

Dante's Inferno



A

Brief

Introduction

Dante Alighieri



- 1265-1321
- Born in Florence, Italy to an old and moderately distinguished family
- Wrote poetry from an early age
- Wrote *The Divine Comedy*

The Divine Comedy

- Written between 1308 and 1321
- An imaginary journey that takes Dante through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise
- An allegory—the journey is symbolic of the spiritual quest for salvation
- Three parts: *The Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradisio*
- Three was a holy number for Dante; Holy Trinity

Why a Comedy??

- In the middle ages COMEDY meant some human experience that began in tragedy and ended in happiness.
- Written in Terza Rima

Structure



- — Each section has 33 cantos (small division of poetry; canto means “song.”)
- — The *Inferno* includes an introductory canto, which makes 100 cantos total (100 representing the idea of perfection or spiritual enlightenment achieved after the journey).
- — Three major divisions of sin:
 - **Incontinence (lack of self-control), Violence,**

The Inferno



Dante takes a journey through hell which consists of nine circles.

Dante believes that before one can achieve salvation, they must take a hard look at both evil in the world and in himself.

Theme: Just Retribution

“One large and important group of punishments in the tours of hell consists on those based on the principle of measure-for-measure. The principal appears in many ancient legal systems. The biblical formulation, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” is part of a wider ancient Near Eastern pattern” (Himmelfarb 75-76)

Theme: Just Retribution

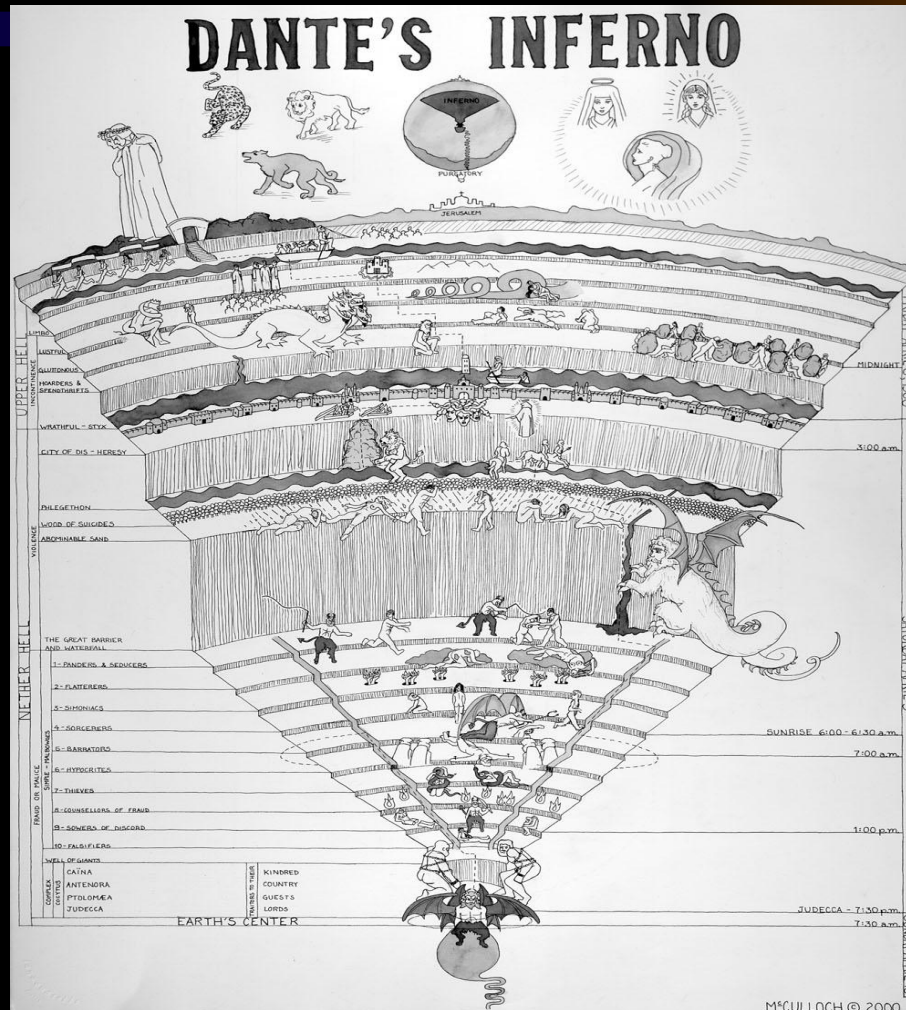


Example: Fortune Tellers pretend to know the future. In hell, their heads are fastened on backwards so they must always look behind themselves.

Theme: Repent!

- Even though this was written long ago, we can still use this story and learn to repent our sins.
- Also, we need to stop sinning!!

Geography: *Nine Circles of Inferno*



Virgil



- In the Middle Ages Virgil was regarded as a sage and necromancer.
- He was the greatest of the Roman poets.
- Virgil was chosen as Dante's guide through Hell, because Dante saw him as his master and inspiration for his poetic style.

1. Limbo



Innocent souls

Blameless, but unbaptized

The atmosphere is peaceful, yet sad

2. *Lustful*



Here are those who could not resist temptation; these sinners betrayed reason in favor of their appetite for pleasure.

Here, sinners are tossed and whirled around by winds as in life they were helpless in the tempests of their passion.

3. *Gluttonous*

In this circle are the gluttonous—those who consumed in excess during their time on Earth.

Here, those who feasted away in their lives now lie like pigs in the stinking mud. Also, they are kept company by Cerberus—a three headed dog who growls and tears at them with his teeth and claws.

4. *The Avaricious & Prodigal*

Here are those who either wasted and lived greedily and insatiably, or who stockpiled their fortunes, hoarding everything and sharing nothing.

The punishment for these sinners is to roll weights back and forth against one another.

5. *Wrathful & Sullen*

The wrathful are here forever lashing out at each other in anger. They are furious and naked and are biting one another.

The sullen, or gloomy, lie gurgling in black mud, just as their silent anger lay hidden in their lives.

6. *Heretics*

Heretics are those who chose their own opinions instead of following the teachings of the Church; they deny God and the afterlife.

These sinners spend eternity with their bodies in burning graves.

7. *Violent*

In this circle are all sinners who committed violence against others, self, and God.

In this circle the stench is unbearable.

Others—these sinners are submerged in a river of blood and are shot by centaurs with arrows if they try to escape.

God—sinners here are showered by flakes of fire that rain down on their naked bodies.

8. *Fraudulent*

Ten pockets based on kinds of malicious fraud--
panderers, seducers, flatterers, simoniacs,
fortunetellers, grafters, hypocrites, thieves, evil
counselors, sowers of discord, and falsifiers.

In this circle, punishments include: being wedged
into stone holes, some wallow in human
excrement, some are afflicted with leprosy, and
some are whipped by horned demons.

9. *Traitors*

This is the deepest level of hell where Satan himself resides. His wings flap eternally, producing a chilling cold. Here Satan has three faces and they each gush bloody foam and their eyes are forever weeping as they chew on the three traitors: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. Sinners here are frozen deep in ice.