

Free essay on dante's inferno

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The Cantos in Dante's "The Inferno" show a series of complex messages meant to broaden our imagination about the afterlife and what we define as evil or sinful. Dante uses his imagination to create conversations about a soul's sin on Earth and the punishment they receive in Hell. Dante's idea of Hell shows powerful imagery and the perfection of God's justice through the eyes of the damned (Dante). By Dante's definition of "sin", there are several contemporary figures that may belong within one of the inner circles of hell. One such contemporary figure is the mass murderer James Holmes.

James Holmes conducted the brutal mass murdering of 12 people in the 2012 Aurora, Colorado theater massacre ("CBS News"). He also is accused of injuring 59 other individuals during the attack ("CBS News"). The attack was premeditated with the intent only to kill as many as possible, there appears to be no other motivation ("CBS News"). Based on Holmes' actions, he was clearly a deeply disturbed individual who has earned a spot in hell based on his unjustified and uncaring actions.

In Cantos 34 of "The Inferno" Virgil and Dante arrive in the inner most circle of Hell (Dante). They relate that this circle is for the deepest of evil, including the Devil himself (Dante). Traitors are considered part of the innermost circle (Dante). The Cantos sends the message of just how traitors were perceived in Dante's time. In my opinion, Holmes became a "traitor" to his own country by killing innocent fellow citizens ("CBS News"). In the third zone of circle 9 suffer those who betrayed friends or guests (Dante).

Dante explains that evil is a contradiction of God's will (Dante). Murder is mentioned as one of God's commandments "Thou shall not kill." This is a sin punished in the Sixth Circle of Hell, in Dante's estimation (Dante). In a

modern sense, many feel that Dante's circles are a bit reversed compared to contemporary values. For example, many feel that murder is the ultimate sin while in ancient times Dante felt that treason or fraud was worse than murder (Dante).

Dante's definition of evil doesn't look at the causes of evil, the psychology of evil, or the consequences of these acts (Dante). Professionals have suggested that James Holmes may be mentally ill, and thus unable to be accountable for his actions ("CBS News"). Dante's description of sin does not take these issues into account. However, based on the facts made public I feel that Holmes' premeditation and sheer violence of the acts would have earned Holmes a place within one of Dante's circles of hell, be it in the sixth circle for murders or in the ninth circle for his betrayal of his fellow citizens. In conclusion, based on modern standards Dante's version of hell may be outdated, but few would dispute that those who commit heinous and uncaring acts such as James Holmes should face their due punishment whether it is earthly consequences, such as prison or otherworldly consequences such as hell.

Works Cited:

- . " Accused Aurora Killer James Holmes Allegedly Foreshadowed Crimes." CBS News. N. p., 21 2012. Web. 26 Nov 2012. .
- Dante, . The Inferno. Penguin Classics, 2010. Print.