

# Inferno literary analysis essay



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If given the opportunity to view Hell and its inhabitants, would you feel sympathy towards those you have known while they were alive, or would you feel as though they deserve the punishment they have been given? One such man who wrote a book about such an encounter is Dante Alighieri. Dante opened up *The Inferno* with a tone of sympathy and grief; however, his attitude toward the souls he encountered became increasingly opposite to that, as if he felt the souls deserved this. Some souls he encountered he had known, and some he had merely heard of. Dante did not pass judgment upon all of them, but many he did.

Dante felt sympathy towards many characters in the first few rings of hell, including a couple, Francesca and Paolo, and his own guide, Virgil. The couple was sent to Hell for an affair, however Dante felt quite sorry for them: “ When I had heard those grief-stricken souls I bowed my head and held it bowed down low. ” Dante remains reticent about being entirely sympathetic, but it is not hard to observe his actions.

Virgil was a Classical Roman poet well known for many works. Virgil was put in Hell not necessarily for any reprehensible works or specific sins, but actually because he simply did not believe in God. It is implied, but remains ambiguous, that Dante thought people like this may not have been introduced to God, and should perhaps be put into the first level of Purgatory. Many souls that Dante and his tour guide meet in the first few rings of Hell he feels sympathetic towards.

At the beginning of Canto VIII, Dante encounters a man by the name of Filippo Argenti. In all Cantos prior to this moment, Dante showed feelings of

sympathy towards the sinners, and this is the first sign of Dante's anti-sympathy. Virgil tells Dante " Before the future shore comes into view, you shall be satisfied. " Dante was at the time on a boat, and as the boat pulled away, Dante enjoys watching the other souls tear apart Filippo. More recent research shows that Filippo may have been the person that seized Dante's property when he was exiled from Florence. So the fact that Dante felt hatred toward him would make sense of course.

When Dante suddenly turned from being so sympathetic towards the souls, into being so callous towards them, it showed a whole new side of his character. The sympathetic side of Dante's character continued to be a prevalent emotion all the way to, and including, the zenith of the book. In fact, he was so cold hearted, that he would not even allow one person to cry: " But now reach out your hand open my eyes! I did not, however, open them for him, since rudeness toward him was a courtesy. " The ninth and final ring of Hell was the climax to the story and included Lucifer himself.

Dante shows obvious hatred towards the three victims of Lucifer; Judas Iscariot, Brutus, and Cassius. All three of these characters were being chewed by one of Lucifer's three heads. Not only did Dante decide that betrayal was the worst of all sin, but he went so far as to classify those three as the worst people to ever walk on earth, and that Satan needed to punish them himself. Only Dante himself would be able to tell the reader whether or not this " change " witnessed was predetermined, or if he actually changed as he was traveling through the nine rings of Hell. Either way, the change that he recorded was quite clear, even if his words were equivocated, and many parts of the story support it. Dante started with a sympathetic view of <https://assignbuster.com/inferno-literary-analysis-essay/>

the souls condemned, and quickly changed towards hatred of all souls in The Inferno.