

# **The Inferno Book Notes**

## **The Inferno by Dante Alighieri**

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## Author/Context

Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in the city of Florence. He was born into an important family and received a broad education, enabling him to marry into the aristocratic Donati family, although he loved another woman named Beatrice. In 1293, he published *Vita Nuova*, in which he described his tragic love for her. He began participating in politics by the age of thirty and was elected to Florence's most powerful administrative council at the age of thirty-five. At that time, Florentine politics was characterized by bitter strife between the Blacks and the Whites, two factions of Guelf political party. The Italian nation was split between the Guelf party, who theoretically supported Papal supremacy, and the Ghibellines, who backed the Emperor. The city of Florence had been dominated by the Guelfs since before Dante was born, but recently had been division along the lines of wealth. The Blacks were the relatively poor former feudal aristocracy and generally sided with the Pope. The Whites were made up of the new rich class who demanded municipal independence. During Dante's term in the administrative council of Florence, a civil uprising between the two parties occurred caused by an attempt of Pope Boniface VIII to bring Florence under his power. The council voted to banish the leaders of both parties from Florence, but Dante was torn in his allegiance, being a close friend of Guido Cavalcante a leading White and married into the Donati family, foremost among the Blacks. Dante was sent to attempt a reconciliation with the Pope, but during his absence the Pope convinced Florence to accept a mediator, the brother of Philip IV of France. When he and his troops were let into the city, he immediately turned all power over to the Blacks. This precipitated Dante's exile from Florence and indirectly much of the inspiration for the *Divine Comedy*, which he wrote in exile. He spent the rest of his life writing and lecturing in different Italian cities, dying of a sudden illness in 1321.

The *Divine Comedy* is known as one of the greatest poetic works in history. In it Dante masterfully combined religious, political, and philosophical themes and expressed them in his vernacular Florentine tongue marking the birth of modern Italian. In medieval Italy, a comedy was simply a tale that progressed from an unhappy beginning to a happy conclusion. However, it was also a lower form of art than the tragedy. With the *Divine Comedy* Dante challenged these strict ideas of art and the idea that only common literature could be written in the vernacular. He addressed the most universal of moral themes and the most controversial political issues of the time using a mixture of grandiose and vulgar expression. This unification of diverse styles and themes is what has made the *Comedy* a timeless masterpiece.

### Bibliography

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# Plot Summary

Dante spends a horrific night, the eve of Good Friday 1300, in a forest. The date is significant because the chronology of Dante's journey through Hell mirrors Christ's descent into Hell after his crucifixion. In the morning, he tries to scale a mountain but is impeded by a lion, a wolf, and a leopard. The spirit of the poet Virgil appears and offers to take him by another path to the top of the mountain. The way leads first through Hell but ends in Paradise. Dante accepts this journey to enlightenment in spite of self-doubt and fear.

As they approach the entrance to Hell, Virgil and Dante see a crowd of people hurrying along the banks of the river Acheron. Wasps torment them continually. Virgil tells Dante these are the souls who neither sinned nor worshipped God, and so are rejected by both Heaven and Hell. They are ferried across the river by Charon and meet the noble heathen in a castle on the first ring of the inverted subterranean cone, which is Hell. These souls are not punished except by exclusion from Paradise. This is Virgil's eternal home. The second ring is guarded by Minos and is the first ring of four in which souls are punished for indulgence of natural desires. In the second ring, the souls of the lustful are blown about by ceaseless winds, as in life they were buffeted unreasonably by passion. In the third circle, the poets find the gluttons soaked by heavy rain and clawed by the three-head dog Cerberus. They encounter a soul from Dante's city, Florence, who predicts that one of the two warring factions in that city will conquer the other. Continuing downwards, the poets meet Pluto, the Greek god of wealth, at the entrance to the fourth ring, which holds both the squanders of wealth and the greedy. These souls are condemned to roll heavy weights back and forth for eternity. The fourth ring is the prison of the wrathful, those who indulged their anger, and the sullen, those who indulged their ill humor. The wrathful fight in the mud of the marsh called the Styx and the sullen gurgle completely covered in the mud. Dante and Virgil are ferried across the fifth circle to the entrance of the walled City of Dis, but a group of fallen angels deny them entry. A messenger from heaven arrives and opens the door for them, but not before the Furies threaten to turn Dante into stone with the head of Medusa. Within the city walls is a plain filled with flaming open tombs. The souls of heretics, Christians who denied certain doctrines of the Church, are stacked within these tombs. Dante converses with the soul of a political rival of his family, and is disturbed by his prediction that Dante will be exiled from his city, but Virgil reassures him that he shall hear the whole of his future when he reached Paradise.

The pilgrims pause at the cliff that divides the sixth circle from those below, and Virgil gives an overview of the classes of sinners held in the three final rings below. The first circle is reserved for the violent and divided into three rounds: violence toward God, towards one's self, and towards one's neighbor. The second circle nests hypocrisy, flattery, sorcerers, cheating, theft, simony, and pandering. The third and last circle of the City of Dis holds traitors. After this introduction, they proceed down into the seventh circle. Passing the Minotaur, they view a river of blood in which men, who committed acts of violence towards their fellowmen, are sunk at varying depths according to their guilt. Centaurs armed with arrows guard them, one of which guides the poets to a ford



in the river. They cross and find themselves in a mystical wood. Here men who committed suicide are transformed into trees and tormented by Harpies who tear their leaves. At the edge of the wood lies a great plain of fiery sand. Blasphemers, sodomites, and usurers are punished here by the blistering heat. The poets meet a reptilian monster with a human face, called Geryon, guarding the usurers and have to ride upon its back down a watery vortex in order to reach the eighth circle that holds the fraudulent.

The eighth circle, Malebolge (evil pouches), is divided into ten rounds, which are like ten fortified trenches of a fortress. The poets pass through the circle along footpaths that bridge the chasms. In the first chasm, former seducers are lashed while marching. In the second, flatterers covered in excrement and enveloped in vile vapors gasp and beat themselves. The third round holds those who sold spiritual things. Here Dante meets a former Pope, imprisoned upside-down in a stone cylinder with flames licking the soles of his feet. The fourth round holds magicians who attempted to see the future. They weep and march backwards because their heads have been twisted around backwards. The fifth chasm holds those who used their public office or authority to make money. They boil in pitch and are attached by hook wielding demons when they rise above the surface. One of the demons informs Virgil that the next bridge is in ruins and outfits the pilgrims with an escort of unruly demons to take them to the next bridge further along the chasm wall. Along the way the demons are distracted by a wily soul and end up fighting among themselves while the poets continue. Easily angered the demons pursue the pair who deem it wise to plunge into the sixth chasm rather than await their escort. There they get an up-close view of the hypocrites trudging along in leaden cloaks gilded on the outside. Climbing out of the chasm they reach the seventh chasm, which holds thieves. The thieves are enveloped in serpents and some morph in between human and reptilian form. The eighth chasm holds evil counselors, including Ulysses, who are individually enveloped in flames. The ninth chasm holds those who willingly created division among other people. They are mutilated in various ways symbolic of their particular sins. The tenth and final chasm of the eighth circle holds the falsifiers, who are afflicted by various diseases.

The ninth circle of Hell is a well surrounded by giants embedded to the waist in its wall. Nimrod who led the building of the tower of Babylon is the first they encounter. The mythological giant, Antæus, lifts the two poets and sets them down in the frozen marsh at the center of the well. The circle of the traitors is divided into three rounds: betrayal of one's family, betrayal of one's country, betrayal of hospitality, and betrayal of lords or benefactors. All are frozen into the marsh. They meet various infamous Italians who Dante treats mercilessly, and finally they arrive face to face with Satan, who is a massive three-faced, winged monster frozen breast deep in the center of Hell. In each of his three hideous mouths he chews an archetypal betrayer of Church or the Empire. Judas, Brutus, and Cassius hold these places of honor in Hell. After a brief but memorable pause, Virgil takes Dante in his arms and climbs down Satan's back emerging on the other side of the center of the earth, which marks their exit from Hell. It is now the dawn of Holy Saturday. To reach the surface of the earth the two poets follow the path of the river Lethe, which at the end offers a view of the beauties of Heaven.



# Major Characters

**Dante Alighieri:** The protagonist of the Divine Comedy and its author. Dante, the character, has lost his way in life and is rescued by the poet Virgil who leads him on a journey to enlightenment. This journey leads through Hell, where Dante witnesses souls being punished for all types of sins. At first he responds with fear and pity, later with loathing and mercilessness.

**Virgil:** The spirit of the great Latin poet and Dante's guide and protector in the Inferno. Virgil is a prisoner of Hell himself because he was born before Christianity existed. He commands many of the creatures in Hell with his strong powers of reason, however he is not able to dominate all of them and is at times fearful himself. He encourages Dante to learn from what he sees and reprimands Dante when he sympathizes with the sinners.

**God:** The designer of Hell and central force that governs it. He is supreme power, wisdom, and love. During his journey, Dante comes to realize that neither human pity nor reason can challenge God's justice and that the basic definition of evil is all that is contrary to God's will.

**Satan:** Also known as Lucifer or Dis, he is embedded in a frozen marsh at the center of the earth, which is the bottom of the pit of Hell. He is punished for rebelling against God in an attempt to try to become his equal. He has three sets of wings and three faces and in each of his mouths he chews an archetypal traitor: Judas, the betrayer of Christ; and Brutus and Cassius, the betrayers of Julius Caesar. The recurrence of the number three in Satan's appearance in Hell is a reference to his desire to be more beautiful than God, the Trinity.

**Beatrice:** One of the blessed souls in Heaven, who sends Virgil to guide Dante through Hell. Virgil tells Dante that when he reaches Paradise Beatrice will reveal to him all of his future. In real life, Beatrice was a woman Dante loved passionately throughout his life despite the fact that she married another man and died at a young age. She has a rather small role in the Inferno, but a symbolically prominent one in the Comedy as a whole as she is one of the goals towards which Dante progresses.

## Minor Characters

**Charon:** A figure from Greek mythology. He is an old bearded man with fiery eyes who ferries souls entering Hell across the river Acheron. He attempts to refuse them passage, but Virgil reminds him that in Hell what God wills is done.

**Minos:** The mythological king of Crete is a monstrous judge who sits at the entrance to the second circle of Hell. Sinners confess all to him and after winding his tail around them the number of circles they must descend he throws them down.



**Paolo and Francesca of Rimini:** Two lovers punished in the second circle for an adulterous love affair inspired by the story of Lancelot and Guinevere.

**Cerberus:** A mythological three-headed dog placed by Dante as the guard of the gluttonous in the Inferno. He has a black greasy beard and a large belly and claws at his wards viciously. To silence the dog, Virgil throws clods of earth into each of his throats.

**Ciaccio:** A former gluttonous citizen of Florence punished in the third circle. He condemns the people of Florence for their pride, envy, and avarice and he predicts that one of the two warring political factions of Florence will conquer the other.

**Plutus:** The mythological god of riches guards the fourth circle, which holds the prodigal and the greedy.

**Phlegyas:** The surly boatman, who takes Virgil and Dante across the river Styx to the gates of the City of Dis, whose walls surround the sixth circle, thereby enclosing all the circles beneath.

**Filippo Argenti:** An arrogant and cruel former citizen of Florence. Also a Black Guelph and therefore a political enemy of Dante. He surfaces, covered in mud, near the boat carrying Dante and Virgil across the fifth circle and Dante reviles him.

**Farinata:** The father-in-law of Dante's best friend and a leader of the Ghibelline party. He is punished in the sixth circle for heresy, but continues to obsess over the politics of Florence. He prophesies Dante's exile and explains that souls can foretell the future and see the past but have no knowledge of the present.

**Minotaur:** A mythological monster, half man half bull, the bastard son of the queen of Crete, who devoured 14 youths each year. He guards the entrance to the seventh circle, which holds all those who committed sins of violence. When Virgil rebukes the monster, he bucks furiously and bites himself.

**Chiron:** The leader of the centaurs, half men half horses, who guard those who committed violence against their fellowman. Chiron was a wise teacher in Greek mythology.

**Pier delle Vigne:** Former advisor to Emperor Frederick II, he committed suicide when the envious gossip of others caused the emperor to distrust him. He suffers in the form of a tree in the second round of the seventh circle.

**Capaneus:** A king famous for his defiance of the gods. While holding siege to the city of Thebes, Jupiter threw a thunderbolt at Capaneus who did not fall, but died standing up. He lies contorted on a burning plain in the third round of the seventh circle of Hell still blaspheming vigorously.



**Brunetto Latini:** One of Dante's contemporaries, a leader of the Guelf party and a poet of some fame. He was both a political and artistic role model for Dante, yet in the *Inferno* he is punished for sodomy in the third round of the seventh ring.

**Geryon:** The mythological King of Spain, who Hercules killed in order to take his oxen. In medieval times, he was believed to lure strangers and then kill them, which is why Dante made him the guardian of the fraudulent in the third round of the seventh circle. He has the face of an innocent man and an intricately marked body of a reptile. Dante and Virgil ride on his back from the seventh to the eighth circle of Hell.

**Pope Nicolas III:** A corrupt pope who reigned from 1277 to 1280. He has the highest position in the third ring of the eighth circle, imprisoned upside down feet flaming above all the corrupt popes before him. He mistakes Dante for Pope Boniface VIII who will replace him.

**Malacoda:** The leader of the hook wielding demons, Malabranche, who reign over the fifth chasm of the eighth circle. He sends a troupe of demons to escort Virgil and Dante, but intentionally gives them incorrect directions.

**Vanni Fucci:** A member of the Black Guelf party from the city of Pistoia, who robbed a church and allowed others to be punished for it. He is punished in the in the seventh chasm of the eighth circle. Dante sees him bit by a snake, transformed into dust, and then reformed into his human shape. Vanni tells Dante that the Blacks will conquer the Whites in Florence in the near future, clarifying the prediction of Ciaccio. He concludes his speech by flagrantly insulting God.

**Ulysses:** Mythical adventurer and soldier in the Trojan war. Dante meets Ulysses in the eighth chasm of the eighth circle, where he is punished for stealing a statue from the Trojans and convincing the warrior Achilles to leave his lover who thereafter died of grief. Ulysses recounts the story of his last voyage, which is an invention of Dante the writer. He sailed out of the Mediterranean, beyond the edge of the known world, and his ship capsized as it approached a mountain on an island. This mountain represents the mountain of Purgatory, which Dante will later climb with Virgil.

**Count Guido da Monfelfro:** A famous Ghibelline warrior and politician, who later became a Franciscan monk and advisor to Pope Boniface VIII. He advised the Pope to offer an enemy amnesty and then attack them when their guard was down. Guido agreed to give the evil advice securing the Pope's absolution beforehand. This did not save him from God's condemnation, as repentance is required for forgiveness.

**Mosca de' Lamberti:** The man whose advise led to the long-lasting Guelf-Ghibelline feud. Buondelmonte was betrothed to a girl of the Amidei family, but decided to break off the engagement. The men of the Amidei family decided to kill him based upon Mosca de' Lamberti's advise. This act precipitated a war between the families that escalated over time into all-encompassing civil discord in Tuscany.

**Nimrod:** A Biblical character, who led the building of a great tower that would reach the heavens, the tower of Babel. God considered this an affront upon his status and a type



of betrayal. So, in the midst of the construction he confused the languages of all those involved thus halting construction. Nimrod is buried in the walls of the lowest circle of Hell, but has not lost his capacity to babble.

**Antæus:** A mythological giant, who did not fight against the gods. He was renowned for his deeds of strength, but Hercules killed him by lifting him from the ground from which he drew his power. In Dante's *Inferno*, he is imbedded in the wall of the ninth circle, but is otherwise unfettered. He picks up the poets and places them in the bottom of the circle.

**Bocca:** A Ghibelline by blood who when fighting in a key battle for the Guelfs betrayed them. Dante stumbles upon his head, which protrudes from the frozen surface of the Cocytus, and he berates him. When the soul refuses to reveal his identity to Dante, Dante grabs his scalp and demands to know. Another treacherous soul nearby identifies him and Dante lets him go with disgust.

**Count Ugolino:** A traitor punished in the second ring of the ninth circle of Hell. He gnaws on the head of Archbishop Ruggieri, both frozen neck deep in ice. Ugolino betrayed the Guelf party of Pisa by conspiring with Ruggieri, the leader of the Ghibelline party, to get rid of one of his Guelf competitors; however, having thus weakened the Guelf party, Ruggieri imprisoned Ugolino as well as four of his sons and grandsons. Ugolino describes how he watched his sons starve to death in the prison before going crazy and dying himself of starvation.

**Friar Alberigo:** A traitor to hospitality, Alberigo killed his brother and his brother's son during a dinner at his house. Dante is surprised to see him in Hell because he believes him to be alive. Alberigo explains that souls can be taken to this circle of Hell before they die, and that a demon takes over their body for the remainder of their life. Dante promises to remove the ice from his eyes after he tells his story, but in the end refuses to do so for such a sinner.

**Judas, Brutus, and Cassius:** The three archetypal traitors chewed by the monster Satan in the lowest circle of the *Inferno*. Judas was Jesus' disciple who betrayed him to the Pharisees for money, leading to his crucifixion. Brutus and Cassius betrayed Julius Cæsar, the greatest leader of the Roman Empire, which also led to his death.



## Objects/Places

**The dark wood:** In the middle of the path of his life Dante finds himself lost in a dark wood where he spends a night in fear and confusion before attempting to scale a mountain at the top of which he sees the sun. However, his attempt to escape the wood is futile without the divine intervention of Beatrice and the guidance of Virgil.

**Leopard, Lion, She-wolf, and Greyhound:** Heading in the direction of the sun to escape his confusion and fear of the dark forest, Dante attempts to scale a mountain but is impeded by three animals. A playful leopard distracts him from his journey and then a lion and a wolf terrify him. He flees back down the dark side of the mountain, where he meets Virgil who tells him the she-wolf is vicious and insatiably greedy and will slay everyone who tries to climb the mountain. Virgil continues to say that a greyhound will eventually come to slay the wolf, which represents the corrupt papacy, and unify Italy.

**Blank banner:** The souls on the outskirts of Hell were never sinners but also never followed God. Their punishment is to run in a group after a blank banner.

**The abyss:** Dante's hell is formed in the shape of an inverted cone whose point is at the center of the earth, which is the furthest place from God who is in the heavens. Virgil suggests that Hell took this shape because when Lucifer was flung into the earth, all the soil fled away from his face.

**Castle:** In the first circle, called Limbo, noble heathen dwell in castle on a lit plain. These souls were born before Christ, but lived their lives for other noble causes. The castle is surrounded by seven walls with seven gates and a rivulet. The walls may represent the seven virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.

**Water:** There are various rivers and streams and lakes and marshes in Hell that all derive from the same source, a mountain spring on the island of Crete, and so in some sense link together the different levels of Hell. There is no explanation for why sometimes the water becomes blood and vice versa. The river Acheron marks the boundaries of Hell. The sinners wallow in the marsh Styx and they boil in the bloody river Phlegethon. All the waters pool in the basin of Hell and there form the frozen marsh named Cocytus. The river Lethe also shares the same source and empties into Cocytus but it traverses Purgatory where the repentant sinners wash in it.

**The Furies and Medusa:** Mythological characters. The Furies represent a guilty conscience and Medusa represents stubbornness that turns the heart to stone. Virgil tries to protect Dante from these beings but only divine power can remove them from Dante's path.

**City of Dis:** The city of Satan is guarded by fallen angels and the three Furies. It encompasses all of the circles below the fifth. Sins of incontinence are not punished in



the City of Dis, because they are only an indulgence of natural desires, whereas the sins that are punished within the City are considered by God as perversions of what he ordained for man.

**Old Man:** A symbolic image appropriated by Dante from the Bible. All the waters that flow through Hell derive from the fissures in the body of this man-shaped mountain. His head is made of gold, his arms and breast of silver, his abdomen of brass, his legs and left foot of iron, and his right foot, upon which he leans, of baked clay. This image is an allegory of the history of the human race. The four metals represent the four ages of man, and the iron and clay feet represent secular and spiritual authority respectively.

**Baptistry of Florence:** The third ring of the eighth circle holds simonists, those who used their spiritual offices to make money. The walls of the chasm are lined with niches in which souls are imprisoned upside down. This design of this chasm resembles the Baptistry of Florence, whose walls were lined with niches in which priests could preach protected from the crowd.

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**Whore:** In the book of Revelation, the evangelist, John, has a vision of a whore sitting on many waters. That whore represents the Catholic Church. Her seven heads and ten horns represent the seven virtues and ten commandments. Dante condemns Pope Nicolas III for making the Church, which was once virtuous, a whore to wealth and power.

**Islands of Caprara and Gorgona:** Two islands off the coast of Tuscany, but belonging to the province of Pisa. Dante, revolted by the gruesome story of treachery told by Count Ugolino of Pisa, condemns Pisa and suggests that these two islands move to block the river Arno, thereby drowning the city Pisa in a sort of geographical betrayal.

**Figs:** A rather unremarkable fruit in the modern English language, but in ancient and modern Italian the fig is a fruit loaded with connotative possibilities. Vanni Fucci makes the gesture of the fig as a contemptuous insult toward God. The gesture of the fig is made by placing the thumb in between the first and middle finger when making a fist thereby creating a phallic symbol. Friar Alberigo says that in Hell he receives dates for his figs. Some say this means that he receives a heavy punishment since dates were worth more than figs. Dante uses fruit imagery in this case because the Friar killed his guest as the fruit course was being brought out.

**Satan's Wings:** Dante opens the last canto of the Inferno with a parody of the opening line of a Latin hymn that announces advancing regal banners. Dante adds the adjective "infernal." In this way Dante ironically refers to the giant bat-like wings of his version of

Satan, who has a pair of them under each of his three gruesome heads. They flap slowly and impotently through the freezing air of the ninth circle.

**Stars:** Each of the three canticles *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* end with the word “stars.” As Dante and Virgil exit the other side of the earth after their journey through Hell they are again able to see the stars. Their journey, which continues up the mountain of Purgatory and then through the heavens, is a continuous path towards these stars.



## Quotes

Quote 1: "In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost." Canto I, pg. 11

Quote 2: "Through me is the way into the doleful city; through me the way into the eternal pain; through me the way among the people lost. Justice moved my High Maker; Divine Power made me, Wisdom Supreme, and Primal Love. Before me no things were created, but eternal; and eternal I endure: leave all hope, ye that enter." Canto III, pg. 22

Quote 3: "Without hope we live in desire." Canto IV, pg. 27

Quote 4: "Sullen were we in the sweet air, that is gladdened by the Sun, carrying lazy smoke within our hearts; now lie we sullen here in the black mire." Canto VII, pg. 43

Quote 5: "Come thou alone; and let that one go, who has entered so daringly into this kingdom. Let him return alone his foolish way; try, if he can: for thou shalt stay here, that hast escorted him through so dark a country." Canto VIII, pg. 47

Quote 6: "Why dwells this insolence in you? Why spurn ye at that Will, whose object never can be frustrated, and which often has increased your pain?" Canto IX, pg. 51

Quote 7: "Like someone who has imperfect vision, we see things, which are remote from us; so much light the Supreme Ruler still gives to us; when they draw nigh, or are, our intellect is altogether void; and except what others bring us, we know nothing of your human state." Canto X, pg. 56

Quote 8: "Not green the foliage, but of colour dusky; not smooth the branches, but gnarled and warped; apples none were there, but withered sticks with poison." Canto XIII, pg. 71

Quote 9: "Though Jove weary out his smith, from whom in anger he took the sharp bolt with which on my last day I was transfixed; and though he weary out the others, one by one, at the black forge in Mongibello, crying: 'Help, help, good Vulcan!' as he did at the strife of Phlegra; and hurl at me with all his might, yet should he not thereby have joyful vengeance." Canto XIV, pg. 77

Quote 10: "But that ungrateful, malignant people, who of old came down from Fiesole, and still savors of the mountain and the rock, will make itself an enemy to thee for thy good deeds; and there is cause: for amongst the tart sorbtrees, it befits not the sweet fig to fructify." Canto XV, pg. 82

Quote 11: "An ill way thou goest!" Canto XVII, pg. 94

Quote 12: "O Simon Magnus! O wretched followers of his and robbers ye, who prostitute the things of God, that should be wedded unto righteousness, for gold and silver." Canto XIX, pg. 102



Quote 13: "Ah Constantine! To how much ill gave birth, not thy conversion, but that dower which the first rich Father took from thee" Canto XIX, pg. 105

Quote 14: "covered thou must dance thee here; so that, if thou canst, thou mayest pilfer privately." Canto XXI, pg. 114

Quote 15: "Do not take him; wrong me not. He must come down amongst my menials; because he gave the fraudulent counsel, since which I have kept fast by his hair: for he who repents not, cannot be absolved; nor is it possible to repent and will a thing at the same time, the contradiction not permitting it." Canto XXVII, pg. 145

Quote 16: "Of itself it made for itself a lamp, and they were two in one, and one in two; how this can be, He knows who so ordains." Canto XXVIII, pg. 151

Quote 17: "I am Friar Alberigo, I am he of the fruits from the ill garden, who here receive dates for my figs." Canto XXXIII, pg. 178

Quote 18: "Vexilla Regis prodeunt inferni towards us." Canto XXXIV, pg. 181

Quote 19: "through a round opening the beauteous things which Heaven bears; and thence issu[ing] out, again to see the Stars." Canto XXXIV, pg. 184



# Topic Tracking: God's Will

## Canto III

God's Will 1: Charon, the ferryman of the Acheron, refuses to allow Dante into his boat, but Virgil convinces him by saying God wills it and what God wills is done. Charon assents but is angered.

## Canto VII

God's Will 2: Plutus gibbers uncontrollably in anger when the Poets enter his ring of Hell, but when Virgil tells him they are moved by the will of God, Plutus collapses.

## Canto VII

God's Will 3: In the fourth ring, Virgil and Dante discuss the goddess Fortune. Virgil says God ordained Fortune to govern the destinies of men on earth and she does not follow the rules of human reason or respond to human efforts. Therefore the struggles of the avaricious are futile because what they gain or retain ultimately depends on what Fortune and indirectly God wills.

## Canto IX

God's Will 4: An angel from Heaven rebukes the fallen angels who guard the entrance to the City of Dis for their insolent attempt to stop the Poets in their journey. He says the will of God is never frustrated, and their attempts to rebel only add to their suffering.

## Canto XIX

God's Will 5: The third ring of the eighth circle holds the simonists, who sold spiritual things. A series of Popes suffer here. And Dante rebukes emperor Constantine, who instituted Christianity as the national religion, for rewarding Popes monetarily.

## Canto XXVI

God's Will 6: Dante reminds himself as he approaches the next seventh chasm of the eighth circle, which holds evil counselors, that he must not obtain deliverance for himself and Florence through fraud. He believes he may be inclined to use fraudulent means to achieve honorable goals.

## Canto XXVII

God's Will 7: Count Guido da Montefeltro agrees to give Pope Boniface VIII evil advice after securing his forgiveness for the sinful act. However, God only forgives those who repent, not those who bargain for the Pope's official ablutions. Guido finds himself in Hell because one cannot repent before actually performing a sin.



### **Canto XXVIII**

God's Will 8: Through his character Mahomet, Dante, the author, exhorts one of his contemporaries, Fra Dolcino, to curb his religiously divisive actions. He also places the initiator of the Guef-Ghibelline schism in the depths of Hell.

### **Canto XXXI**

God's Will 9: Mythological giants are imbedded in the walls of the ninth circle of Hell. They are punished by God for rebelling against the mythological gods.

### **Canto XXXIII**

God's Will 10: As Dante nears the end of his journey through Hell he begins to treat the sinners without mercy. He promises to remove the ice from Friar Alberigo's eyes if he tells him his sin, and then refuses to fulfill the promise after he tells his story.

### **Canto XXXIV**

God's Will 11: In the nadir of Hell Satan is frozen with three sinners in his mouth: Judas, who betrayed Christ and Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed Cæsar. These three sinners are given equal status in Dante's Hell.



# Topic Tracking: Human Reason

## Canto I

Human Reason 1: Virgil is commonly accepted to represent Human Reason. He was a venerable poet but born before Christ and therefore unsaved. He is Dante's guide through the Inferno and Purgatory but not Paradise.

## Canto VII

Human Reason 2: Virgil and Dante discuss the goddess Fortune as they traverse the fourth ring of Hell. Virgil explains that the goddess rules man's destiny according to God's will. She is insensible of human reason and emotion and therefore human attempts to alter or understand individual destinies are futile.

## Canto VIII

Human Reason 3: Dante, asking Virgil to explain the signal flames they see on the walls of the City of Dis, refers to him as the "Sea of all intelligence."

## Canto IX

Human Reason 4: Virgil fails to get past the fallen angels, who deny he and Dante entrance to the City of Dis, without the help of an angel sent from Heaven. This is the first instance during their journey through Hell in which his powers are demonstrated to be ineffective.

## Canto X

Human Reason 5: The sixth circle is occupied by heretics. Dante meets several Epicurean heretics, who believed that the highest form of happiness was not closeness to God but the absence of pain. These sinners substituted philosophy for God.

## Canto XI

Human Reason 6: The second circle nests hypocrisy, flattery, sorcerers, cheating, theft, simony, and pandering. Dante questions why the carnal, gluttonous, avaricious, prodigal, wrathful, and gloomy are not punished here, and Virgil explains that these sins less offend God than violence and malice because they are an indulgence of what is naturally enjoyable. The man who does natural things in excess is more Godly than he who acts in an unnatural way. Hell is designed according to God's will, but Virgil explains using examples from philosophy and ethics.

## Canto XIII

Human Reason 7: The soul of Pier delle Vigne explains to Dante and Virgil that at the second judgment of all souls, which occurs at the end of time, those who have



committed the isn of suicide will regain their bodies but not to wear because it is not just that a man have what he takes from himself.

### **Canto XX**

Human Reason 8: Dante pities the souls of the diviners in the fourth ring of the eighth circle, but Virgil rebukes him saying it is impious to pity those who God condemns. Their sins are deserved and their punishments perfect.

### **Canto XXIII**

Human Reason 9: After leaving a demon escort in the fifth ring of the eighth circle, Dante intuitively fears that the demons will chase them and perhaps do them harm. He shares his fears with Virgil who agrees to hasten to the next chasm. The demons appear in pursuit a moment after.

### **Canto XXIII**

Human Reason 10: Virgil finds the location of the collapsed bridge and realizes that the demons of the fifth ring of the eighth circle lied when giving them directions. This is the second point in the poets' journey through Hell at which Virgil's powers have been foiled.

### **Canto XXVII**

Human Reason 11: Count Guido da Montefeltro agrees to give the Pope sinful advice after securing his forgiveness in advance. This logic does not get him out of Hell.



# Topic Tracking:

## Literature/Mythology/Bible

### Canto I

Literature/Mythology/Bible 1: Before entering Hell, Dante compares himself to Æneas and Paul, and begins to doubt the path he has agreed to take. Æneas is a character in Virgil's poetry, supposedly the father of Sylvius, the founder of Rome, who descended to Hell. Also, according to medieval tradition, St. Paul visited Hell as well.

### Canto V

Literature/Mythology/Bible 2: The second circle of Hell is populated by those who indulged in the lusts of the flesh. Included in the ranks are the mythological characters; Dido, Helena, Achilles, and Paris; a knight of King Arthur's round table, Tristan; and Cleopatra. Dante speaks to two lovers who fell into an adulterous relationship while reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere.

### Canto VI

Literature/Mythology/Bible 3: The mythological three-headed dog, Cerberus, tortures the souls of the third circle of Hell. He barks and tears at them with his claws. When he barks threateningly at Virgil and Dante, Virgil throws clods of dirt into each of his three mouths. The Greek god of riches, Plutus, guards the entrance to the fourth circle in which the avaricious and prodigal are held.

### Canto IX

Literature/Mythology/Bible 4: At the gates of the City of Dis, the three Furies threaten Dante and Virgil by suggesting they will bring forth the head of Medusa and turn Dante into stone. Virgil turns Dante away from them and covers Dante's eyes with his own hands. The Furies depart when an angel from Heaven arrives.

### Canto XII

Literature/Mythology/Bible 5: The seventh circle, where the violent are punished, is guarded by the Minotaur, half man half bull. He thrashes about violently while biting himself when the Poets pass him. Centaurs, half men half horses, guard the souls of the first ring of the seventh circle, who are guilty of committing violence against their fellowman.

### Canto XIV

Literature/Mythology/Bible 6: Virgil says the source of all the waters of Hell is a spring within a giant mountain of a man, who stands on the island of Crete. His head is made of gold, his arms and breast of silver, his abdomen of brass, his legs and left foot of iron,



and his right foot, upon which he leans, of baked clay. This image is taken from the Bible and is an allegory of the history of the human race. The four metals represent the four ages of man, and the iron and clay feet represent secular and spiritual authority respectively.

### **Canto XVII**

Literature/Mythology/Bible 7: The half human half reptile monster, Geryon, guards the usurers of the seventh circle and the entrance to the eighth circle. In classical mythology Geryon is King of Spain, who Hercules killed in order to take his oxen. Dante and Virgil ride on his back down to the eighth circle. Dante compares his fear during this ride to that of two other mythological figures, Phaeton and Icarus.

### **Canto XXIII**

Literature/Mythology/Bible 8: In the sixth ring of the eighth circle, Dante sees Caiaphas, a Jewish high priest, pinned to the ground crucifix-style and being trampled by his other fellow hypocrites. Caiaphas is recorded in the New Testament as advising a council of Jews to crucify Jesus, reasoning that it was better for one man to die than for all the people of Israel to suffer.

### **Canto XXVI**

Literature/Mythology/Bible 9: Ulysses is punished in the eighth ring of the eighth circle for advising Achilles to leave his new wife to fight in the Trojan War. Dante adds to mythology by inventing the story of Ulysses death.

### **Canto XXXI**

Literature/Mythology/Bible 10: The biblical character Nimrod and the mythological giants surround the ninth circle of Hell. Nimrod blows a horn and speaks unintelligibly. God confused his speech when he tried to build a tower that reached to the heavens. The giants who warred against the Greek gods, including Ephialtes, are chained to the ground in Hell; whereas Antæus, who was neutral, is not chained.



# Topic Tracking: Politics

## Canto I

Politics 1: Dante predicts that a Greyhound will rise up in Italy and slay the She-wolf. The wolf represents the corrupt papacy. There are various opinions of who Dante believed this political savior would be.

## Canto VI

Politics 2: Ciaccio, a former citizen of Florence, tells Dante that the vying parties in Florence, the city of envy, will war and one will conquer the other. He is referring to the Black and White Guelfs. Dante is a White Guelf. Dante asks specifically about the fates of specific former politicians of Florence, and Ciaccio also tells him that they and many of their contemporaries are now deep in the lower circles of Hell being punished for various sins.

## Canto X

Politics 3: Dante discovers Farinata among the heretics in a flaming tomb. A former Ghibelline party leader, Farinata voraciously discusses Florence's past, present, and future politics with Dante. He boasts that his party routed the Guelfs several times, but Dante reminds him that at present the Ghibellines had not been in power in Florence for some time. Farinata retorts that Dante's faction, the White Guelfs, will be exiled in the near future as well.

## Canto XVI

Politics 4: In the third round of the seventh circle, Dante meets Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, and Jacopo Rusticucci; contemporary patriots of Dante. They ask for reports of Florence, and Dante weeps telling them Florence suffers from pride and excess. They look at each other as if they have heard the truth and commiserate with Dante.

## Canto XIX

Politics 5: Dante condemns Pope Nicolas III, who he meets in the third ring of the seventh circle, for making the Catholic Church a whore to the kings, for wedding the Church to politics and money rather than to righteousness. He goes on to bitterly lament Constantine's choice to give money to the Popes. Virgil approves of Dante's harsh criticism.

## Canto XXIII

Politics 6: Dante finds two Bolognese Friars, Catalano and Loderingo in the sixth chasm of the eighth circle. They belonged to the Guelf and Ghibelline families respectively



and were chosen to take religious positions in Florence with idea that outsiders could soothe political tension in the city. They are punished for hypocrisy in Dante's hell.

#### **Canto XXIV**

Politics 7: Vanni Fucci maliciously reveals to Dante the sad future of his political party, the White Guelfs. He alludes to the minor success of the Whites in Pistoia followed by their complete exile from Florence.

#### **Canto XXVII**

Politics 8: Dante defames Count Guido da Montefeltro as being an evil counselor. He advised Pope Boniface VIII to offer an enemy amnesty and then attack them when their guard was down.

#### **Canto XXXII**

Politics 9: Dante reviles and is revolted by Bocca, a Ghibelline by blood who when fighting in a key battle for the Guelfs betrayed them. He is frozen neck-deep in the lowest circle of Hell.

#### **Canto XXXIII**

Politics 10: Dante condemns Pisa and its citizens Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri. They are frozen in next to each other in the lowest circle of Hell, one gnawing upon the skull of the other. Ugolino betrayed the Guelf party of Pisa by conspiring with Ruggieri, the leader of the Ghibelline party, to get rid of one of his Guelf competitors; however, having thus weakened the Guelf party, Ruggieri imprisoned Ugolino as well as four of his sons and grandsons and let them starve to death.

# Canto I

"In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost." Canto I, pg. 11 Dante finds himself lost in a dark wood, and spends a horrific night there. Though it is a suffering, he recounts his story in order to show how he was led to discover the real causes of all misery. He comes to a Hill upon which he can see the light of the morning Sun. This heartens him and he begins to ascend the hill along a deserted path. He meets a beautiful Leopard who impedes his way for some time, but he continues with a light heart until he is driven back by the terrifying appearance of a Lion and a She-wolf. As he is running down the hill, Dante meets the poet Virgil who tells him that the She-wolf traps and kills everyone who tries to climb the mountain by the road on which she stands. He says in the future a strong and vice-less Greyhound will save Italy by chasing the Wolf back into Hell where she came from. Virgil offers to take Dante by another path on which he will see the depths of misery and the heights of joy. Virgil says he will guide him only part of the way and then pass him onto another more worthy guide. Dante follows him.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 1

Topic Tracking: Politics 1

## Canto II

The first day ends and Dante begins to doubt whether he has enough strength of spirit to complete this journey. He asks Virgil to consider again whether he is virtuous enough to succeed. He compares himself to Æneas and Paul, who traveled to the immortal world, and fears he does not match them in worthiness. Virgil tells him that a beautiful spirit, Beatrice, a woman Dante loved in real life, called Virgil from heaven and told him to guide Dante. Dante is encouraged and tells his guide to lead him on.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 1



## Canto III

"Through me is the way into the doleful city; through me the way into the eternal pain; through me the way among the people lost. Justice moved my High Maker; Divine Power made me, Wisdom Supreme, and Primal Love. Before me no things were created, but eternal; and eternal I endure: leave all hope, ye that enter." Canto III, pg. 22

Dante reads these words written above the gate of Hell. Virgil tells him he must leave his fears behind him. The cries of pain resounding in the air beyond the gate cause Dante to weep. He sees a massive crowd hurrying behind a blank flag around the dark plain outside of the confines of Hell. They are stung by hornets and wasps, and worms feed on their blood and tears. He asks Virgil who they are. Virgil says they are those who neither sinned nor worshipped God but lived for themselves. The fallen angels who sided with neither God nor Satan are among them. They are barred from both Heaven and Hell. The two approach a great river, the river Acheron, and are met by the ferryman, Charon. Charon tells Dante that he cannot have passage on his boat, but Virgil tells him that the higher spirits will it, and so they cross the river with the rest of the damned who are driven on by a feverish sense of divine justice. On the other side Dante collapses in a fearful faint.

Topic Tracking: God's Will 1

## Canto IV

Dante is awakened by thunder, and he finds himself on the brink of the abyss. Virgil leads him into the first circle, Limbo, which contains the souls of those who lived without sin but died without baptism or Christianity. The air trembles with their sighs for they have no hope of ever knowing God. "Without hope we live in desire." Canto IV, pg. 27 Virgil belongs to this circle of Hell. Dante and Virgil approach a lighted area of dark Hell and are met by the heathen poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan. The poets lead them into a castle where on a green plain they meet the noblest of the heathen personalities including Socrates, Seneca, Hector, and Orpheus. Then they part from the company and continue their journey into the dark pit of Hell.

## Canto V

The second circle of Hell is the true entrance to Hell. At the door, sits Minos. He judges those who wait to enter and sends them to their appropriate tier in Hell. This second tier is the eternal prison of carnal sinners, those who indulged irrationally in the lusts of the flesh. Their punishment is to be lashed and driven about by an unending fierce wind. In the ranks of the shadows are Dido, Helena, Achilles, Paris, Tristan, and Cleopatra. Dante calls two spirits who seem lighter than the rest to come to him. They are the lovers Francesca of Rimini and her lover Paolo. Francesca tells him their sweet story of earthy longing while Paolo weeps and Dante is overwhelmed by pity and faints.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 2



## Canto VI

Dante wakes to find himself in the third circle, which is the place of torment for epicures and gluttons who were distracted from God by the enjoyment of food. A steady heavy rain of water, hail, and snow pours down on the accursed, and Cerberus, the mythological three-headed demon-dog, claws his prisoners while barking viciously. The monster turns and snarls at the two travelers, but Virgil silences him by throwing a clod of dirt into his gaping mouth. As the two walk over the prostrate souls, one lifts his head to speak to Dante. He is a citizen of Florence, known to Dante, and nicknamed Ciaccio in his former life. He tells Dante that the vying parties in Florence, the city of envy, will war and one will conquer the other. He also tells him that many of the politicians of his time are now deep in the lower circles of Hell being punished for various sins. Virgil says Ciaccio will lie on the ground until the Final Judgement of all souls. They leave Ciaccio and continue wading through the soaked souls until they meet Plutus, the ancient god of riches, at the descent to the next circle.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 3

Topic Tracking: Politics 2

## Canto VII

Plutus is enraged by the sight of a mortal entering his realm. Virgil causes him to collapse with a few strong words, and they continue. In this circle the prodigal and avaricious are punished. It is divided into two halves, dividing the opposing classes of sinners. The souls are condemned to roll large weights back and forth around the semi-circle meeting at the center to curse each other bitterly. Dante notices that many of the avaricious souls are tonsured, which indicates that they were dignitaries of the Catholic Church; however, they are now impossible to recognize. They move on, discussing the goddess of fortune who is untouched by human concerns and distributes riches as she wills. Passing to the next circle they find a dark stream and follow it to malignant marsh called the Styx. They see the naked souls of the wrathful fighting viciously with one another in the mud, and further on, completely covered in the mire, the souls of the sullen gurgle miserably. "Sullen were we in the sweet air, that is gladdened by the Sun, carrying lazy smoke within our hearts; now lie we sullen here in the black mire." Canto VII, pg. 43 After traversing the marsh, Dante and Virgil come to a tower.

Topic Tracking: God's Will 2

Topic Tracking: Reason 2

Topic Tracking: God's Will 3



## Canto VIII

On the ramparts of the tower two flames signal the arrival of the travelers, and a ferry quickly crosses the marsh to collect them. The resentful ferryman, Phlegyas, takes them across the marshy fifth circle towards the City of Dis. During the passage, Dante is recognized by a spirit and recognizes him as Filippo Argenti, who had been known for his arrogance and cruelty. He tries to grab the boat but is thrust back by Virgil and swallowed in the mire. They see the fiery towers of the city looming above them and disembark at the gates. However, a group of fallen angels keep them from entering, but assent to talking privately with Virgil. "Come thou alone; and let that one go, who has entered so daringly into this kingdom. Let him return alone his foolish way; try, if he can: for thou shalt stay here, that hast escorted him through so dark a country." Canto VIII, pg. 47 These same angels opposed Christ when he tried to enter Hell after his crucifixion.

Topic Tracking: Reason 3

## Canto IX

Dante grows pale when he sees that his guide has been thwarted. Virgil tries to calm him, but his broken response betrays an uncertainty, which further unsettles his ward. Dante asks if what they will is possible. Virgil says he has passed into the city before to retrieve a soul from the lowest circle of Hell. The three weeping Furies approach threatening to bring forth Medusa and turn Dante into stone. Virgil turns Dante away from them and covers Dante's eyes with his own hands. The Furies depart and Virgil tells Dante to look across the waters of the marsh, where an angel can be seen walking across the water. The fell spirits flee from the messenger from Heaven and he opens the door, reprimanding the fallen angels. "Why dwells this insolence in you? Why spurn ye at that Will, whose object never can be frustrated, and which often has increased your pain?" Canto IX, pg. 51 The two travelers enter to see a vast plain full of sorrow and torment. Across the plain were flaming chests filled with the burning the souls of all types of heretics. The poets walk between the tombs and the wall of the city.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 4

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 4

Topic Tracking: God's Will 4

## Canto X

As Dante and Virgil walk along side the fiery tombs, Dante inquires as to whether the spirits within the boxes can be seen. Virgil responds to the affirmative and says that tombs near them contain the souls of the Epicurean heretics, whose irreligious philosophy held that the highest form of happiness was absence of pain. While Virgil speaks the very person Dante was thinking of rises out of a nearby tomb, Farinata, the father-in-law of one of Dante's dearest friends, Guido Cavalcanti. Farinata belonged to the Ghibelline party, the historical political rival of the Guelf party, which Dante and Guido were born into. The soul of Guido's father, Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, rises out of a nearby tomb and asks if his son is with Dante, when Dante pauses he assumes his son is dead and collapses back into his grave. Farinata prophesies Dante's exile from Florence and explains that the spirits in Hell have no knowledge of the present state of things on earth, but can see the future and the past. "Like someone who has imperfect vision, we see things, which are remote from us; so much light the Supreme Ruler still gives to us; when they draw nigh, or are, our intellect is altogether void; and except what others bring us, we know nothing of your human state." Canto X, pg. 56 Dante tells Farinata to assure Cavalcante that his son is still alive and parts with Virgil. He is bewildered by Farinata's prophesy and Virgil tells him that he shall hear the whole of his life's path from Beatrice.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 5

Topic Tracking: Politics 3

## Canto XI

After crossing the sixth circle the poets come to cliff, which marks the entrance to the circles below. A great monument declares that within the circle below is held a heretical Pope. They wait there a few moments to accustom themselves to the stench that rises from below. Virgil explains which types of sinners are punished in the three rings below. The first circle is reserved for the violent and divided into three rounds: violence toward God, towards one's self, and towards one's neighbor. The second circle nests hypocrisy, flattery, sorcerers, cheating, theft, simony, and pandering. The third and last circle of the City of Dis holds traitors. Dante questions why the carnal, gluttonous, avaricious, prodigal, wrathful, and gloomy are not punished here, and Virgil explains that these sins less offend God than violence and malice because they are an indulgence of what is naturally enjoyable. The man who does natural things in excess is more Godly than he who acts in an unnatural way. At the dawning of their second day in Hell, the Poets descend into the Seventh Circle.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 6



## Canto XII

Virgil and Dante descend down the steep cliff and encounter the Minotaur, a mythological creature, half man half bull, previously imprisoned in the Labyrinth of Crete. Virgil addresses the Minotaur harshly and they rush by him as he thrashes and bucks in anger. The descent is covered with loose rocks, and Virgil notes that an avalanche of sorts must have occurred since he last came this way. He suggests that when Christ visited Hell, the earthquake that accompanied his death also shook Hell. They see a river of blood in the valley. All those who commit violence against their fellowman are punished in it. Centaurs ran along the banks armed with arrows to keep the sinners at different depths in the boiling purple river according to the weight of their sins. They approach Chiron the leader of the centaurs, and a wise teacher in Greek mythology. He appoints another centaur, Nessus, to take them to the ford of the river in order that they may cross. As they cross the ford, Nessus points out tyrants who stand brow-deep in the seething blood. They include Alexander the Great as well as infamous Ghebellines and Guelfs.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 5



## Canto XIII

They immediately find themselves in a strange wood, which is the second round of the seventh circle and contains those who commit violence against themselves. "Not green the foliage, but of colour dusky; not smooth the branches, but gnarled and warped; apples none were there, but withered sticks with poison." Canto XIII, pg. 71 Harpies, part human, part winged-predator, roost in the branches of the trees. Virgil tells Dante that his thoughts will mutate if he breaks a branch from one of the trees, and Dante decides to test the statement. The cut tree bleeds and reproaches Dante. He is Pier delle Vigne, minister to Emperor Frederick II who committed suicide in prison after being suspected of treachery. He denies ever being unfaithful to the Emperor. He explains that those who commit suicide are thrown into the wood of the Seventh Circle and take root. There the Harpies tear at their leaves, giving them pain. At the end of time, they will regain their bodies, which will be dragged through the wood and hung in the branches of their correlate souls. The first soul is interrupted by the flight of two other tormented souls pursued by vicious hell-hounds. One is torn apart piece by piece, and the other takes root as a bush. The first is Jacomo da Sant' Andrea; the second is Lano. Both these men killed themselves violently. Lano identifies himself as a former resident of Florence.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 7



## Canto XIV

Dante collects the scattered leaves of the bush, and returns them to his countryman before following Virgil to the third round of the Seventh Circle that is a vast plain of burning sand. There are three classes of sinners tortured on this plain: those who committed violence against God, blasphemers; those who committed violence against Nature, sodomites; and those who committed violence against Nature and Art, usurers. Those of the first category lie supine on the plain and suffer the most. Those of the second crouch, and those of the third pace back and forth incessantly at a speed proportionate to their guilt. The sands of the plain are heated by an eternal shower of fire. Capaneus, a blasphemous king who held Thebes in siege, lies on the plain still reviling God furiously. "Though Jove weary out his smith, from whom in anger he took the sharp bolt with which on my last day I was transfixed; and though he weary out the others, one by one, at the black forge in Mongibello, crying: 'Help, help, good Vulcan!' as he did at the strife of Phlegra; and hurl at me with all his might, yet should he not thereby have joyful vengeance." Canto XIV, pg. 77 Virgil comments that Capaneus' own unending anger is his punishment in itself. The poets leave him cursing and circle the burning sands on the edge of the wood. A rivulet of blood exits the wood and flows across the plain, which prompts Virgil to describe the origin of all the rivers in Hell. He says they flow out of a fissure in the body of a great Old Man standing on the island of Crete.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 6

## Canto XV

The river exhales a dark cloud that quenches the flames raining down on it, and so the two poets follow the bank of the stream across the fiery plain. A group of wraiths passes near them and one recognizes Dante and grabs his skirt. Dante recognizes him to be Brunetto Latini, a member of the Guelf party of Florence and a poet who influenced Dante himself. They converse and Brunetto warns Dante to beware of the people of Florence. "But that ungrateful, malignant people, who of old came down from Fiesole, and still savors of the mountain and the rock, will make itself an enemy to thee for thy good deeds; and there is cause: for amongst the tart sorbtrees, it befits not the sweet fig to fructify." Canto XV, pg. 82 Dante laments the state of his role model, Brunetto, as they reminisce of the past and discuss the future. However, soon Brunetto must rejoin his companions in their tortuous race.

## Canto XVI

Virgil and Dante have almost reached the next circle, when they are approached by three more wretched souls who circle vigorously in front of Dante, vying for his attention. They introduce themselves: Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, and Jacopo Rusticucci. All three were valiant, talented patriots and contemporaries of Dante. He salutes them and grieves their present misery. They ask about the present state of Florence, and he tells them the city suffers from pride and excess. They ask him to rekindle memories of them in the world above and race off into the desert. The pilgrim poets come to the edge of the plain and follow the course of the river down a steep bank towards a watery abyss. Virgil throws a cord into the abyss and the two watch as a monster swims up through the vast depths.

Topic Tracking: Politics 4



## Canto XVII

The monster, Geryon, pulls himself onto the bank of the dark lake. He has the face of a man and the body of a reptile. As they approach him, he wields his tail like a scorpion. Virgil approaches the monster and tells Dante to pass on and view the tortures of the usurers alone, so as to better remember them. Dante approaches a crowd of souls crouching on the sand beyond Geryon. Dante sees them writhe attempting to escape the scorching sand and flames, but he does not recognize any of them. Each has a moneybag tied around his neck marked with a family's coat of arms. They gripe among themselves and urge Dante to leave them to their misery. He leaves without responding and finds Virgil has mounted the monster and expects him to do as well. "Greater fear there was not, I believe, when Phaeton let loose the reins, whereby the sky, as yet appears, was burnt; - nor when poor Icarus felt his loins unfeathering by the heating of the wax, his father crying to him, "An ill way thou goest!" Canto XVII, pg. 94 He does so with great trepidation and Geryon moves slowly out into the abyss and then down in slow circles. Like a weary, sullen falcon he fled away after the poets dismounted at the bottom of the whirlpool.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible 7



## Canto XVIII

The eighth circle, lies at the bottom of the poets' descent. It is made of iron-like stone and divided into ten rounds, each constructed like a fortified trench of a fortress. Footpaths and bridges cross the tops of these ramparts like the spokes of a wheel. They lead to another deeper well at the center of the Circle. Virgil, turning to the left, leads Dante down one of these paths. Horned demons lash the naked souls marching in the first ring. Dante compares the pattern of their marching to the ritual march performed at the Catholic Church's Jubilee celebration. Dante recognizes one soul, Venedico Caccianimico, who confesses to aiding a marquis in seducing his sister, Ghisola. This sin classes him as a panderer or "pimp." He says there are many greedy men from Bologna, his city, who suffer with him for like sins. As they cross one of the bridges that connect the ring ramparts, Virgil points out one soul of regal aspect. He is the mythological adventurer Jason and is punished here for seducing Hypsipyle, the daughter of the King of Lemnos, and leaving her pregnant. They continue over to the next chasm, which is encrusted with filth and filled with vile vapors. The souls within this ring gasp and beat themselves. They are covered in something like human excrement. Dante recognizes one soul, Alessio Interminei of Lucca, who suffers here for the sin of flattery and Virgil points out another soul, a former harlot, Thais, who exaggerated her compliments to her lovers.



## Canto XIX

They cross to the third ring that holds the simonists, those guilty of the selling of spiritual things. "O Simon Magnus! O wretched followers of his and robbers ye, who prostitute the things of God, that should be wedded unto righteousness, for gold and silver." Canto XIX, pg. 102 Simonists take their name from Simon Magnus, a king of Samaria rebuked by St. Peter for declaring that the things of God can be bought for money. The walls and floor of this chasm are lined with round holes. The holes resemble niches in the Baptistery of Florence where priest stood when addressing a congregation. Dante mentions that he rescued a boy imprisoned in one such niche in Florence. However, priests have been deposited upside down in these holes with only their feet and calves visible. Flames ripple across the soles of their feet and burn with an intensity proportionate to the soul's sin. Dante points out one who writhes more than the rest and Virgil carries him down into the chasm to speak with this sinner. He is Pope Nicholas III. Dante addresses him and Nicolas mistakes him for Pope Boniface VIII, who he expects to join him in suffering and replace him in the highest position in the Circle. Nicholas predicts with precision the chronology and identities of the Popes who will follow him: Boniface VIII, for eleven years, and then Clement V. Dante rebukes him for his greed, saying that he was worse than idolaters because he crushed the good and lifted up the wicked, and that he made the church a whore to wealth. "Ah Constantine! To how much ill gave birth, not thy conversion, but that dower which the first rich Father took from thee" Canto XIX, pg. 105 Dante laments Constantine's mistake in paying the leaders of the early Church. Virgil approves of Dante's vociferous criticism and then carries him up to the bridge to the next chasm.

Topic Tracking: Politics 5

Topic Tracking: God's Will 5



## Canto XX

The fourth chasm contains those who practiced magic to see into the future. The heads of these souls have been twisted around and they walk backwards weeping upon their buttocks. Dante pities them, but Virgil objects saying pity for those whom God judges is impious. Virgil proceeds to name various souls imprisoned in this chasm: Amphiaraus, a diviner; Tiresias, the Theban prophet who transformed himself into a woman; Aruns a Tuscan diviner, and Manto, a sorceress and the namesake of Virgil's city, Mantova. Virgil pauses to describe the early history of his city. From a lake in the Alps, Benacus, which is now called Lago di Garda, flowed the river Mincio. This river formed a marsh in the plains; and Manto lived and died on a piece of land surrounded on all sides by this marsh. After her death, a city was built there and named after her, Mantua. Virgil exhorts Dante to correct people if they say otherwise, and then continues pointing out the prominent of the suffering souls: Eurypylos, who advised the Greek warrior Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter before going to fight the Trojan War; Michael Scott, a magician; Guido Bonatti, an astrologer; and Asdente, a shoe-maker turned soothsayer. They then move to the next chasm as the Moon sets.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 8

## Canto XXI

The fifth chasm is filled with boiling pitch and in it suffer the barterers and barrators who used their public offices and authority to make money. A fearsome demon swoops towards the poets and drops a government official of the city of Lucca into the pitch, returning to Lucca for more men like him. Other demons swoop down upon the soul and tear his flesh with hooks telling him to stay under the pitch and saying, "covered thou must dance thee here; so that, if thou canst, thou mayest pilfer privately." Canto XXI, pg. 114 Virgil tells Dante to hide in a crag of rock and he ventures across the bridge. The demons fly at him, but he manages to stop their flight and recount his story and special privilege at which they back off. Dante hurries to Virgil's side and their leader, Malacoda, sends some demons to escort the pair to the next bridge down the circle, the immediate one being in ruins. The demons can barely restrain themselves from attacking their wards.



## Canto XXII

The poets move on with a hideous regiment of demons along the side of the chasm holding the barrators. One who pauses too long above the surface of the pitch is caught and hauled up by one of the demons. He is from Navara and confesses to practicing barratry in the court of king Thibault, which prompts one of the demons, Ciriatto, to rip him with his tusks. Another demon, Barbariccia, holds the soul away from the others and allows Virgil to continue the interrogation. Virgil asks him if there are any Latians in the pitch, and he affirms that Friar Gomita a infamous barrator lies nearby and that he could summon him with a whistle if he was let down near the pitch. The demons distrust the wily sinner but agree to set him down on the ledge of the chasm, believing that the height will dissuade him from escaping. However, immediately when he is set down he flings himself into the pitch, and though the winged demons swoop after him they do not succeed in catching him. Angered two of the demons turn upon each other and clawing each other fall into the pitch. Covered in the thick tar they can no longer fly and the leader of the troupe sends some others to rescue them. At this juncture, Dante and Virgil leave their escort and continue on alone.



## Canto XXIII

Dante is reminded of the fable of the frog and the mouse as he follows Virgil along the edge of the chasm. In this fable, a frog offers a mouse passage across a river and the mouse accepts. The frog ties the mouse to one of his legs and begins swimming across the river, but maliciously dives under mid route. Dante fears the fable relates too well to his own situation and suggests to Virgil that the enraged demons may follow them in order to take out their anger upon them. At that moment the demons appear in pursuit. Virgil clasps Dante to his breast, as if Dante were his endangered son, and slides down the cliff into the sixth chasm, which holds the hypocrites. They are surrounded by souls trudging along in hooded leaden cloaks that glitter on the exterior. Two of them approach the poets. They are Bolognese Friars, Catalano and Loderingo, belonging to the Guelf and Ghibbelline families respectively and chosen to take religious positions in Florence with idea that outsiders could soothe political tension in the city. Upon recognizing them, Dante begins to condemn them, but is stopped by the sight of another soul, pinned crucifix-style to the ground and being trampled by the others. Friar Catalano identifies him as the high priest Caiaphas who told the Jewish Pharisees that it was necessary to torture one man for the sake of the rest of the people. Virgil asks the friar if there is any way out of the chasm. He tells them they can ascend the ruins of a broken bridge nearby. Virgil realizes that the demons had misdirected them and becomes angry.

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 9

Topic Tracking: Politics 6

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 10



## Canto XXIV

Seeing Virgil's mood change from anger to affection, Dante is reminded of a despairing peasant who thinks he cannot feed his flock but becomes relieved as the sun melts the frost on the fields. They have arrived to the ruins of the bridge, and although Virgil helps Dante mount the treacherous rocks, Dante is exhausted when they reach the top. Virgil exhorts him to continue up the path, and Dante feigns readiness. As they move forward Dante hears an angry voice and sees that the seventh chasm is full naked souls running among serpents. This chasm is the eternal prison of thieves. One soul is bit in the neck by a serpent and turned into dust, which then immediately reforms into the shape of the anguished soul. He is Vanni Fucci, a savage Tuscan who robbed a church of its furniture and allowed another to be punished for it. He is very ashamed to be seen by a living man and in order to pain Dante foretells the disasters that will befall Dante's family and political party.

Topic Tracking: Politics 7



## Canto XXV

Vanni Fucci concludes his spiteful predictions by blaspheming with an obscene gesture. The serpents immediately engulf him, and Dante considers them as friends from that time forth. A centaur approaches whose haunches are covered with snakes and upon his shoulders a dragon rests. He is Cacus, a mythological monster known for thievery. Then Dante sees five of noblemen of Florence: Agnello, Buoso, and Puccio who are in human form; and Cianfra and Francesco de' Cavalcanti, who are in reptile form. Dante witnesses the reptilian Cianfra merged with the body of Agnello followed by a bizarre exchange of form between Buoso and Francesco.



## Canto XXVI

Dante laments the dishonorable state of the city of Florence and hopes for a brighter future before moving on to the eighth chasm, which holds evil counselors. Dante reminds himself as he approaches the next chasm that he must not obtain deliverance for himself and Florence through fraud. Within that chasm Dante sees numerous little fires that seem like fireflies on a summer night. Each sinner is engulfed in a flame as the prophet Elijah was engulfed by the fire of the chariot that carried him away to heaven. One flame contains both Ulysses and Diomed who stole a statue, the Palladium, from the city of Troy. When they draw near, Virgil asks them how they died. Ulysses recounts the story of the last voyage of his life in which he leaves the Mediterranean Sea through the straits of Gibraltar, which were considered to be the western end of the world by the Greeks, and upon seeing a great mountain upon an island, a storm capsizes his ship and all are killed.

Topic Tracking: God's Will 6

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible



## Canto XXVII

The flame that contains Ulysses departs and another approaches containing the spirit of Count Guido da Montefeltro, one of Dante's contemporaries. He eagerly requests news of his countrymen from Romagna. Dante tells him that currently there are no wars in his area and relates all of the major men of power in the area. He then asks Guido to reveal his sins. He agrees to tell him because he does not believe he will ever return to the real world and defame him. He says he was a warrior but then became a Franciscan monk and later an advisor to Pope Boniface VIII who led him back to his evil ways. He advised the Pope to offer an enemy amnesty and then attack them when their guard was down. Guido agreed to give the evil advice securing the Pope's promise to forgive him of his sin. After his death, Saint Francis came to rescue him from Hell, but was convinced through logic not to save him by one of the Black Angels. "Do not take him; wrong me not. He must come down amongst my menials; because he gave the fraudulent counsel, since which I have kept fast by his hair: for he who repents not, cannot be absolved; nor is it possible to repent and will a thing at the same time, the contradiction not permitting it." Canto XXVII, pg. 145 After listening, the poets continue to the ninth chasm.

Topic Tracking: Politics 8

Topic Tracking: Human Reason 11

Topic Tracking: God's Will 7



## Canto XXVIII

Dante is disgusted by the torments of the ninth chasm, where the men who sow scandal and schism are punished. He sees one ripped from chin to crotch with his entrails hanging between. This is Mahomet, who in founding Islam, altered the Christian faith and divided it. His nephew, Ali, is cleft from chin to forehead nearby. Their wounds are continually reopened by a guardian demon. Virgil informs him that Dante is still alive and will return to the living world, whereupon Mahomet tells him to warn Fra Dolcino, a politically divisive contemporary of Dante's, to stop the works he has set in progress if he wants to escape this chasm. Other souls present themselves to Dante, disfigured to match their crimes. Pier da Medicina, split through the throat, missing a nose and an ear, was principally guilty of setting the families of Polenta and Malatesta against each other. Curio, with split tongue, advised Cæsar to go forward with divisive maneuvers that he at first doubted. Mosca de' Lamberti of Florence, with both hands cut off and spurting blood, was guilty of advising the murder of Buondelmonte, which was the event that triggered the feud between the Guelfs and Ghibellines. Bertrand de Born carried his severed head before him like a lamp. "Of itself it made for itself a lamp, and they were two in one, and one in two; how this can be, He knows who so ordains." Canto XXVIII, pg. 151 He is thus punished because he created strife between father, Henry II, and son. Bertrand compares his role to that of Ahithophel who counseled Absalom to conspire against his father, the Jewish king David.

Topic Tracking: Politics 9



## Canto XXIX

The mutilated souls make Dante want to weep, but Virgil urges him on. Dante reveals that he was looking for his father's cousin, Geri del Bello, among the sowers of discord. Virgil admits that he saw the cousin gesture threateningly at Dante from afar, and Dante guesses that the motivation for this is that Dante's family has not yet avenged Geri's violent death for him. They reach the tenth chasm and Dante's ears are pierced by piteous screams and a vile smell of gangrene limbs assaults his nose. This chasm holds the falsifiers who are punished with various diseases. Some lay in heaps and others crawl. Two scab-covered souls sit, back-to-back, scratching themselves vigorously. The first is Griffolino of Arezzo, who was an alchemist, one who creates false gold. He tells them he was burnt to death by Albert of Siena for failing to make him able to fly after claiming to be able to do so. Virgil comments that few are as vain as the Sieneese, and the other soul lists off a number of particularly vain Sieneese, famous for competitively squandering their wealth. He is Capocchio of Siena, also being punished here for alchemy.



## Canto XXX

Two rabid souls run towards Dante and his companions. Dante compares their aspect to the insane mythological figures Athamas of Thebes and Hecuba of Troy. The first grabs Capocchio by the neck with his tusks and drags him belly-down along the floor of the chasm. Griffolino identifies this soul as Gianni Schicchi, who impersonated the dead Buoso Donati on his son's request in order to change his will in their favor. Gianni gained a beautiful horse known as *Lady of the troop*. The other crazed soul is Myrrha, who disguised herself in order to seduce her father whom she lusted after. Dante notices another soul with an enormously swollen belly, who introduces himself as Master Adam. He counterfeited the florin of Florence and was burnt to death for it. In Hell he suffers extreme thirst that causes his belly to extend, and longs to find the man who convinced him to make the coins, Guido. Dante asks him to identify two souls lying next to Adam and emitting vapors, and he says they are Potiphar's wife, who falsely accused Joseph of attempting to seduce her, and Sinon the Greek who convinced the Trojans to bring the wooden horse within their city walls. They fume due to the burning fever they suffer. Sinon hits Adam in the belly and Adam returns the blow in Sinon's face. They begin one-upping each other with insults as Dante listens intently. Virgil reprimands Dante for his interest in such vulgar discourse and Dante is deeply ashamed.



## Canto XXXI

Virgil soothes Dante's shame as they enter the central pit, the ninth circle, where Satan himself is held. This circle holds traitors of all kinds. The air is thick and impairs sight. They hear a thunderous horn sound, which Dante compares to Roland's signal to Charlemagne, which he ignored based upon a betrayer's advice. Virgil points out giants who are sunk in the walls of the pit and emerge navel-deep, appearing like guard towers in the darkness. The first giant they approach is Nimrod, the man who organized the building of the tower of Babel. He shouts out nonsensical words at the pilgrims, and Virgil reprimands him and suggests he use his horn instead. The next giant they approach is Ephialtes, who warred with the Olympian gods. His arms and torso are wound and fastened with chains. Dante wishes to see the giant, Briareus, who also warred with the gods and was famous for his immense size. Virgil says he is imprisoned further along and they will not pass him, whereupon Ephialtes struggles violently causing the earth to move. They move on and reach Antæus, one of the giants who did not participate in the war against the gods. He is left unchained, and Virgil summons him to lift them up and place them in the bottom of the pit. The giant leans to take them and Dante is reminded of the Carisenda, a leaning tower in the city Bologna. Antæus takes them up together and places them in the frozen marsh Cocytus, where all the waters in Hell collect and where Lucifer and Judas are punished.

Topic Tracking: Literature/Mythology/Bible

Topic Tracking: God's Will 9



## Canto XXXII

Dante asks for the help of the Muses, who aided Amphion in playing the lyre so sweetly that he charmed the stones that formed themselves together to form the walls of the city of Thebes, in describing rightly the horrors of the final circle of Hell. Dante finds himself walking on a deep bed of ice in which souls are imprisoned up to the cheeks, teeth chattering. This is Caina, the first round of the ninth circle, named after Adam's son Cain who killed his own brother Abel. It holds those who have done violence against their own family members. Two enraged souls butt fruitlessly against each other, and another identifies them as Alessandro and Napoleone, brothers who quarreled over their inheritance and ended up killing each other. He himself is Camicion de' Pazzi, also guilty of killing a family member. He lists others frozen for the same crimes: Mordred, Focaccia, and Sassol Mascheroni. Dante continues on to Antenora, the second round of the ninth circle, named after Antenor who was suspected of betraying the city of Troy to the Greeks. Here those who betrayed their country are imprisoned. He accidentally trips upon one protruding head, which cries out asking why Dante molests him. Dante suspecting he knows this particular traitor demands to know his identity, and when the soul refuses he grabs him by the scalp and begins pulling out his hair. His protestations attract the attention of another frozen spirit who names the other Bocca, a Ghibelline by blood who when fighting in a key battle for the Guelfs betrayed them. At which point Dante releases him disgusted. Bocca proceeds with spite to identify all his neighbors. The one who named him is Buoso da Duera, who betrayed the leader of Parma to the French invaders. Beccheria, Gianni de' Soldanier, Ganelone, and Tribaldello, all Dante's countrymen, are buried in the encircling ice. Dante proceeds and discovers two souls frozen so close that one gnaws the neck of the other. He asks them who they are, luring them with a promise to vindicate them in the world above.

Topic Tracking: Politics 9



## Canto XXXIII

The sinner raises his head, wiping his mouth upon the other's hair, and though grieved by what he tells continues, hoping it will bring infamy to the one he chews. He identifies himself and the other as Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri respectively. Ugolino betrayed the Guelf party of Pisa by conspiring with Ruggieri, the leader of the Ghibelline party, to get rid of one of his Guelf competitors; however, having thus weakened the Guelf party, Ruggieri imprisoned Ugolino as well as four of his sons and grandsons. Ugolino describes how he watched his sons starve to death in the prison before going crazy and dying himself of starvation. After recounting the terrible story he resumed his bite upon the other's skull with renewed vigor. Dante condemns the city of Pisa for its horrible history, and suggests that the islands of Caprara and Gorgona move to close up the mouth of the river Arno, and thereby drown Pisa. Moving into the third round, Dante describes a new class of traitors frozen in the same manner except that their faces are raised. Their tears collect in the hollows of their eyes and freeze into clouded ice goggles. This round is called Ptolomæa after Ptolomæas who murdered his father-in-law and his two sons when they were dining with him. Sinners who have betrayed those to whom they gave hospitality are punished here. Dante feels a wind and asks Virgil where it comes from, but is denied an answer for the present. One of the souls asks Dante to remove the ice from his eyes, and Dante assents on the condition that he tells them his story. He agrees. "I am Friar Alberigo, I am he of the fruits from the ill garden, who here receive dates for my figs." Canto XXXIII, pg. 178 Alberigo killed his brother and his brother's son during the fruit course of a dinner at his house. Dante is surprised to hear his identity because he believes the Friar to be yet alive. Alberigo reveals that often the souls headed for Ptolomæa begin their suffering even before their bodies leave the world of the living. He further informs them that a demon takes over the body of one who commits a sin of this class and rules it until the body dies. The soul of the still-living Ser Branca d'Oria who murdered his father-in-law, Michel Zanche, with the help of his nephew, lies near the Friar as well. Dante affirms that he is not dead, but when the Friar asks Dante to remove the ice from his eyes he refuses and deems it a courtesy to be rude to such a sinner.

Topic Tracking: Politics 10

Topic Tracking: God's Will 10



## Canto XXXIV

In the fourth round of Hell, named Judecca after the famous betrayer Judas, Dante and Virgil see a great pair of wings mowing the air and sending out thick breaths of air. "Vexilla Regis prodeunt inferni towards us." Canto XXXIV, pg. 181 In this ring, the center and nadir of Hell, are punished those who betrayed their lords or benefactors. The souls here are completely emerged in ice, but they pass them and head directly to impossibly massive form of Satan. His size is not comparable even to the giants. He is only frozen to mid breast so much of his hideous aspect can be seen clearly by Dante who because of fear feels neither dead nor alive. Satan has three faces: one red, one yellow, and one black. Two enormous bat-like wings immerge from under each of his faces and beat together creating three currents of freezing wind. Tears and bloody foam drip off each of his three chins and in each of his three mouths, he chews a traitor. Judas Iscariot is one of these sinners. His head is inside the red mouth and Satan's teeth tear the skin from his back. Brutus, who betrayed Cæsar, writhes in the mouth of the black face, and his partner, Cassius, in the yellow. Virgil tells Dante they must move on and carries him through Satan's wings and down his back. At one point Virgil turns round and appears to climb back up, but they come out in what seems like the dark corridor of a prison. Satan's legs are imbedded in the floor. Dante is disoriented, but Virgil explains that they have come to the other side of the center of the earth, and what was up is now down and where there night was beginning, here day rises. Virgil says Satan fell from heaven headfirst down into the earth on this side. He suggests that the vast well of Hell is actually the earth fleeing Satan's vile form and that the mountain of Purgatory, which they will ascend towards on this side, is another such natural repulsion. They follow the path of the river Lethe that flows down from Purgatory, and see "through a round opening the beauteous things which Heaven bears; and thence issu[ing] out, again to see the Stars." Canto XXXIV, pg. 184

Topic Tracking: God's Will 11