

Essay about a Theme from Dante's *Divine Comedy*

I. The Assignment:

Dante discusses several themes at length in the *Divine Comedy* and in so doing explores conflicts humans have in regards to those themes. For example, he presents creative arts nobly as the daughter of Nature and the granddaughter of the Creator and as a tool in *Purgatory*, yet he also discusses the perils of art throughout the *Inferno* and *Purgatory*. First, find quotes that relate to those points. What is the heart of the conflict about the arts as Dante sees it? How does Dante judge the influence of the "Sweet New Style" on how society uses the arts? What is Dante's opinion as to the proper role of art in human society?

Using your class notes, Mark Musa's footnotes, and your discussion question research, work to formulate a **thesis** statement expressing three opinions about Dante's viewpoint on the roles of art in human society. Then, for the body of your paper, discuss three major points to support that thesis, each point expressed as a topic sentence in one of the body paragraphs.

II. Structure of the Essay:

Use a **funnel introduction**, which is a specially structured paragraph:

- a) Start with a very general statement about the topic;
- b) About midway, introduce the author and book and presents your research question (what is the proper role of art in society?)
- c) The last sentence of your introductory funnel should be your **thesis** statement. The thesis statement should be strong and should advance three opinions about the topic. Ex. In the *Inferno* and *Purgatory* portions of his *Divine Comedy*, Dante shows his reader that the arts ...opinion 1....opinion 2...opinion 3.

2. The **body** of the paper — this is where you make your argument to develop the opinions expressed in your thesis.

- a) Begin with a topic sentence that addresses one of the opinions in your thesis statement.
- b) Elaborate on that idea with at least three points that support it.
- c) For each point of your argument, include a quote showing where you found that idea.
- d) Quotes need to be
 - i) fewer than 10 words in length and
 - ii) must be followed by a citation (see format in section III).
 - iii) Finally, each quote needs to be followed by an explanation of its significance for your argument. Show us how it relates to your thesis.

3. The **conclusion** -- have this be an inverted funnel (begin with the narrowest idea and end with a universal one) that emphasizes and gives us an insight about your thesis based on your research.

III. THE DRAFT — DUE March 18th — be sure to follow directions to the letter

1) Write your funnel introduction (See section II for directions). Be sure to include the title of the

book and the author. You can also work in a quote from Dante, as well. At the end of this paragraph, **underline your thesis** statement about Dante's viewpoint on the role of art in human society.

- 2) For each of the three body paragraphs: use a **bullet outline format** to show the following:
 - your topic sentence (this bridges the thesis and the content of the paragraph)
 - bullet outline phrases (*not* sentences) for your supporting points to support your topic sentence
 - a brief (< 10 words) quote for each point to serve as evidence.
 - follow each quote with its citation ex. (*Inferno* XI: 25) be sure to follow this format
- 3) Save the conclusion for the final. Don't write it yet.

FINAL PAPER DUE April 15th
be sure to follow directions to the letter

Now you're ready to write your paragraphs. As you write the actual body of your paper, be sure to explain how each quote relates to your thesis in some way -- don't expect that the reader will do that thinking for you. As you are showing those connections, you are building your case to support and clarify your argument.

Now you can write your conclusion. Remember to have it be the opposite structure from your introductory funnel and have it tie in closely with those same ideas. If you want to, work in one last quote from Dante to sum it all up.

Nota Bene: Your last step is to set your paper aside for a few days and then read it over carefully. Do the ideas make sense? Does the style flow? Have you proofread for spelling and punctuation errors?

Final **length**: 900 - 1000 words **MINIMUM** number of required excerpted **quotes**: 10
PLEASE READ ALL OF THE DIRECTIONS CAREFULLY AND REPEATEDLY

Tips for how to proceed in the idea gathering phase:

- 1) The first step is to read over your class notes. We've had several class discussions about the "Sweet New Style" and the role of art. A good question to ask about a conflict is "why" -- why do humans struggle about the role of art?
- 2) The next thing to do is to do research. Skim with your finger to find every reference to the arts (can be poetry, visual art or music) and to the role of art from Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatory*. Note the canto and line number for each reference that seems to address the role of art. [ex. *Inferno* I: 3-5] This part will take lot of time. That's why you have 4 weeks until the Draft is due. Start early.
- 3) Try to group the references by topic. Some quotes may be used in more than one group.
- 4) Now try to express each of the points Dante has made by writing a sentence for each group of references. Each sentence will have its supporting quotes.