twenty-third Psalm the best known of the Psalms of the Old Testament, often read at funerals as a profession of faith ion god's protection.
- valley of the shadow of death –an expression from the Twenty-third Psalm; figuratively stands for the perils of life, from which God protects believers.
- vanity of vanities, all is vanity —a statement at the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. The pointlessness of human activity is the major theme of the book, the author (traditionally Solomon) insists that God's laws must be kept, whether keeping them results in happiness or sorrow.
- **voice of one crying in the wilderness** –a phrase used in the Gospels to refer to John the Baptist. It is quoted from the prophet Isaiah and is used to imply that John was preparing the way for Jesus, as foretold by Isaiah the prophet.
- walking on water –a miraculous act performed by Jesus, according to the gospels. Figuratively to "walk on water" is to perform a impossible or near-impossible task.
- Whither thou goest, I will go. –words of Ruth; part of a long promise of fidelity, spoken by Ruth to Naomi, her mother-in-law.
- wise men –the magi who visited Jesus in Bethlehem shortly after His birth. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and
 myrrh.
- · wolves in sheep's clothing -an image for false prophets, adapted from words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.
- Ye cannot serve God and mammon –a teaching of Jesus, meaning that His followers can not love God and money at the same time.
- **Zion, Mount** –the mountain in Jerusalem on which the fortress of the city was built.

Adapted from:

Hirsch, E.D. Jr., Joseph F. Kett., and James Trefil,. The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Lass, Abraham H., David Kiremidjian, and Ruth M. Goldstein. <u>The Facts on File Dictionary of Classical</u>, <u>Biblical</u>, and <u>Literary Allusions</u>. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1987.