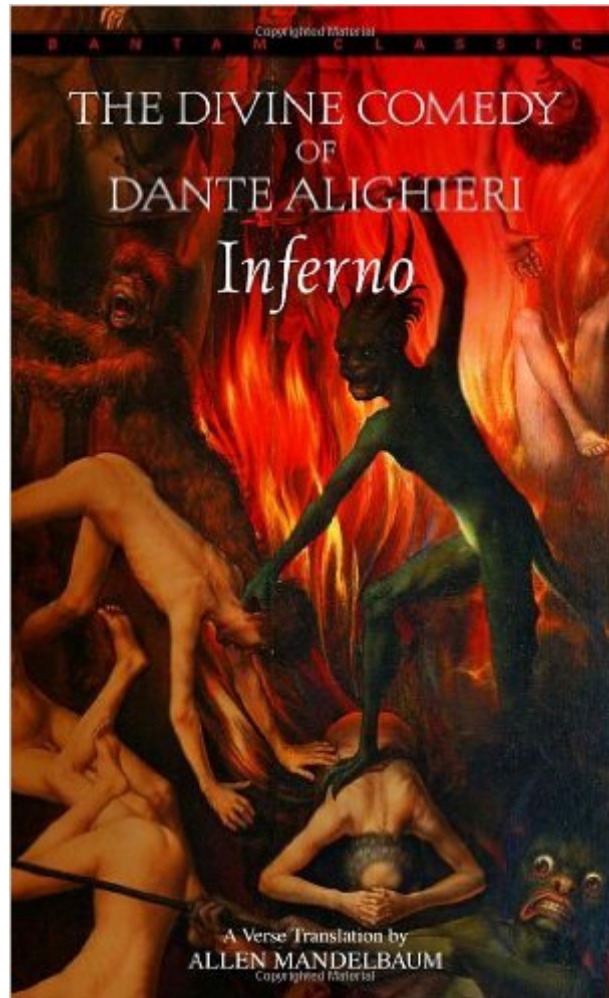


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Inferno (Bantam Classics)



Synopsis

In this superb translation with an introduction and commentary by Allen Mandelbaum, all of Dante's vivid images--the earthly, sublime, intellectual, demonic, ecstatic--are rendered with marvelous clarity to read like the words of a poet born in our own age.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dante Alighieri's three part epic *The Divine Comedy* ranks highly among the literature of the world. Written in early Italian and rhymed in terza rima, its 100 cantos display impressive allegory and use of scholastic philosophy. In *INFERNO*, the first volume, the narrator finds himself "half of our life's way" (around 35 years old) and lost in a forest at night. When day breaks, three savage animals bar his escape. The Roman poet Virgil (best known for his *AENEID*) appears and tells him that Heaven has sent him to lead Dante through Hell, Purgatory, and finally Heaven to bring him out of his spiritual malaise. Dante's Hell differs from the traditional view of everyone together amongst flames. Here the dead receive different punishments based on their sins. Thus, the lustful are caught up eternally in a whirlwind, and astrologers and magicians have their heads reversed (so those who tried to foretell the future can only see their past). Nowhere, however, does anything seem wrong. The dead are placed into Hell not by an unjust God, but by their own decisions and actions. *INFERNO* is a slow beginning, most of the grace and beauty of the *Comedy* lies in the subsequent volumes, *PURGATORIO* and *PARADISO*. However, this first volume has a solid role in the allegorical significance of the *Comedy*. Dante wrote not just a simple story of quasi-science fiction, but a moving allegory of the soul moving from perdition to salvation, the act which the poet T.S. Eliot

called "Mounting the saint's stair". While INFERNO may occasionally lack excitement on the first reading, the next two volumes thrill and upon reading them one can enjoy INFERNO to the fullest. I believe that the best translation of INFERNO to get is that of Allen Mandelbaum, which is published by Bantam (ISBN: 0553213393).

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