

## 1 Canto I

- Opening phrase "midway through the journey of our life"
- Meets three beasts: a leopard, a lion, then a she-wolf. These beasts represent something within the human experience, but it's unclear what exactly.
- As a result of these three beasts, Dante is unable to move forward and is instead forced to retreat back, during which he meets Virgil
- Here, Dante gives overwhelming praise to Virgil: "O glory and light of all other poets... you are my master, you are my author. It is from you that I have acquired the beautiful style that has won me honor" (lines 85-90)
- Virgil says that "You will have to go by another road" (line 91), and convinces Dante to go on the journey with Virgil through the Inferno. Here, he explains how the Virgin Mary sent Beatrice (Dante's lover) to go tell Virgil to save Dante.

## 2 Canto II

- Where Dante questions whether he truly is fit to go on the mission set out for him by Virgil.

## 3 Canto III

- Before they enter the first circle, they encounter the neutrals. They are souls that are neither wanted by Hell or Heaven, since they did not choose sides in their lives.
- For this, they are punished by being constantly stung by insects, while also pursuing a banner that leads nowhere.
- In some sense, Dante is pointing to the fact that being neutral is arguably worse than picking a side.
- Dante falls asleep at the end of this Canto.

## 4 Canto IV

- First circle of inferno: Limbo
- Reserved for souls whose only sin is that they did not worship God in their past life. These include those who predated God, great Roman and Greek poets reside here.
- Dante is essentially calling into question: what happens to these people? If the rules of the bible are that you must worship God in order to be allowed into Heaven, then those who were born before Christ would have no choice but to reside in Hell (through no fault of their own).
- The only punishment given to those in Limbo is the fact that they cannot exit. Other than that, this seems like a pretty chill place.
- Virgil reveals that there has been an instance where people were "saved" from Limbo by christian figures, but it won't happen again.

- Dante is invited as the sixth into the group of legendary poets, and falls asleep there.

## 5 Canto V

- Second circle of Inferno: Lust
- Guardian: Minos. Judge souls and determines where they go. The soul goes to the layer determined by the number of times Minos spins his tail.
- Punishment: infernal wind that never rests that whips them around. They are never allowed to rest.
- People who were blown about by the passion of love are punished by being blown about by winds.
- Notable Figure: Francesca who was reading Lancelot with a lover and then ended up making out.
- Dante falls asleep listening to this story

## 6 Canto VI

- Third circle of Inferno: Gluttony
- Guardian: Cerberus, which Virgil just shoves dirt in his mouth to get him to shut up.
- Notable Figure: Ciacco – a fellow Florentine.
- Punishment: Laying in a pool and being rained on.
- Ciacco gives Dante a prophecy about what will happen to Florence
  - It's important to learn about the conflict that exists here: there is divide in Florence among the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, while the Guelphs are further divided into white and black guelphs.
  - Guelphs supported the pope, and Guibellines supported the emperor.
  - Notice Dante injecting his own political views into this story.
- Dante also mentions that those who were well respected in their normal life are condemned to "hell's blackest souls". He makes clear that what you are respected for is not all that you are being measured for.

## 7 Canto VII

- Fourth circle: Avaricious and the Prodigal
- Guardian: Plutus
- Here we see Dante echo Aristotle's *Ethics*, where he describes a balance between two extremes: hoarding and wasting.
- Their punishment is to scream at one another about hoarding and wasting.
- Fifth Circle: Wrathful and Sullen
- Not much mention of this circle at all really, the wrathful are stuck fighting each other and the sullen are found below the river styx. They are condemned to repeat the same words, but in their throats because they cannot speak the words fully.

## 8 Canto VIII

- Guardian: Phlegyas
- Dante recognizes somebody from Florence (Filippo Argenti), and the two get into an altercation where Dante says that the soul should “be damned right here where it steeps”.
- To this Virgil gives Dante a kiss on the cheeks, and congratulates him on what he’s done.
- They come to the outer wall of the city of Dis, and this is the first point where Virgil fails to get through the guardians of the city. They will have to go by another path as a result.

## 9 Canto IX

- Virgil says that this isn’t the first time he’s made this journey, assures Dante that he’s in good hands
- They are stopped by three Furies who threaten to use Medusa and turn Dante to stone, Virgil then puts a hand to Dante’s eyes so that he doesn’t look.
- Somebody from above comes and helps them out, but is unnamed.
- They enter the Sixth circle, where the heretics (those who don’t believe in the Bible) reside.

## 10 Canto X

- Still in circle 6.
- Notable Figure: Farinata
  - He’s a Ghibelline, so obviously he has to be in this circle of Hell
  - It’s fitting that he’s placed in Heresy, too, given that it’s a circle meant for those who “have strayed from God”
  - This section goes into detail about the political conflict, and it’s just a lot of Farinata asking why his party wasn’t welcomed in Florence.
- Cavalcante is also here, asks Dante whether his son is still alive, to which Dante does not reply. Then at the end of the canto he tells Farinata to tell Cavalcante that his son is still living.

## 11 Canto XI

- Very important Canto, goes over the structure of the entire Inferno.
- They couldn’t continue the journey because of the smell – think about the ways that Dante (the author) tries to insert moments of dialogue into the poems.
- Structure of the last three circles:
  - First is violence, separated into three rings: to God, to themselves, and to neighbours.
  - Violence against neighbours (those who have killed others) are found first in violence, those who were violent toward themselves (sodomy, usury) and their possessions are found second, and those who were violent toward God (blasphemy) are found last.
- The fraudulent are found next, in the 8th circle, for hypocrites, sorcerers and parasites. The traitorous is the worst type of fraud, and is therefore found at the very bottom of Inferno.

- Aristotle's Ethics: the three things rejected by Heaven: Incontinence, malice, and bestial rage. Incontinence is the lightest of the three, so they aren't punished as much.
- As Dante puts it, art and your creations are in some sense a grandchild of God, but since the usurer takes advantage of others, it is effectively a sin against God.

## 12 Canto XII

- Seventh Circle, 1st section: Violence against others
- Virgil explains that when Christ came to Limbo and saved souls from there, it caused this landslide to occur.
- They approach the river of blood, where these souls lie.
- They are eternally punished to reside in the river, guarded by Centaurs who shoot them down whenever they get too close.

## 13 Canto XIII

- Seventh Circle, 2nd section: Violence against self
- Virgil tells Dante to break off a branch, which actively hurts one of the trees.
- Virgil then apologizes to the tree, but says that it needed to be done since Dante wouldn't have believed him.
- The more we go into the Inferno, the more Dante (the author) seems willing to highlight Virgil's limitations as a poet and figure.
- The tree Dante pulled is Pier de la Vigna, who was an advisor for emperor Frederick. He was accused of treason, to which he thought he could escape by killing himself. This was not true, and instead he's punished for thinking this in the 7th circle of hell.
- These people are punished by being reincarnated into a tree, from which they grow fruit for harpies to come eat.
- The suicides are in a sense also violence against God, against life, which is why it's punished harshly as well.

## 14 Canto XIV

- Seventh Circle, 3rd section: Violence against God
- They are punished by the hot sand and hot rain
- Capaneus: a figure whose pride is his punishment, and Virgil points out that "no torment in Hell would be painful enough to match your fury".
- Here it is revealed that the river of blood is also called the phleglathon, and mentions the river Lethe as well. Virgil replies that the Lethe will not be found in Inferno, but instead resides in Purgatory.

## 15 Canto XV

- Continuing on with violence against God, meets his teacher Brunetto Latini
- Brunetto comes to Dante, and walks alongside him, while Dante is in the boat. He is positioned higher than Brunetto is, showing how the student has surpassed the master in a sense.

- Brunetto praises Dante and reassures him that he will be a great poet. Quite elegant of him to do that.

## **16 Canto XVI**

- Here Dante comes across the souls that he asked Ciacco about back in Canto VI (Jacopo, Tegghiaio and Guido).
- These people ask about Florence's future, and their presence here highlights the fact that what you were regarded in your past life is not all that is considered when you are thrown into Inferno