

Contrast dantes
presentation of sins
and sinners in inferno
and purgatorio



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Contrast Dante's presentation of sins and sinners in Inferno and Purgatorio

Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) great epic poem, the Divine Comedy (Divina Commedia), written between 1308 and the poet's death in 1321, has been recognized as one of the most celebrated works in Italian literature and the world literature in general. This classic piece has been written in three parts: Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise and it is presented as the poet's journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven representing the ultimate pilgrimage by every Christian. Among others, the Divine Comedy is especially significant for its presentation of sins and sinners in Inferno and Purgatory and characteristic portrayal of sins and sinners by Dante surpasses the treatment of the theme by any literary figures the world literature. " Ultimately, of course, what most distinguishes Dante' Inferno from other representations of Hell is that he creates sinners so complex and alive that the reader is compelled to sympathize and identify with them, rather than simply to fear their lot and resolve to avoid it." (Lansing and Barolini, 476) Therefore, Dante Alighieri's presentation of sins and sinners in Inferno and Purgatory are unlike their typical representations in literature and there is essential difference in the depiction of sins and sinners between the books Inferno and Purgatory. In a profound analysis of the two books of the Divine Comedy, it becomes lucid that Dante's Purgatory, in contrast to the Inferno, is a place of camaraderie, harmony, and sharing and it is, in fact, a transitory state of existence where the sinners are hopeful of purging themselves of their sins and gaining entry into Paradise. Significantly, there is essential difference in the representation of sins and sinners between the books Inferno and Purgatory and it is important to realize this distinction to comprehend how the Divine Comedy surpasses other pieces of the world literature which deal

<https://assignbuster.com/contrast-dantes-presentation-of-sins-and-sinners-in-inferno-and-purgatorio/>

with the same theme.

In his introduction to Purgatory, Mark Musa makes the distinction between the portrayal of sins and sinners in *Inferno* and Purgatory as follows: “ In the *Inferno* the damned are grouped according to the sinful acts they committed; in the Purgatory repentant sinners are grouped according to the tendencies that were the cause of their sins. Penance is not to be considered as a punishment, but rather as a corrective measure for that sinner who has repented. It was a discipline imposed in order to help one fight the old habit of ones sin or the residual tendency to sin.” (Musa, x) Therefore, Dante has been careful about making the essential distinction between the states of sin and sinners in his first two books of the *Divine Comedy*. Significantly, such a distinction is evidently in proportion to the Christian ideas of the optimistic state of the sinners who are given opportunity to purge themselves of their sins in the Purgatory. There is essential difference in the nature of punishment to the sinners in the first two books and it corresponds to the state of sin and sinners in *Inferno* and Purgatory. “ Penance is not to be considered as a punishment, but rather as a corrective measure for that sinner who has repented. It was a discipline imposed in order to help one fight the old habit of ones sin or the residual tendency to sin... While in Hell punishment was retributive (it is the sin itself), in Purgatory it is remedial (it reaches the virtue that is the opposite of that tendency to sin).” (Musa, x) In conclusion, it is obvious that there is essential difference in the representation of sins and sinners between the books – a distinction which is central to comprehend how the *Divine Comedy* surpasses other pieces of the world literature on the theme of sin and sinners.

Works Cited

<https://assignbuster.com/contrast-dantes-presentation-of-sins-and-sinners-in-inferno-and-purgatorio/>

Lansing, Richard H and Teodolinda Barolini. (Ed). The Dante encyclopedia. Taylor & Francis. 2000. P 476 .

Musa Mark. " Introduction to Purgatory." Purgatory. Dante Alighieri. New York: Penguin Classics. 1984. Page x.