Allusion

1. Go to the following website to review this literary term: allusion:

2. Read the following poem:

   "An Ancient Gesture" Edna St. Vincent Millay

   I thought, as I wiped my eyes on the corner of my apron:
   Penelope did this too.
   And more than once: you can’t keep weaving all day
   And undoing it all through the night;
   Your arms get tired, and the back of your neck gets tight
   And along towards morning, when you think it will never be light,
   And your husband has been gone, and you don’t know where, for years,
   Suddenly you burst into tears;
   There is simply nothing else to do.
   And I thought, as I wiped by eyes on the corner of my apron:
   This is an ancient gesture, authentic, antique,
   In the very best tradition, classic, Greek;
   Ulysses did this too.
   But only as a gesture, -- a gesture which implied
   To the assembled throng that he was much too moved to speak.
   He learned it from Penelope…
   Penelope, who really cried.

3. Answer the following questions:

   A. Who is Penelope? (Hint: this is an allusion that can be traced by using google or wikipedia)

   B. How does Penelope’s situation relate to the speaker’s?

   C. How does Penelope’s gesture differ from Ulysses’?

4. Meet with a professor to go over your answers and discuss WHY the author uses this literary allusion in her poem. How does it add to the overall meaning of her poem?