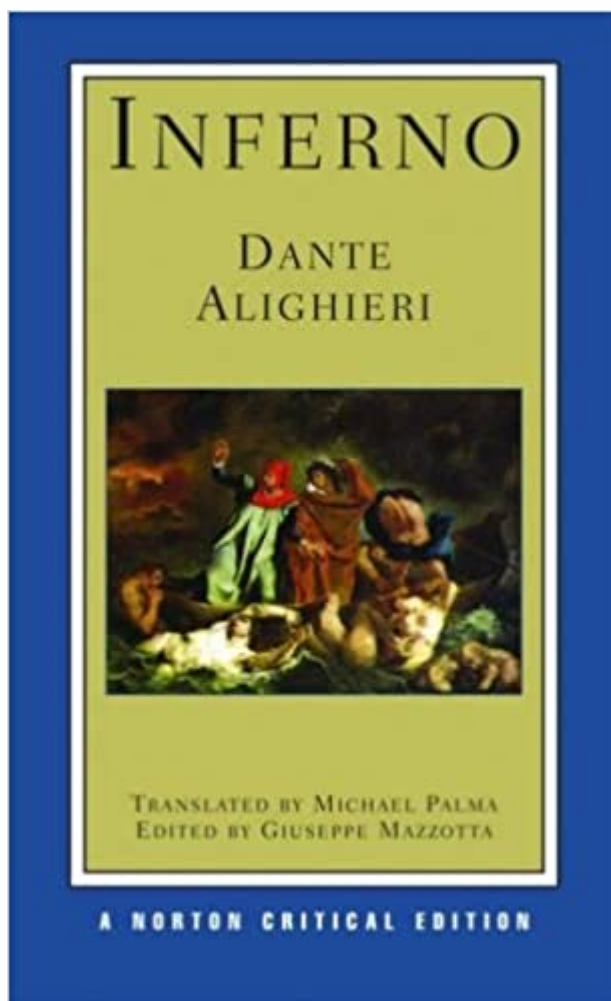


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# Inferno (Norton Critical Editions)



## Synopsis

This Norton Critical Edition of Dante's masterpiece is based on Michael Palma's verse translation, which is acclaimed for its elegant rendering of Dante's triple-rhyme scheme into contemporary English. Richard Wilbur praises Palma's translation as "accurate as to sense, fully rhymed, and easy, as a rule, in its movement through the tercets. Readers will find it admirably clear and readable." The text is accompanied by detailed explanatory annotations. Also included in this edition are an illuminating introduction by Giuseppe Mazzotta, a Translator's Note, The Plan of Dante's Hell, and six maps and illustrations. "Criticism" provides twelve interpretations by, among others, John Freccero, Robert M. Durling, Alison Cornish, Teodolinda Barolini, Giuseppe Mazzotta, and Robert Hollander. A Chronology and Selected Bibliography are also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Dante's conversations with his mentor Virgil and the doomed shades are by turns assertive and abashed, irritated and pitying and inquisitive, and Anthony Esolen's new translation renders them so sensitively that they seem to take place in the same room with us. It follows Dante through all his spectacular range, commanding where he is commanding, wrestling, as he does, with the density and darkness in language and in the soul. This "Inferno gives us Dante's vivid drama and his verbal inventiveness. It is living writing." --James Richardson, Princeton University "Professor Esolen's

translation of Dante's "Inferno is the best one I have seen, for two reasons. His decision to use unrhymed blank verse allows him to come nearly as close to the meaning of the original as any prose reading could do, and allows him also to avoid the harrowing sacrifices that the demand for rhyme imposes on any translator. And his endnotes and other additions provoke answers to almost any question that could arise about the work." --A. Kent Hieatt, professor emeritus, University of Western Ontario "Esolen's brilliant translation captures the power and the spirit of a poem that does not easily give up its secrets. The notes and appendices provide exactly the kind of help that most readers will need." --Robert Royal, president, Faith and Reason Institute "From the Hardcover edition.

Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in Florence to a family of minor nobility. He entered into Florentine politics in 1295, but he and his party were forced into exile in a hostile political climate in 1301. Taking asylum in Ravenna late in life, Dante completed his *Divine Commedia*, considered one of the most important works of Western literature, before his death in 1321. Giuseppe Mazzotta is Sterling Professor of the Humanities for Italian at Yale University. He is president of the Dante Society of America (2003-2009). He is the author of *Dante: Poet of the Desert* and *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge*. Michael Palma is the recipient of the Italo Calvino Award for his translation of *My Name on the Wind: Selected Poems of Diego Valeri* and of the Raiziss/de Palchi Translation Award from the American Academy of American Poets for his translation of *The Man I Pretend to Be: The Colloquies* and *Selected Poems of Guido Gozzano*. A poet in his own right, Palma has published three collections of verse, and his poetry has been anthologized in, among other publications, *Penguin's Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry*.

Jean and Robert Hollander's edition of *Inferno* is outstanding in every way. The translation is well-suited to the modern reader and seems to follow the Italian quite closely. The synopses preceding each canto are very useful and Hollander's analyses are exhaustive, interesting and complete with detailed references to earlier analytical works. The detail and extent of the analyses is remarkable. Hollander's commentary on the text is much more detailed than any other edition with which this reader is familiar, and the analyses are clear, interesting and well-referenced. For the serious student of Dante, this e-reader edition perhaps sets the standard for its ready access to the Italian and to the commentary. The default mode for each canto is the English text with links to the left for the corresponding original Italian. To the right are links to Hollander's analyses, line by line.

Click on the link and the relevant Italian or annotation appears. Having read and studied the poem both with the Hollanders' hard-copy edition, the electronic version is far more user-friendly than scrambling back and forth through twenty or more pages to find an annotation and then return to the text, only to find another annotation in the next line or tercet. It might be of interest to also view the youtube videos of two Robert Hollander lectures at the University of Dallas. He is complete FULL of Dante. His enthusiasm and humor are infectious while transmitting a scholarly approach. Hollander says that Dante only offends two groups of people, non-believers and believers! This highlights one important aspect of this great poet, Dante's statement that Commedia is theological, not poetic allegory. This means that the narrative is claimed by Dante as to be literally true. This e-book is a gem and a bargain.

The Inferno is a classic, must read. The electronic version I paid \$5.99 for is rife with typos, at least one per chapter, occasionally more. This would be easily corrected by an editor- why wasn't it? Also, this is a rough book to read on a kindle. With an introduction prior to each Canto and notes immediately following, it is difficult to flip from page to page in order to reference the sentence in the Canto with the intro explanation and/or the notes. While there is a page with an illustration of the circles of hell, a hard copy book with a color illustration is far more user friendly. Please clean up the typos! You misspelled Virgil as Virgit (Note 39, Canto X), Christ as Chritt (8-9 Anastasius and Photinus) and Aristotle as Arietotle (Note 17, Canto XI), for Pete sake!

Rating: I gave this five stars only because it is the best translation of perhaps the finest literary achievement outside of the Bible. However, I MUST express my concerns as below: The original: TEN stars out of Five for it is unparalleled. The Translation by John Ciardi: FIVE stars out of FIVE for it is in itself a work of art! The OCR conversion: MINUS TEN out of FIVE; for numerous, glaring, disconcerting and inexcusable OCR errors!!! I have been a dedicated fan of John Ciardi's inspired translation of Dante's Commedia for many years. The original work; The Commedia, by Dante is perhaps the closest thing to perfection outside of the Bible (which, I believe firmly was God-Authored, so, it would not be fair to compare any Man's work to that too closely). The appellation of 'Divine' to Dante's extraordinary allegory is a statement to its almost perfect quality. Now, the problem for me is that it is written in Italian. I speak English. So, I cannot read this work in its original form. The next best thing is to read a translation into English. Again, no matter the quality of the original, the translation can provide an experience near to that which the author intended, or it can mar the work beyond recognition. For this work, Dante's Commedia; the Inferno, Purgatorio and

Paradiso, there exist several translations into English. For my dollar, John Ciardi's is the best. Others may disagree on this count, but there is no arguing that his translation is masterful. The added bonus is his short prose summaries of each canto (chapter) and his extensive footnotes for illumination of the text. Added together, John Ciardi and Dante Alighieri present, in this translation, a reading experience of scintillating excellence. Each and every reading from the first to the thousandth is wonderful, rich and even fresh. Now along comes the Kindle. Being an extreme bibliophile, I never thought I would like the ebook experience. Suffice it to say that I was quite wrong on that count. However, this is not a review of the Kindle or any e-reader. So, naturally, loving this translation and work like I do, I purchased the Kindle version without blinking. To my utter dismay, the text is sorely corrupted by errors. The OCR output does not seem to have been reviewed, edited or otherwise corrected at all. Having read this work as many times as I have, each canto, each stanza, each verse, and every word are precious and like old friends. (I re-read it for the same reasons one keeps returning to their favorite ice cream flavor, or their favorite song). But, in this case, the amount of error contained in this electronic copy is jarring and unpleasant and all too frequently encountered. So, if the nice folks at Penguin publishing should happen to read this review; I can only say: You have a gem on your hands, so why smear it with mud? Please, Please, correct the text errors, which are legion and most disconcerting, and restore this literary diamond to its original and deserved luster and brilliance and re-publish the work as it should have been done from the start.

I am glad to have received this book I'm very excited about the class I will be taking that required this book. I will come back and adjust my review when the class is finished and I see how the book ties in with the class

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