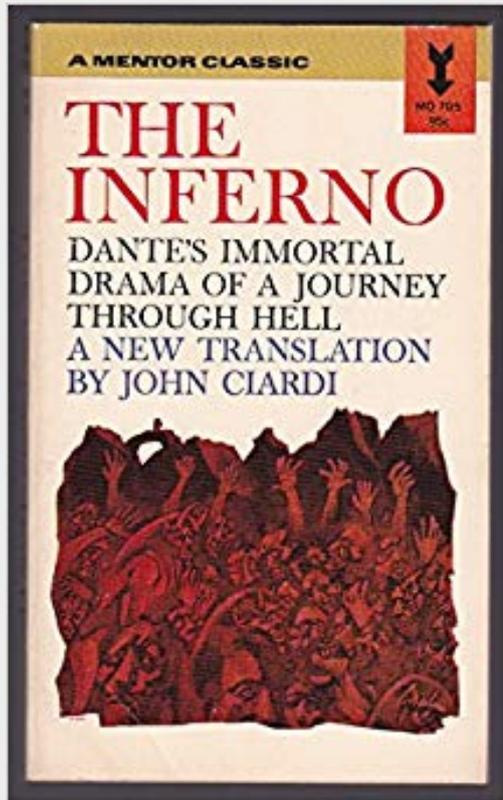


## The Inferno by Dante Alighieri, John Ciardi



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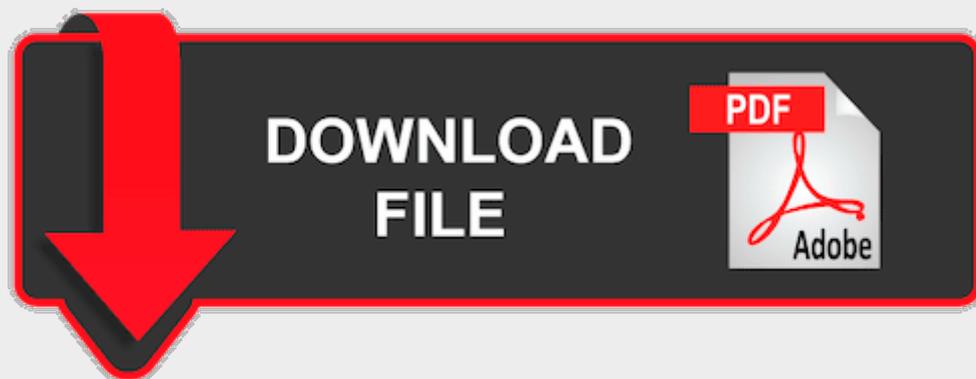
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DANTE'S IMMORTAL DRAMA OF A JOURNEY THROUGH HELL. TRANSLATION BY JOHN CIARDI



## Reviews of the The Inferno by Dante Alighieri, John Ciardi

### 1. Lightseeker

I highly recommend this translation of Dante's Inferno. For many years, Ciardi's translation has been the standard and it has much to recommend it. But Ciardi's rhymed stanzas are looser, wordier, and less faithful to the original than Thornton's blank verse. Thornton brings us closer to what

Dante wrote. And the excellent notes at the end of each canto help bring this masterpiece to life for a modern reader.

## 2. Prince Persie

With decades of study and meticulous craftsmanship, Dr. Peter Thornton has offered his translation of "The Inferno." I do not know Italian, but I have read a couple of other translations of "The Inferno," and I found this one the best for several reasons. First, the poetry is vivid. I felt like orange flames and the stench of Sulphur were my companions as much as were Dante and Virgil.

The verse itself is a second reason I liked this translation. The meter - iambic pentameter, the ordinary meter of the English language - does not intrude into the poetry itself. That is, I wasn't conscious of stretching of words or awkward diction for the sake of the meter.

You can enjoy the translation without bothering to read the footnotes, but once you start, you are off on another journey, equally absorbing - this one through contemporary (to Dante) Florentine history, Christian metaphors and allusions, Roman legend and mythology, and Catholic scholars from Augustine on.

Read the translation; savor the footnotes. There's always room for a fresh version of hell.

## 3. Nnulam

THANK YOU !! I've been trying to expose my kids to more of the classics. But every translation of the Divine Comedy I've come across has been so difficult that I couldn't even get through Hell (felt like hell trying to read it). UNTIL NOW !!! Thank you Mr. Douglas Neff for this translation. It keeps all the flavor, tension, and character; and stays true to the original story. Reading this translation, I find myself more absorbed and engaged in trying to understand what Dante was trying to get across, and why he picked certain persons for certain levels, and doing research into some of the people, places, vices, etc. that he talks about, instead of spending hours trying to decipher the actual language of the translation. My 7 year

old is totally engaged, while at the same time, my 15 year old and I are getting into some very interesting discussions (Dante put Pope Celestine V with those souls who neither heaven nor hell want, because he resigned as Pope . . . I wonder what that means for old former pope Benedict XVI / cardinal Ratzinger who just did the same thing). And none of us are getting ground down by having to stop and try and translate the language.

I cannot encourage you strongly enough to get this book. You will not be disappointed. I'm now trying to find a comparable translation of Purgatory and Paradise so we can complete the story.

#### 4. Priotian

Dante's *THE INFERNO* is a classic. Written around 1321, the book predates most of the classics, except Homer's works of course. But even before Shakespeare, this book heralded in an uncommonly twisted and almost perverse story of Dante's descent into Hell and his description of everything he sees and those he meets. It's eloquently written. Not necessarily an easy read but it does tribute to the language and reminds the reader that our vernacular has so much more color than the *reductio ad absurdum* we see being used today. Dante's descriptions of the nightmare that sinners endure at each level is pretty graphic, sometimes bordering on horrifying, and who knows, he might even be credited with the first narrative on the subject of flesh-eating zombies which are so popular today. The narrative also gives the reader a feel for certain historical relevancies of that and earlier times and how Dante saw the world. This particular version of the book, by John Ciardi, provides excellent descriptive notes after each section, clarifying things mentioned in the story so the reader stays on track. Lastly, I could not help but wonder if the Vatican of that time didn't encourage the book to be written simply because of its thematic message of what happens to sinners, particularly those who sin against God and the Church or become apostates. It certainly provides compelling imagery to anyone who believes in Heaven and Hell. Add it to your reading arsenal - it's worth the read.

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