

Discussion Questions for the *Inferno*, by Reuben Claveria

Does "Ulysses" who a world renowned respected character in epic Greek poetry deserve be in the "Inferno?" Is Dante an anti-pagan in his poem "Inferno?" Why do you suppose that Greek mythological characters populate hell or the inferno?

Some of the people doomed in Dante's vision of hell are symbolic or allegorical, each representing one of the Seven Deadly Sins of Catholicism? Francesca and Paolo are doomed in hell for their adulterous affair, and yet Rodin created a beautiful sculpture of these two lovers kissing that created quite a scandal for it's nudity? Are we as a reader supposed to feel some sympathy for these people trapped in hell? Is their redemption for them?

Dante's poem was written in vernacular Italian or common language, but it was published in Latin, which meant only wealthy and educated people could afford it, read it, and understand it. Why did Dante choose to write in common language? Was he trying to make the poem accessible to all readers?

2021 will be the 700th anniversary of Dante's death, 2020 will be the 700th anniversary of the completion of "The Divine Comedy." 2017 is the 150th anniversary of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's translation of "The Divine Comedy," which made many Americans interested in this classic poem. Does the Inferno still read as accessible, relevant, and important today? Or does it seem far-fetched, ridiculous and satirical? Do you believe that there is such a vision of hell? Or is there a place in hell for us all, as lovers of great pagan literature?