

Analysis of the divine comedy assignment

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YUCHEN DIAO EH 235 Mr. Fantoni PAPER #2 Analysis of The Divine Comedy

The selected text comes from The Divine Comedy, written by Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet. It is a part of Canto XXIV, where Dante goes down to the seventh chasm of the eighth cycle in Hell with Virgil's help. The seventh chasm is the Thieves' place which is filled with " a terrible confusion of serpents, and Thieves madly running. " This short selected text links the previous passages with later passages by developing of the scenario of The Divine Comedy.

In this short scene, Dante used some similar elements from the over all story, such as the same voice. In The Divine Comedy, the writer Dante used the first person as the voice. He is the narrator. This serves two main purposes: first, the first person implies that the stories of this poem are based on his own real experience, for example, the story of Vanni Fucci in the seventh chasm; second, first person lets author describe his stream-of-consciousness during the adventure. In addition, Dante kept to his proposal about retribution that the punishment should fit the " sin".

Dante illustrates his agreement with the moral standard of Christians. The sins are related to the faith of the Christian's thoughts. The seventh chasm is the place to punish Thieves, who committed sins of stealing. The Thieves stole property of other people before their death, so they are condemned to spend eternity with their hands bound by serpents. Various punishments in Inferno are the marvels of Dante's imaginative minds. Dante is thusly warned to avoid those sins, because people who did villainy during life, in the Inferno, suffering from their sins in life.

Therefore, he preferred to describe everything in details. In the selected text, he describes a lot how the serpents bound the Thieves, “ Their hands were tied behind their backs with serpents, which pushed their tails and heads around the loins and coiled themselves in knots around the front. ” The More vivid the description is, the more fears readers can feel. Dante uses serpents as chains to lend some terror of this punishment. They have acted in sneaky and furtive ways, and now their forms are stolen by the snakes, which symbolize blackness and deceit. Besides, the serpents’ attack is the starting point of painful transformation to those Thieves, who will be burned into a heap of ash, turn into a phoenix form, and then return back to the original form, repeating this process again and again. Continuous transformation implies that those Thieves’ bodies are taken from them as a fair punishment for that they took. Thieves are subjected to a punishment that is synonymous with their sins. Besides, during the whole trip, Dante relies on Virgil, who is the symbol of wisdom and sagacity. Dante stays the same in the selected text, because he is still terrified. As they travel so far, Dante is mortally afraid of all things in Hell.

At the beginning of Canto XXIV, Virgil seems to lose the direction caused by Malacoda’s deceit. So, Dante flinches in alarm. Compared with preceding texts, Dante does not trust Virgil absolutely as before; he starts to query Virgil’s guide, because he realizes that Virgil is just a normal human same as himself. Although Virgil is a good guide, he still cannot reach the divine perfection. Virgil’s confusion gives a heavy blow to Dante’s confidence and courage. “ Master, why not go down this bridge onto the next encircling bank, for I hear sounds I cannot understand, and I look down but cannot see

a thing. Dante is tremblingly standing on the high bridge, while he asks this question. Dante reveals his fear when Virgil shows weakness and confusion, which are the evidence of his human part. This time, Virgil does not appease Dante in some tender and encouraging words. He speaks in a commanding tone, “`No other answer,’ he replied, `I give you than doing what you ask, for a fit request is answered best in silence and in deed. ’” Under this awkward situation, which Virgil lost trust from Dante, he chooses to push Dante more to move on. And this way works; it makes Dante rely on Virgil again.

The only difference is that he relies on Virgil’s powerful push instead of soft guidance. The development of this selected text is that Dante turns more coldblooded to the terrified visions in Inferno. Not only he can directly describe the frame of punishments, but also he starts to depict breezily. He says, “ NO o or i was ever quicker put by pen to paper than he flared up and burned, and turned into a heap of crumbled ash; and then, these ashes scattered on the ground began to come together on their own and quickly take the form they had before. This sentence uses allegory to emphasize high speed of transformation. Vossler estimates this, “ In the seventh moat, where deceit takes the form of robbery, Dante feasts his eyes with cruel eagerness on the punishment. ” (P. 278) Dante becomes numb of those bloody and cruel chastisement scenes after more and more things he has seen. Dante as a spectator goes through terrifying punishments of Hell; he turns out to be calmer for his adventure. Furthermore, caused by his moral hatred, Dante thinks that those sinners deserve their punishments.

If he could not stand his sight of those punishments before, now he can.

Following the developments of the story, Dante and Virgil travel deeper and <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-divine-comedy-assignment/>

deeper through first cycle to eighth cycle in Hell, whose structure is downward, but they climb up between the Chasms in Cycle VIII. The difficult ascendant chasms are metaphors to the difficulty of seeking moral perfection, which requires progress through the knowledge of sins. By the developing of the story, it illustrates more concrete moral standards of Dante's thoughts between these lines.

The skillful designs of Hell's frames are gentle hints of Dante's ideology, which reflect his desire of seeking moral perfection. In conclusion, this show selected text serves as a connecting link between the preceding and the following. It not only keeps the essence of the proceeding passage, but also carries toward new developments. Reference List Karl Vossler (1958). *Mediaeval Culture Volume II*, Published by, Frederick Ungar Publishing CO. New York. Translated by William Cranston Lawton. Page 278.