

Dante vita nuova



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1. Why is Capaneus so important in understanding Inferno (Canto 14)?

Capaneus is vital to understanding Inferno for he represents the pagan disbeliever. He is a powerful warrior king who, through Dante, embodies defiance and rejection of the gods and is thus an archetypal blasphemer. Blasphemy against God is one of the most significant and grievous sins against God. Dante's portrayal is based on a Roman epic entitled Thebaid in which Capaneus scorns Jove and taunts him to strike him down with thunderbolts. The consistent arrogance and defiance runs through the epic and thus Dante used Capaneus as exemplar of such lack of the fear of God. Capaneus's pagan background also speaks of the price of disbelieving.

2. What is Dantes' attitude toward Pier della Vigna in Inferno XIII?

Dante seems to have a nuanced view almost sympathetic one for Pier della Vigna. Pier della Vigna was a poet and official of the court of King Frederick II. But his talent soon became the target of envy and was thus framed by his political enemies. Frederick, believing the conspirators, had della Vigna imprisoned and blinded. Seemingly unable to accept the turn of fate, della Vigna took his own life. Suicide is condemned by the church as an unacceptable sin and so Dante places him on the suicide-trees, as one of the damned in the Woods of Suicide, Circle VII. Thus, as much as della Vigna's situation can be empathised, his suicidal act cannot be condoned.

3. What is Dantes' presentation of Lucifer in Inferno 34?

Lucifer, or Satan, is portrayed as a giant deformed beast with three heads and pairs of bat like wings. Residing in the Ninth Circle, he perpetuates the eternal frost that resides in that level. Strangely, Dante's Lucifer is a less

powerful portrayal than common understanding. He receives the same punishments as the rest of the sinners in Hell and sits in the last ring, Judecca, where the worst sinners - traitors - reside. As punishment for his betrayal of God, Dante depicts Satan as one whose most painful punishment is to further punish himself. His physical deformity, and terrible fate of being entrapped by ice are distinct metaphors for the grotesquery of sin and the impotence of life denied when one betrays the Creator. Lucifer's isolation is also symbolic of the denial of the grace of God.