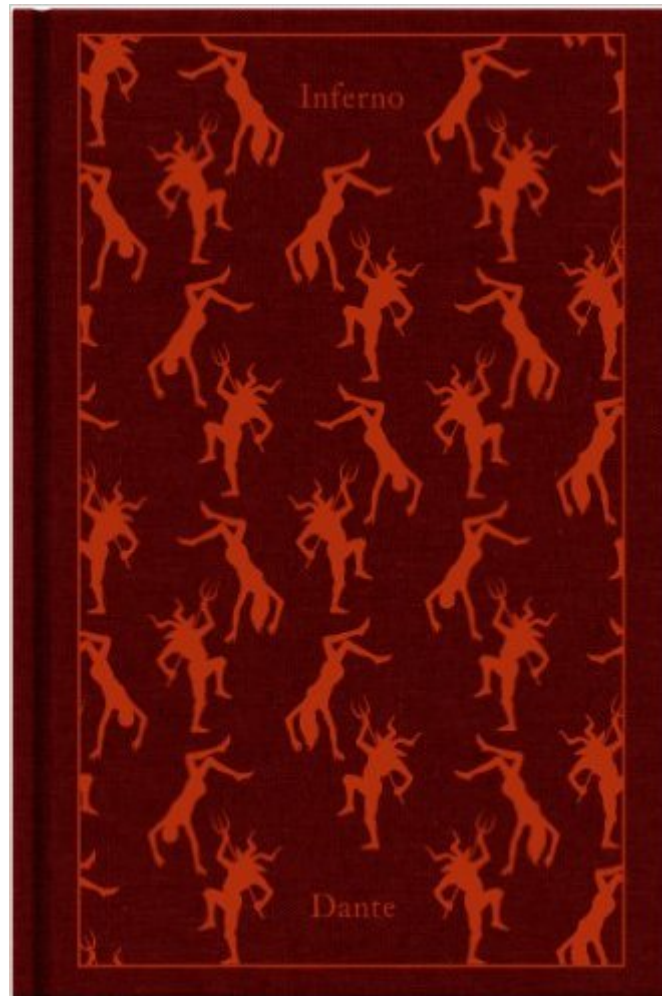


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The Divine Comedy: Volume 1: Inferno (A Penguin Classics Hardcover)



Synopsis

Part of Penguin's beautiful hardback Clothbound Classics series, designed by the award-winning Coralie Bickford-Smith, these delectable and collectible editions are bound in high-quality colourful, tactile cloth with foil stamped into the design. Describing Dante's descent into Hell midway through his life with Virgil as a guide, *Inferno* depicts a cruel underworld in which desperate figures are condemned to eternal damnation for committing one or more of seven deadly sins. As he descends through nine concentric circles of increasingly agonising torture, Dante encounters doomed souls including the pagan Aeneas, the liar Odysseus, the suicide Cleopatra, and his own political enemies, damned for their deceit. Led by leering demons, the poet must ultimately journey with Virgil to the deepest level of all. For it is only by encountering Satan, in the heart of Hell, that he can truly understand the tragedy of sin.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I always felt it a crime that I made it through high school and college without reading this. I recently read *The Dante Club* which re-ignited my interest in finally reading *The Divine Comedy*. I looked at all the versions out there and decided on this one. I am so glad I did.

Intro: There is an introduction on "How to read Dante" which was indispensable for my first time foray. There is a note from the translator that explains how his translation might differ from others and why. There is an introduction from a colleague of the translator that puts the *Divine Comedy* in a historical context.

Text: So easy to

read! Each Canto begins with a synopsis. If all you wanted to know was the plot of the Divine Comedy you could just read all of these half page summaries (but you'd really miss out.) Then the canto in beautiful verse. Then copious notes that explain the minute details about whom you meet in the Canto and relevant events in history. The notes are as interesting as the Cantos themselves. I am so glad I picked this copy up. I have now read and ENJOYED Dante's Divine Comedy. I highly recommend this as a starting point. It is extremely accessible.

Those of us not fortunate enough to be able to read Italian and thus savor Dante's masterpiece in its original language have the next best thing--the comprehensively noted translation by another great poet, the late John Ciardi. This superb and handsome hardbound edition of Ciardi's translation of Dante's Divine Comedy is not simply the collected, earlier translations of *The Inferno*, *The Purgatorio*, and *The Paradiso*, which in past years appeared in separate paperback editions: This edition is the final Ciardi translation from earlier forms which were "a work in progress." In this magnificent final translation, the non-Italian-speaking reader can savor Dante's extraordinary fusion of morality with the metaphorical architecture of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, explored with pathos and sympathy for the human condition which, in the mind of Dante, constantly yearns for The All in All. A volume that should be required reading for anyone who aspires to understand man's place in the universe.

To be well read means that you have read the Comedy (at least once). At once haunting, dark and yet grotesquely beautiful, Dante has written for us the definitive Catholic epic poem of hell, purgatory and heaven. Mark Musa is one of the foremost Dante scholars in the world & teaches at the university of Indiana. His footnotes & commentaries are exceptional, a trademark that is not only a luxury but is, in fact, a necessity when it comes to Dante. I would recommend everyone read not just the *Inferno*, but all three canticles of the Comedy as a whole. One cannot truly understand everything in *Inferno* without reading thru the entire poem (including *Purgatory* and *Paradise*). Would also admonish that anyone interested in this work begin with Virgil's *Aeneid* and also read some Homer, Plato & Aristotle as well as some Roman history for a rough background of the work. Be advised that the bard expects you to have read everything he has so that you will catch all of his allusions. Once again, this is where Musa's footnotes come in handy, but there is still no substitute for actually reading thru the primary texts that serve as the foundation of this work. Also, would advise that one read the short work, *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life) before reading the Comedy, as it is basically a prologue to his epic. It will also help make more sense re: the pilgrim's near-obsessive

love that he has for Beatrice. This is truly one of the great epic poems ever written and it positions Dante right up there with Homer, Goethe & Virgil.

About twenty years ago I read Dorothy Sayers's translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy" with great pleasure, finding an awesome grandeur in Dante's progression from Hell through Purgatory to Heaven. When I decided to re-read the work, I found the poetry tortured and the references obscure. So I went comparison shopping, settling on Mark Musa's version. He created an excellent, free-flowing, poetic, and easily understandable translation of the three canticles of Dante's "Divine Comedy" for Penguin Classics. In addition to the direct translation, Musa provides an introductory summary to each canto, detailed notes following each canto, a glossary of names in the back of each volume, and an introductory essay for each volume. The introduction to "Volume 1: Inferno" gives a thorough introduction to Dante and to his other works as well as to the Inferno. Following the introduction is a translator's note. The introductions to "Purgatory" and "Paradise" do not go over the extra information presented in "Inferno". It is useful to read all three of Dante's canticles in the Musa translation to get a complete, consistent presentation of the work. Musa does make reference in his notes to one volume to ideas or people presented in the others. The notes are vital for almost everyone. The references to Biblical, classical, and medieval personalities, myths, time systems, theology, and events come frequently. Few people are up on the ins and outs of Guelf vs. Ghibelline in medieval Italian politics. Musa makes it all as clear as it needs to be. Musa's version of "Inferno" italicizes the introductory summary before each canticle and retains the detailed, interesting mappings of Hell used in the Sayers edition. Dante's poem is central to Western civilization. Allowing for some poetic necessities, it pulls classical and medieval history into the framework of Christian theology to show how God's love powers the universe, how people can exercise free will, and how God can help and reward those who trust in Him. It is very easy for the reader to ask how he or she would fare in the afterlife and how to go about finding a better outcome. Some sins are punished severely [like traitors frozen near Lucifer in the ice of the Cocytus lake], and some sins have varying outcomes [E.g., there are some sodomites running on the burning sand of Lower Hell forever and some having their sins burned away in the last stage of Purgatory before going to Paradise.]. Some loves are more blessed than others too. There is much to reflect on. Dante the Pilgrim, drawn by his love for Beatrice gets the full experience. Reading "The Divine Comedy" is valuable in any translation; Musa's flies along, bringing his audience along with understanding. This review for "Inferno" applies to "Purgatory" and "Paradise" as well, since the productions are so comparable.

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