

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)

born in Florence, Italy (province of Tuscany)

Beatrice Portinari (1266–1290)

Guelf (pope) –Ghibelline (emperor) conflict

White Guelfs (Dante's party) vs. Black Guelfs

1301 exiled from Florence

Guido Cavalcanti (Dante's friend and patron)

Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303)

his poetry

Vita Nuova (1295)

Divine Comedy (1310–1320)

1317 living in Ravenna

1321 dies of fever (possibly malaria)

The Divine Comedy

influences:

Scholasticism (synthesis of classical philosophy and Christian doctrine)

Franciscans (poverty; criticism of papal wealth & political involvement)

Aeneid (1st c. epic poem by Virgil, describing the founding of Rome by a fugitive of the Trojan War)

structure:

14,233 lines

three canticas: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*

100 *canti* (33 in each book, with one introductory *canto*)

division of realms: 9 levels + 1

Hell : Charity (Compassion); Purgatory : Hope; Paradise : Faith.

“the stars”

main characters:

Dante's narrator (the Pilgrim)

Virgil

Beatrice

Christ

verse form:

dolce stil nuovo (“sweet new style”)

terza rima (“third rhyme”)

hendecasyllabic (eleven-syllable lines)

Nel <u>mezzo del cammin</u> di <u>nostra vita</u>	A (-ita)
mi <u>ritrovai</u> per <u>una selva oscura</u> ,	B (-ura)
ché <u>la diritta via</u> <u>era smarrita</u> .	A (-ita)
Ahi, <u>quanto a dir</u> qual <u>era</u> è <u>cosa dura</u> ,	B (-ura)
<u>esta selva selvaggia</u> e <u>aspra</u> e <u>forte</u>	C (-orte)
che <u>nel pensier</u> <u>rinova la paura!</u>	B (-ura)
<u>Tant'</u> è <u>amara</u> che <u>poco</u> è <u>più morte</u> ;	C (-orte)
ma per <u>trattar del ben</u> ch' <u>i' vi trovai</u> ,	D (-ai)
<u>dirò</u> de l' <u>altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte</u> .	C (-orte)
Io <u>non</u> so <u>ben ridir</u> com' <u>i' v'intra</u> ,	D (-ai)
<u>tant' era pien di sonno</u> a quel <u>punto</u>	E (-unto)
che <u>la verace via</u> <u>abbandonai</u> .	D (-ai)

Inferno

Good Friday Eve, 1300

Dante's Pilgrim in the Dark Wood

three beasts: lion (self-indulgence), leopard (violence), she-wolf (malice)

Virgil & Beatrice

contrapasso ("counter-suffering")

geography of Hell:

Circle 1: Limbo (virtuous pagans without sin but ignorant of Christ)

Circles 2–5 (Upper Hell): self-indulgence

Circle 2: lust

Circle 3: gluttony

Circle 4: greed

Circle 5: wrath

Circle 6: heresy

Circle 7: violence

Circles 8 and 9: malice (fraud and treachery)

So...

Why does Dante start us at the time & place he does (i.e. why the eve of Good Friday, and why Hell before ascending through Purgatory and Paradise)?