

# The Birth and Evolution of a Powerful Allusion: A Study of John

**Grade Level:** English 11 AP and English 12 AP

**Time Required:** 2 periods (44 minutes)

**Objectives:**

1. To explain what Winthrop means by “a City on the Hill”
2. To list Puritan values and religious beliefs stated or implies in Winthrop’s speech
3. To describe the **S**peaker, **O**ccasion, **A**udience, **P**urpose, **S**ubject, and **T**one of Winthrop’s speech, Kennedy’s speech to the Massachusetts Senate, and Reagan’s speech at the 1984 Republican Convention
4. To define allusion
5. To analyze how different speakers, historical contexts, and purposes affect the impact of the “City on the Hill” concept

BINARY PAIDEIA		
<b>Society</b> <b>Native American</b>	<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Society</b> <b>African</b>
	<i>Politeia/Regime</i>	
	<i>Politeuma/Ruling Class</i>	
	<i>Paideia/What makes a society what it is</i>	
	<i>Virtue/ The highest moral excellence</i>	

**Key Terms:**

**Historical Background for the Teachers:**

**Winthrop’s “City upon a Hill”**

**Foundations of Massachusetts**

The first settlers to Massachusetts were the Pilgrims. The Pilgrims were a group of Puritans who left England in the early 1600s to escape religious persecution. From there, they settled in Holland to live and practice their religion in Leiden. In 1620, the Pilgrims were granted a land patent from the London Virginia Company to start a colony at the mouth of the Hudson River. The ships landed in Cape Cod, instead, where the group founded the Plymouth Colony. This group would expand over the years that followed before eventually joining the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

In 1629, a charter was granted to the Massachusetts Bay Company to create a colony near Plymouth Colony. This group was made up primarily of Puritans leaving England because of the political situation there. In England, the king, Charles I, had done all in his power to remove any Puritan aspects from the Church of England. Charles I banned the teaching of predestination (a large tenet of the Puritan faith) and would not allow ministers who deviated from the Book of Common Prayer.

Once in New England, the group worked to establish a colonial government and church. They founded the city of Boston on September 17, 1630 where they established the First Church of Boston and the Massachusetts General Court.

**John Winthrop**

The first governor of the Massachusetts Colony was John Winthrop of Suffolk, England. Winthrop studied to become an attorney, but later devoted his life to preaching in the Puritan movement. His teachings emphasized the ideas of the supremacy of God over all beings. In 1630, he received a charter to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony from King Charles I. On the journey to the colony, Winthrop wrote the famous sermon, “A Model of Christian Charity.” This sermon would contain the famous call to establish the

colony as a “city on a hill.” Winthrop would go on to govern the colony for twelve terms before his death in 1649.

### **What the Puritans believed**

The Puritan movement was founded as a protest to the religious changes of the Church of England in the mid-1500s. The Puritans wanted to reform the church, but were met with resistance and persecution. Puritans believed in predestination, the belief that everyone is pre-selected for heaven or hell by God. Because of this, they believed that your actions on Earth did not change your eventual outcome. Despite this, they sought to eliminate sin from their society because they felt that God would only choose the most virtuous of people to go to heaven. This opposed the Anglican and Catholic beliefs that held that someone’s actions could impact their fate. By coming to America, they hoped to preserve their form of Christianity and escape any corruption in the Church of England. Their vision of New England was that of a model Puritan society (the city on a hill idea).

The hope of the Puritans was that their ideal society would be envied by those in England. In their minds once those in England realized the form of paradise that the colony offered, England would adopt this form and allow for the Puritans to return to England. They briefly believed this succeeded when the Glorious Revolution occurred in England. The Puritans in England had overthrown the king allowing for more religious acceptance. However, this quickly ended a dozen years later when Oliver Cromwell died and the monarchy was restored. Because of this, the Puritans decided to stay in New England and continue their colony.

### **Do Now Activity:**

What do John Winthrop and Ronald Reagan have in common? What do their speeches have in common?

Students explain the origin and current use of an allusion related to literature that they have studied in high school—blood on my hands (Macbeth), Prometheus (Frankenstein), “To thine own self be true” (Hamlet), Big Brother (1984), etc.

### **Procedures:**

In pairs or groups of 3 students will complete a **SOAPStone** chart for Winthrop’s and Reagan’s speeches

Full class discussion of chart and what the speeches imply about the values and beliefs of the speakers and audiences

Discuss Do Now and review definition of allusion

In groups, write compare/contrast statements regarding the speakers, occasions, audiences, purposes, subjects, and tones of these two speeches

Exit ticket: Each student writes how the “City on the Hill” allusion adds layers of meaning to Reagan’s speech and appeal to his specific audience

### **Homework:**

Students will read Kennedy’s speech, SOAPStone it and explain how the “City on the Hill” allusion is used to add layers of meaning to Reagan’s speech and appeal to his specific audience.

### **Assessment:**

SOAPStone charts, written compare/contrast statements, exit ticket, random sample during discussion, homework, enrichment activity below

### **Extension:**

Adopt an Allusion: Students will choose a common allusion, research its origins, and a subsequent use, report the information to the class

### **Resources:**

“John Winthrop’s ‘City Upon a Hill’”

<http://www2.cicerohistory.com/Cicero/subscriber/content/Books/Book-3/R06-Lessons/003HighSchool/hs2-Puritans.pdf>

“Heroes: John Winthrop”

<http://www2.cicerohistory.com/Cicero/subscriber/content/Books/Book-3/R05-Heroes/JohnWinthrop/01JohnWinthrop.pdf>

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