

The just punishments in dante's inferno assignment

[History](#)



The Just Punishments in Dante's Inferno Inferno, written by Dante in the early fourteenth century, is a poem about Dante's, the main characters, journey through Hell and signifies the nature of sin on Earth and punishment in Hell (Gardner et al online). Those who sinned while on Earth are justly condemned to different levels of punishments in Hell, relative to their sins on Earth. Each of the nine circles of Hell represents a worse sin, and therefore, a crueler punishment.

The categorized punishments in Hell that Dante Alighieri assigns are symbolically fair and representative of the sins committed on Earth, given the time period and Christian values context from which this poem was written. The first inhabitants, just outside of Hell, are residents of the Ante Inferno. The Ante Inferno is not quite Heaven and not quite Hell. Those placed here opted to not side with God or the Devil while living, therefore their sin was never choosing to live by a set of Christian ideals.

Accordingly, the punishment for those who selected not to follow God is to constantly chase a blank flag. This punishment is appropriate because those who knowingly choose a path other than following God tend to lead a meaningless existence, which is symbolized by the blank flag. Once in the Ante Inferno, they are forced to follow and chase something, a punishment that is both physically and mentally exhausting. While the suffering these sinners face is suitable, their physical location outside of Hell is inappropriate given their personal choice to not live by the path of God.

The Ante Inferno should be the first level of Hell. The first circle of Hell, Limbo, is the final resting place for the people who died before the coming of

Christianity or who were never baptized. Dante's guide through Hell, Virgil, resides in Limbo and Dante expresses " heartfelt grief" (Inferno IV 33) for those stuck here, because, as Virgil describes, " Some lived before the Christian faith, so that They did not worship God aright - and I Am one of these. Through this, no other fault, We are lost, afflicted only this one way: That having no hope, we live in longing. (Inferno IV 28-32). In Limbo, one merely walks around and talks to other ill-fated souls. This seems appropriate given their unawareness of Christ and the existence of Heaven and Hell. Limbo is not as much a punishment as it is a neutral place to put those who, by no fault of their own, were ignorant to the rules of entry to Heaven. The problem with Limbo in Inferno is Dante's physical placement of it in the first circle of Hell. Given that those in Limbo never had the chance to live a Christian life, the placement of Limbo should be outside the first circle of Hell.

If Limbo and the Ante Inferno physically switched positions, than Dante's reasoning and punishments for the two groups would seem more appropriate. The second circle of Hell is home to the lustful, such as Cleopatra and Helen of Troy (Inferno V 55). Those who allowed their lives and everyone's around them to be hurled around by their untamed actions, experience an eternity of being hurled around by tormenting winds and storms. Lustful individuals, who take action on their untamed desires, often have no regard for the consequences their actions will have on others' in their lives.

When their lustful and immoral activities come to be publicly known, many people's lives, such as the significant other of the sinner, are thrown upside
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down and hurled around. Chaos and confusion is created in the lives of many innocent people when lustful sinners' actions become known. It only seems fair and just that in the Inferno, the lustful are condemned to an eternity in Hell of being thrown and hurled about by raging water and storms. Those who act upon their lustful desires do not care about anything preventing their actions, just as a raging storm does not care what it destroys in its path.

The seventh circle of Hell is inhabited by the violent. Those who were physically violent towards others while on Earth are justly sentenced to an eternity of being submerged in boiling blood. "The river of blood - in which boils everyone. Whose violence hurt others" (Inferno XII 41-42) describes the perfect punishment for those who were violent towards others. Each of these souls is subjected to a different level of agony; those who killed one person stand only with their legs in the boiling blood, however, tyrants, like Alexander, are completely submerged.

These individuals are now eternally submerged in the blood that they lusted after and shed during life. The boiling blood, which they are depressed in, is also representative of their blood while on Earth, simmering with rage and passion when they committed their violent sin. The endless torment of being immersed in a ghastly pool of heated blood is a just punishment for those who commit the crime of violence and murder. The torments that sinners are subjected to in Inferno may seem extreme to some modern readers, given the liberal advances in society's views of moral norms.

However, given the time period and religious context from which this poem was written, the punishments seem fair and just for the particular sins committed. Throughout the poem, it becomes clear that there is a balance between sins committed on Earth and punishments in Hell. Each sinner suffers to a degree befitting to the gravity of his or her sins. The poem progresses from minor sins to major ones, as Dante proceeds deeper into Hell and closer to Lucifer.

While there may be some discrepancy and confusion as to the placements of some sins or circles, the deepest part of Hell, the ninth circle, is rightly reserved for the harshest punishments and for those who have committed sins against those whom the sinner has connections with, such as family or friends. Despite the actions, it appears fair that a traitor of this nature must be punished accordingly. Work Cited Dante. *Inferno*. Trans. Robert Pinsky. New York: FSG, 1994. Gardner, Patrick and Phillips, Brian. SparkNote on *Inferno*. 21 Mar. 2008 .