



0. DANTE ALIGHIERI - Story Preface

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This image depicts a portrait of Dante Alighieri by Luca Signorelli. Today it is maintained by the Chapel of San Brizio at the Cathedral of Orvieto. Online via Wikimedia Commons.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was nine years old when the Catholic Church (at the Second Council of Lyons, in 1274) issued its official teaching on purgatory:

If those who are truly penitent die in charity before they have done sufficient penance for their sins of omission and commission, their souls are cleansed after death in purgatorial or cleansing punishments...The suffrages of the faithful on earth can be of great help in relieving these punishments, as, for instance, the Sacrifice of the Mass, prayers, almsgiving, and other religious deeds which, in the manner of the Church, the faithful are accustomed to offer for others of the faithful.

Who can say how the young Dante was impacted by the Church's idea of purgatory—a place where prayer and penance are demanded of a soul which has not yet reached heaven. Certainly he believed the journey was not easy. In his imaginings, people willingly suffer on the "Mountain of Purgatory" so they can ultimately escape that abode and rise to heaven.

More than any other writer, contemporary or historical, Dante Alighieri made the idea of purgatory come alive in The Divine Comedy. Finishing his masterpiece about hell (Inferno), purgatory (Purgatorio) and heaven (Paradiso) not long before his death in 1321, Dante's words are still quoted ("Abandon every hope, who enter here!") and studied.

Although his completed masterpiece was released at a time when books were copied by hand, there were at least twelve commentaries on its meaning by 1400.

Medieval artists illuminated Dante's words with stunning illustrations, engravings, and paintings. Thanks to the generosity of leading universities, we can view those creations (or facsimiles of them) on-line.

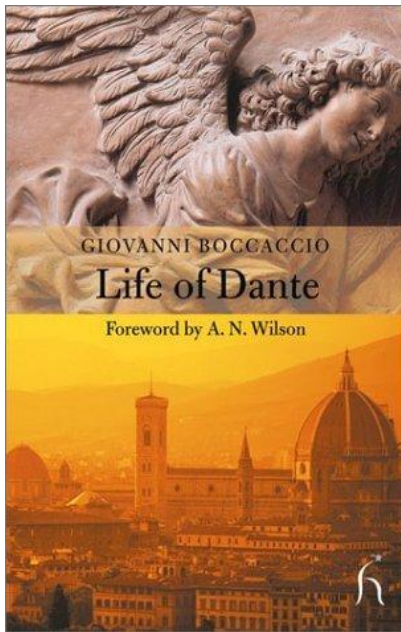
Let's examine some of the most famous and beautiful.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DANTE-ALIGHIERI-Purgatory-and-Dante-s-Divine-Comedy>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DANTE-ALIGHIERI-Purgatory-and-Dante-s-Divine-Come>



Life of Dante

Image online, courtesy the [goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com) website.

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Dante Alighieri

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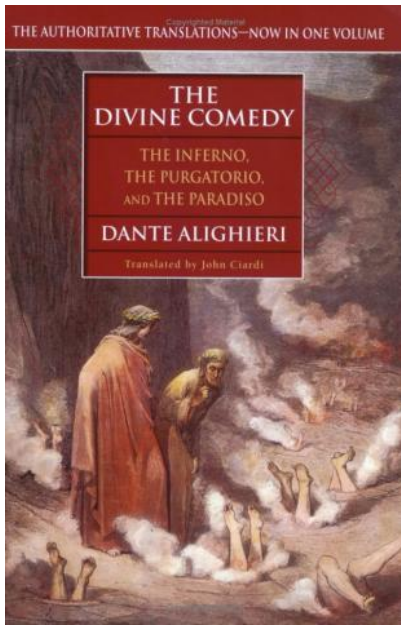
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Dante Alighieri

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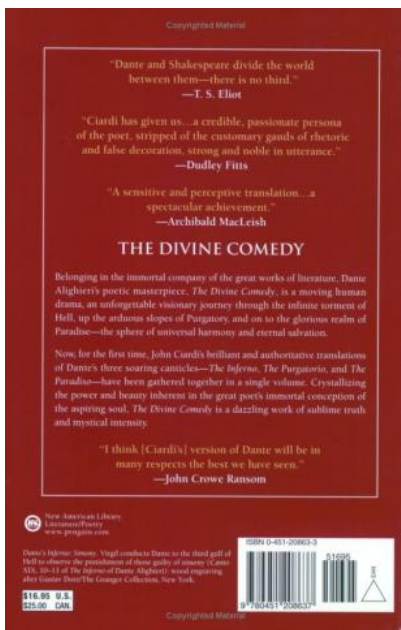
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The Divine Comedy

Image online, courtesy the amazon.com website.

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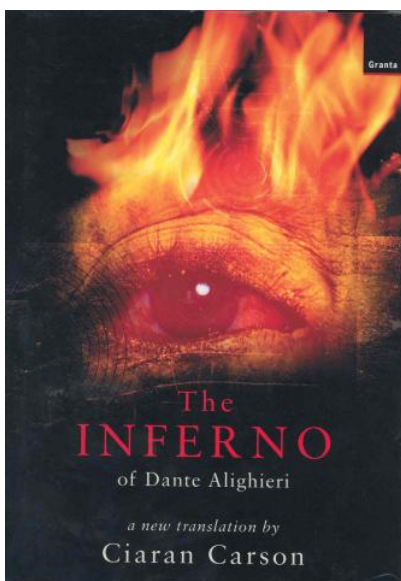


Divine Comedy - A Masterpiece

Image online, courtesy the amazon.com website.

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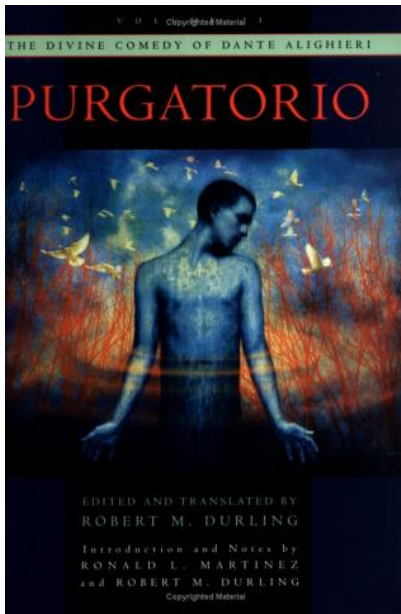
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The Inferno

Image online, courtesy the amazon.co.uk website.

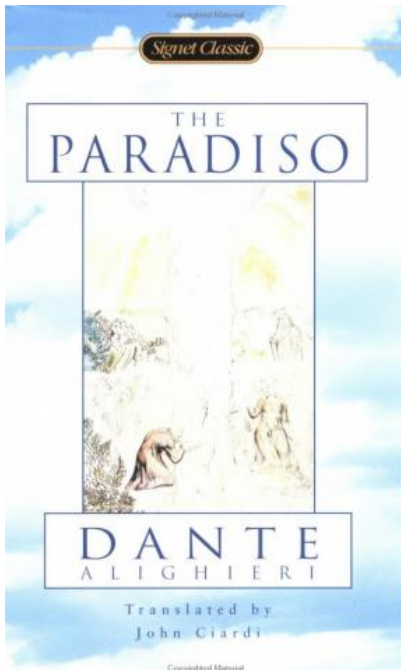
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Purgatorio

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The Paradiso

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