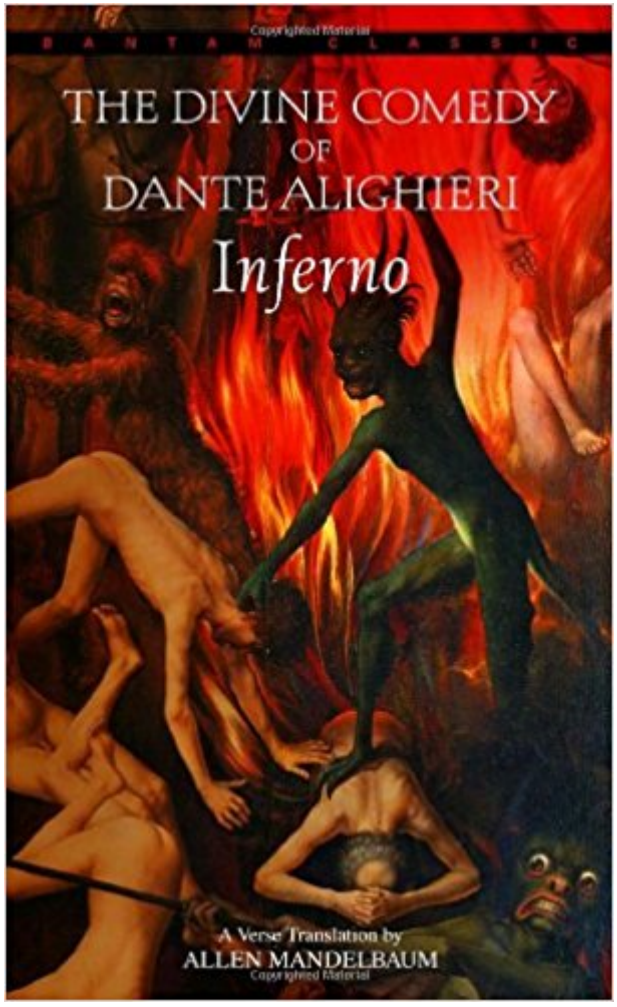
Inferno (Bantam Classics)



Synopsis

In this superb translation with an introduction and commentary by Allen Mandelbaum, all of Dante’s vivid images--the earthly, sublime, intellectual, demonic, ecstatic--are rendered with marvelous clarity to read like the words of a poet born in our own age.

Book Information

Series: Bantam Classics

Mass Market Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Bantam Classics; Bantam Classic Ed edition (January 1, 1982)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553213393

ISBN-13: 978-0553213393

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.9 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 59 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #15,901 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Poetry #18 inÃ Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Classics & Allegories #32 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > European

Customer Reviews

"An exciting, vivid Inferno by a translator whose scholarship is impeccable."--Chicago magazine"The English Dante of choice."--Hugh Kenner."Exactly what we have waited for these years, a Dante with clarity, eloquence, terror, and profoundly moving depths."--Robert Fagles, Princeton University."Tough and supple, tender and violent . . . vigorous, vernacular . . . Mandelbaum’s Dante will stand high among modern translations."--The Christian Science Monitor"Lovers of the English language will be delighted by this eloquently accomplished enterprise."--Book Review Digest

In this superb translation with an introduction and commentary by Allen Mandelbaum, all of Dante’s vivid images--the earthly, sublime, intellectual, demonic, ecstatic--are rendered with marvelous clarity to read like the words of a poet born in our own age.

If this book had been written last week, I would give it three stars. Because it’s seven hundred years

old, and it’s one of the major literary works of the medieval period, you have to bump it up a couple of stars. Back in Dante’s day, capable writers were few and far between, so anyone who distinguished himself automatically became an icon.It’s a pleasant yarn about Dante’s imaginary stroll through hell, accompanied by Virgil. They travel through all the levels of hell, encountering a number of famous people along the way. Surprise, surprise: people Dante didn’t like are there. He can’t punish people on earth, so he puts them in hell in his poem. In that respect, he’s kind of like a blogger.Viewing this poem objectively, without fanboi stars in my eyes, I can tell you that Dante can’t stand beside Shakespeare, Pound, or other well-known highbrow authors. Nothing in this book will amaze you. You will not find it illuminating. Nonetheless, it’s a highly influential work, and it’s entertaining. Unlike many other pre-Renaissance writers, Dante is not windy or incapable of realizing he’s boring the reader.Every educated person should read this. It’s like Huckleberry Finn or Catcher in the Rye. It will not change your life, but it will make you less ignorant.

This past spring I took a class on Dante in which we read the entirety of The Commedia. After taking some time to think about and digest this massive poem, I think I am finally ready to write my review.At the opening of the poem, Dante awakes to find himself lost in a dark wood. Unable to leave the valley, he is greeted by the shade of Virgil, who tells him that he has been sent by Mary and Dante’s dearly departed Beatrice to guide Dante through Hell, Purgatory, and eventually to the highest parts of Heaven. Although Dante is initially reluctant to go, he eventually follows Virgil down into the mouth of Hell.While the idea of reading such a long old poem seems daunting, the language and imagery that Dante uses makes it as compelling and fresh as if it were written yesterday. It is, first and foremost, a journey, and the sights the pilgrim sees on his journey to the bottom of Hell are described in vivid and sometimes gross detail. Hell is a very physical place, full of bodies and bodily functions, and Dante doe snot skimp on the imagery. But as often as his language is crude, it is at times stunningly beautiful. There were similes that absolutely stopped me in my tracks with their perfection and beauty. If you want to read the Inferno for the first time, read it like a novel. Jump in, enjoy the story, gawk at the imagery, and stop to relish the beautiful passages.Just as Dante the pilgrim takes Virgil as his guide through Hell, Dante the poet uses Virgil as a poetic guide in his attempt to write an epic that encompasses religion, politics, history, and the human experience. In each circle, Dante meets a new group of sinners who are in Hell for different reasons. The first thing to note about the damned is that they seem to be mostly from Florence. Seriously, sometimes I think Dante wrote this just so he could shove everyone he didn’t like into the fiery pit. But in all seriousness, Dante’s goal wasn’t just to describe the afterlife, he was also trying to describe life on

earth. By putting people from Florence in Hell or Heaven, Dante was commenting on what was happening in Italy at the time. Most important for Dante was the corruption he saw in the church, so there are entire cantos of the Inferno devoted to religious leaders, especially Popes, and especially Boniface, who was Pope at the time Dante was writing.The other thing to note about the damned is how relatable they are, at least in the beginning. When you meet Paolo and Francesca in Canto V and listen to Francesca's story, you can't help but be drawn in and pity her. Dante the pilgrim pitied her too, and swoons (again, seriously, he spends like the first 10 cantos swooning left and right) due to his empathy for them. Again and again the pilgrim pities the damned, but as the canticle goes on this happens less and less. By the end of the canticle he has stopped pitying the shades at all, and instead feels that their damnation is deserved. Why did Dante the poet make the pilgrim transforming such a way? Just as the description of Hell also serves as a description of Earth and of the nature of the human soul, the pilgrim's journey through the afterlife mirrors the soul's journey from the dark wood of sin and error to enlightenment and salvation. Dante is at first taken in by the sinners because he is not wise enough to see through their excuses. He is too much like them to do anything other than pity them. As he goes through Hell, he learns more and shakes off the darkness of the wood, so that by the time he gets to the bottom he no longer pities the damned. Still, even in the lowest circles, the shades are all deeply human, and their stories of how they ended up in Hell are incredibly compelling.Dante the poet shows again and again how similar the pilgrim and the damned really are. He constantly explores sins that he could have committed or paths that he could have taken, exposing his own weaknesses and confronting what would have been his fate if Beatrice and Mary had not sent Virgil to save him. I think it speaks to his bravery as a poet that he insisted on exposing not just the weaknesses in society, but also the weaknesses in his own character.Dante the poet is also brave, I think, for tackling some very serious theological, political, and psychological issues. When Dante the pilgrim walks through the gate of Hell, the inscription on the gate says that the gate and Hell itself were made by "the primal love" of God. Here, Dante tackles one of the greatest theological questions; how can a just and loving God permit something as awful as Hell? While the real answer doesn't come until the Paradiso, Dante was brave to put that question in such stark and paradoxical terms.Dante's constant indictments of the political and religious leaders of his day show bravery, intelligence, and a good degree of anger on his part. Before writing the Inferno, Dante had been exiled from his home city of Florence for being on the wrong side of a political scuffle. He was never able to return home, and his anger at the partisanship that caused his exile mixed with his longing for his home make the political themes of the poem emotionally charged and interesting to the reader, even today.Lastly, Dante shows both bravery and

a great deal of literary skill in his treatment of Virgil. Virgil is Dante’s guide through Hell and, later, Purgatory. He leads Dante every step of the way, teaching him like a father would, protecting him from daemons and even carrying him on his back at one point. It is clear that Dante admires Virgil, and in some ways the poem is like a love song to him. Virgil, living before Christ, was obviously not Christian, so Dante’s choice of Virgil as a guide through the Christian afterlife is really quite extraordinary. It shows that wisdom can be attained from the ancient world, and that the light of human reason, which Virgil represents, is necessary for the attainment of enlightenment and salvation. Dante believed strongly that reason and faith were not opposites, but partners, and his choice of Virgil as a guide is a perfect illustration of that principle.But, despite Dante’s love of Virgil, Virgil is, to me, one of the most tragic characters in literature. Virgil, as a pagan, cannot go to Heaven. He resides in Limbo, the first circle of Hell, home of the virtuous pagans. There, he and the other shades (including Homer, Plato, and others) receive no punishment except for their constant yearning for Heaven and the knowledge that they will never see the light of God. Virgil, at the request of Mary and Beatrice, leads Dante toward a salvation that he can never have. Human reason can only lead a soul so far; to understand the mysteries of Heaven one has to rely on faith and theology. Virgil’s fate is the great tragedy of this otherwise comic poem, and the knowledge of that fate haunts the first two canticles. And while it makes sense thematically and in terms of the plot, Dante makes you love Virgil so much that his departure in the Purgatorio never really feels fair. I still miss him.The Inferno is a long and complex poem, filled with vivid imagery, vast psychological depth, scathing social commentary, and deep theological questions. It is also a journey, a real adventure in a way, and a pleasure to read. Though the real fulfillment of Dante’s themes does not come until the Paradiso, the Inferno is well worth reading on its own. Even if you don’t go on to read the other two canticles, reading The Inferno is time well spent.Rating: 5 starsRecommendations: Read it. Skip the boring parts if you want to, but just read it.

The cover of the book was not the same as the one advertised and I needed the exact edition of this book.

I have looked for this book for a very long time and found it here...Thank You!

Unlike the Hollanders’ version of the Divine Comedy, Mandelbaum actually provides a flowing verse translation that conveys the richness of Dante’s masterpiece in both its music and language. What, then, have the Hollanders done? They’ve taken the Singleton prose translation and shoehorned it

into a metrical framework - but it still reads like a plodding prose translation, broken up into stanzas. I think Mandelbaum's effort deserves to be turned into a deluxe limited edition. Other than the Mandelbaum translation of the complete Comedy, do try the W.S. Merwin translation of Purgatory (he didn't do Inferno or Paradiso), another superb verse translation. Both bring the full scope of Dante's achievement within reach of the English reader as never before.

What can I say, it's Dante's inferno. It's a classic for a reason. It has stood the test of time. It is a great literary work. I was never required to read this book when I was in school so I was curious to read it. It didn't disappoint. I loved the imagery and symbolism. Not an easy or relaxing read, but a very good one.

The most popular, for good reason, of Dante's Comedia. Amazingly worded, graphic and telling imagrery, metaphor and symbolism. Great book and a must read for all those who love to study classics.

Having read three different translations of Dante's Divine Comedy, Mandelbaum's is far superior. I like that the original is printed on the left pages, and the english translation is printed on the right; It makes it easier to cross reference and compare if needed. Great read, but focusing more on the physical presentation, this edition is the best one out there.