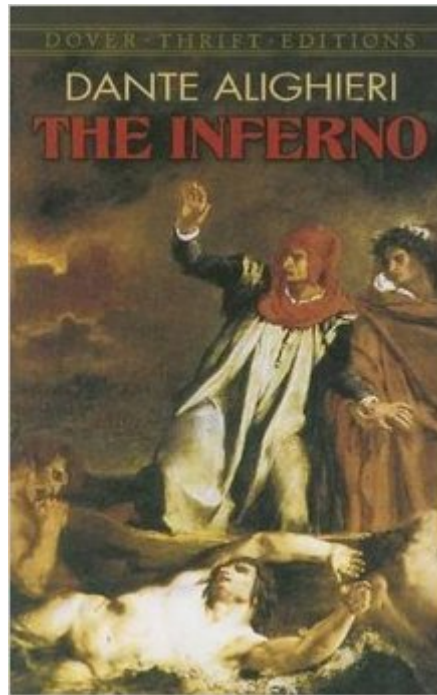


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# The Inferno (Dover Thrift Editions)



## Synopsis

"Here at last that much suffering reader will find Dante's greatness manifest, and not his greatness only, but his grace, his simplicity, and his affection." — William Dean Howells, *The Nation* "As a crown to his literary life, Longfellow combines his exquisite scholarship and his poetic skill and experience in the translation of one of the great poems of the world." — *Harper's Monthly* Enter the unforgettable world of *The Inferno* and travel with a pair of poets through nightmare landscapes of eternal damnation to the very core of Hell. The first of the three major canticles in *La divina commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), this fourteenth-century allegorical poem begins Dante's imaginary journey from Hell to Purgatory to Paradise. His encounters with historical and mythological creatures — each symbolic of a particular vice or crime — blend vivid and shocking imagery with graceful lyricism in one of the monumental works of world literature. This acclaimed translation was rendered by the beloved nineteenth-century poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. A skilled linguist who taught modern languages at Harvard, Longfellow was among the first to make Dante's visionary poem accessible to American readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ciardi's translation of Dante's *Inferno* is one of the very best. Its major strength is the intensity and power of its language. Although the translation is now more than fifty years old, it remains fresh, unencumbered by archaisms. Ciardi is a poet and it shows. I found myself more stunned by the

horrors of hell in this translation than any other I've seen. Chills ran down my spine as I read about Count Ugolino encased in the ice. This edition includes a plot summary before each canto, and footnotes telling you which dead Florentine did what after each canto. For the first-time reader, these are truly helpful -- indeed, essential. Unlike most translators who completely abandon the idea of making Dante rhyme in English, Ciardi preserves a partial rhyme scheme. The first and third lines of each tercet rhyme, while the middle rhyme is dropped. While Ciardi's translation is reasonably faithful to the original, he had to take minor liberties with the text to make it rhyme. The excellent Musa and Hollander translations are more literal and straightforward, and the Hollander version comes in a handy bilingual edition if you want to try your hand at reading Dante's incredible Italian. Still, the best poetic translation of the Inferno in English remains Ciardi's.

First let me say that I am 13 years old; however, my favorite thing to do is to sit down with a good book and read for a good 2 to 5 hours. I have read books like *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I heard about the inferno from one of my teachers who said that I should read it when I get to college or to my senior year in high school. Well I didn't want to wait that long so I came to this site and purchased this book. It changed my life, never before have I read anything like it. When I finished this book I went and read other translations of it. However, this one was by far the best. It captured every aspect of Dante's genius writing and put it into American coming the closest to the real version as possible. Notes also help to decipher and understand Dante's masterpiece. I would recommend this book to anyone who can read.

Don't read Dante for his fame, don't judge *The Inferno* for its subject. Instead, savor Dante's overpowering language that is cleverly winded around one of life's most daunting matter-Hell. Pervaded with vivid and often gruesome imageries, *Inferno* captures the very essence of suffering through Dante's unique understanding of religion with a blend of paganism and christianity. Also it's a thrilling ride down the underworld to be met by history's greatest souls. The notes before every Canto is crucially helpful in helping readers keeping up with ancient historical references. And feeling yourself penetrating the Nine Circles of Hell in the company of Dante and Vergil, you will surely catch a rare taste of the living value as Vergil guides curious eyes down a path where judgment befalls every single flaw of human nature. Perhaps, just perhaps you will attain a better sense of your existence once matched against the standards of Nine Circles designed for different sins. I call that a gripping journey.

+++++(Note: this review is for the book "The Inferno" translated by John Ciardi and published by Signet Classics in 2001.) This is book one containing part one (or "cantic" one) of poet Dante Alighieri's (1265 to 1321) three part "The Divine Comedy." This book describes Hell and the eternal suffering of the damned. This poem is comprised of 34 episodes (or "cantos"). Dante at the beginning of the poem explains why he has begun this journey: "Midway in our life's journey, I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood." Thus because Dante's life journey has led him "astray from the straight road" (that is, from the straight and narrow), he now finds himself "in a dark wood" (that is, in Hell). Thus the journey through the nooks and crannies of Hell begins. Dante takes this incredible journey with his master and guide, Virgil. Along the way the reader along with the travelers encounters such things as mythical creatures and people, legends, people of Dante's time, biblical people and references, and human victims. Hell, according to Dante, has 4 complex parts: (1) The Gate of Hell (2) The first 7 stone ledges or "circles" (3) The eighth circle which consists of ditches (4) The ninth circle with Satan at its center. At the end of this long trek through Hell, Dante says, "My Guide and I crossed over and began / to mount that little known and lightless road / to ascend into the shining world again." From here, they ascend "The Mount of Purgatory" (which is the subject of Book 2 containing Part 2 called "The Purgatorio"). There is a historical introduction by Archibald MacAllister of Princeton. It's imperative to have a good understanding of Dante in order to understand his poetic masterpiece and MacAllister does a good job of detailing Dante and his times. The late John Ciardi, former poet and professor at Harvard and Rutgers, translated this poem from its original 1300's Italian into English. He retains Dante's three line stanzas and there is still much rhyming. He not only relied on his own knowledge but leaned heavily on the knowledge of other scholars for his translation. Some purists may not appreciate this translation but I enjoyed it. This is a narrative poem whose greatest strength lies in the fact that it does not so much narrate as dramatize its episodes. It is a visual work that sparks your imagination. This poem combines the five senses with fear, pity, horror, and other emotions to involve the reader. The result: the reader actually experiences Dante's situation and just does not read about them. Ciardi's mini-summaries in italics before each episode gives a brief summary of what to expect. His (foot)notes at the end of each episode highlight our understanding of key passages within each. For me, Ciardi's mini-summaries and notes that accompany each episode are the cornerstone to understanding what Dante was attempting to convey. As well, Dante can be challenging and tedious to read at times. These mini-summaries and notes help the reader meet the challenge and overcome the tedium. There are five detailed illustrations in this book. These illustrations as a whole detail the complexity of Hell. They further increased my understanding, and,

as well, added another visual dimension to this poem. I should mention the impressive cover art on this book. It has a reproduction of the 1825 painting by artist William Blake of Dante and Virgil about to enter Hell's gate. Above this gate is an inscription that reads: "ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE." Finally, as I said this is a very imaginative poem. Thus I recommend "The Dore Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy" (1976) by Gustave Dore. This book adds another visual dimension to this poem. In conclusion, if you want to experience Hell as seen through the eyes of a gifted poet, then read this book. Further, by reading this book, you will discover why this poem has endured popularity for seven centuries!! (published 2001; translator's notes; introduction; 34 cantos; 260 pages)+++++

Let there be no doubt that Dante's Inferno is a true classic. Let there also be no doubt that the Kindle edition offered here is simply atrocious! Dozens upon dozens of typographical errors and malapropisms mar a literary work of art. Absolutely no effort, whatsoever, could have been made by the publisher to proofread this document before submitting it for purchase. I would strongly recommend that take this e-book off its website. Allowing publishers to sell books that are well below sub-par in quality is, frankly, inexcusable.

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