

Introduction to Dante Questions

KEY

1. **Background:** What is an archaic meaning for *comedy*?

A story that has a happy ending

2. In which country did Dante Alighieri live?

Italy

3. In what language did he choose to write his poems?

Italian

4. What are the three parts of *The Divine Comedy*?

Hell, Purgatory, Paradise (or Heaven)

5. According to Dante, what is the shape of Hell?

A deep cone in the earth

6. Is Dante's journey through Hell meant to be taken literally? Explain.

Although Dante believed in a literal Hell, his trip through Hell is a symbolic allegory.

7. Who is Dante's guide through Hell and also his literary hero?

Virgil, the author of the Aeneid

8. How did Greek mythology inspire Dante's poem?

The idea of the Underworld, where souls are tortured according to their crimes

9. What are three Greek mythological creatures that appear in Dante's *Inferno*?

Centaur, harpies, the Minotaur, the Furies, Charon the Boatman, Cerberus

10. In Greek mythology what must all souls do before entering the Underworld?

Pay Charon the Boatman a coin

11. How did Dante get back at some of his real-life enemies?

He placed them in his fictional version of Hell.

12. How did Dante organize his imagining of Hell?

According to the Seven Deadly Sins

13. According to Dante, what event causes the crater that became Hell?

Satan's fall from Heaven

14. What is the shape of Purgatory, the area between Heaven and Hell?

A tall mountain

15. What famous location is located at the top of Purgatory?

The Garden of Eden

16. The third part of *The Divine Comedy* is Dante's journey through what place?

Paradise or Heaven

17. Who is Dante's guide through the last two parts of *The Divine Comedy*?

Beatrice

18. What connection did Dante have with this real-life person?

She was a woman he fell in love with when he was only nine years old.

19. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is often called what?

The greatest work of art from the Middle Ages

20. **Analyze:** Why do you think *Inferno*, the part of Dante's poem that deals with Hell, has always been the most widely read portion of the poem?

Answers will vary.