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**Dante's Inferno: Sample Essay Outlines**

Choose ONE of the following paper topics testing your understanding of the work as a whole and allowing you to analyze important themes and literary devices. Following each question is a sample outline to get you started. You are expected to use specific quotations and analysis of quotations in your response. Further, you will be required to research, and include analysis of, a scholarly article related to your topic. We plan to set aside library research days on @ 12/10 and 12/11 for this research on, for example, EBSCO. **This will be a minimum three page typed paper following all MLA format conventions, including a works cited page (this works cited page does not count toward the three page total) to be submitted to Turitin.com. Due date is January 4th, 2013 BEFORE 10:00 P.M. You must be registered to Turnitin.com to submit this paper. Details for registration for each class are in the bulletin section of your CBA homepage: it is your responsibility to be properly registered**

Dante’s Inferno Essay Assignment Checklist

\_\_\_\_\_ Did I review proper MLA format, including in-text citations, general page format, and the works cited page? Do I, also, have an appropriate title for my paper?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did I offer proper signal phrases BEFORE each quotation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did I properly and gracefully integrate each quotation into my writing?

\_\_\_\_\_ Did I provide a very clear thesis in my introductory paragraph? And does my analysis of my sources (Dante’s poem and, at least, one academic article) provide detailed support for this thesis? Do I just summarize or do I show real intellectual engagement and reflection on the complexity of the issue? (very often, a good technique, in this regard, is to consider a view that might oppose your own)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do I have at least three typed pages of text AND a separate, properly formatted MLA works cited page.

\_\_\_\_\_ Did I properly submit the paper to Turnitin.com BEFORE 10:00 P.M. January 4th? Keep in mind this is the major assignment for the quarter and late submissions will not be accepted. Though you can continually submit and re-submit before the due date/time. Therefore, if you do not submit this assignment to Turnitin.com before 10:00 P.M. January 4th, 2013, you can fail the quarter!

***Topic #1***: There are three main themes in traditional literature; these themes include the picaresque theme, in which the character travels or makes a journey; the reversal of fortune theme, in which the character has his or her situation in life changed; and the survival of the least worthy theme, in which a character who is not really equipped for survival is able to endure. Which of these themes apply/applies to Dante’s Inferno?

**Possible Outline for Topic #1**

I. **Thesis Statement**: All three of the main themes in traditional literature apply to Dante’s Inferno; these themes include the picaresque theme, the reversal of fortune theme, and the survival of the least worthy theme.

II. **The picaresque theme**

***A. Dante lost in Canto I***

1. In woods

2. Midway on way of life

3. Right road lost

***B. Approached by form***

1. Says Dante must go another way to leave a wasteful life behind

2. Says Dante should take him as guide

3. Says must pass through an eternal place and terrible peril

***C. Reaction of Dante***

1. Asks Virgil to lead him

2. Follows behind

III. **Reversal of fortune theme**

***A. At beginning of* The Inferno**

1. Alone

2. Lost

3. Dark

4. Woods

***B. Appearance of form***

1. No longer alone

2. Will serve as guide

3. Morning rays of sun

4. Now at base of mountain

5. Will allow Beatrice to take over later in the journey

IV. **Survival of least worthy**

***A. Dante threatened from beginning***

1. Lost

2. Three animals

a. Leopard

b. Lion

c. Wolf

***B. Dangerous journey***

1. Specters along way

a. Demons

b. Giants

c. Dis

d. Others

2. Environmental hazards

a. Fire

b. Ice

3. Weight of live person

a. Dangerous on rocky paths

b. Dangerous in boats

C. At last emerges and sees stars

***Topic #2***: Dante tells his own story. Do you think an objective narrator could have presented his story better than Dante, who was close to the story? Explain your answer.

**Possible Outline for Topic #2**

I. **Thesis Statement**: Dante tells his story more accurately and with more emotion and feeling than an objective narrator might. He is familiar with the time frame, the settings, the characters, and his own feelings and emotions.

II. **Time frame**

A. Has lived through the events

B. Can present time accurately because present

C. Can relate time frame to that of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection

III. **Settings**

A. Actually found self in woods

B. Actually tried to climb mountains

C. Understood caste system in Hell

D. Actually experienced each circle and area of Hell

E. Actually experienced the contrasts among emerging from Hell, dark woods at beginning, and

Hell itself

IV. **Characters**

A. Actually saw the leopard, the lion, and the wolf

B. Actually spent time with Virgil

C. Saw and talked with many characters in Hell

V. Feelings and emotions

A. Could describe some of them well since had experienced them

B. Remembered feelings of fear, anger, sadness, and loneliness

C. Portrayed feelings and emotions honestly—even the ugly ones

***Topic #3***: Many conflicts are evident in the Inferno. Conflicts can be person-against-person, person-against-self, person-against-society, and person-against-nature. Which of these conflicts do you think exist in The Inferno? Explain your answer. Be sure to include examples.

**Possible Outline for Topic #3**

**I. Thesis Statement**: In Dante’s Inferno there exist all four types of conflict: person-against-person, person-against-self, person-against-society, and person-against-nature. These conflicts are evident as Dante observes those within the Circles of Hell; Dante himself experiences these conflicts.

II. **Conflicts experienced by shades in Hell**

***A. Person-against-person***

1. Count Ugolino

a. Remembers Archbishop Roger

b. Remembers being imprisoned by Roger

c. Remembers children and self starving to death

2. Archbishop Roger

a. Condemned Ugolino in life

b. Eaten by Ugolino in Hell

***B. Person-against-society***

1. Simon of Troy

a. Lying Greek

b. Convinced Trojans to bring wooden horse inside gates

c. Conquered their people

2. Master Adam

a. Falsified coins

b. Made money off society

***C. Person-against-nature***

1. Cold affecting those in lower realms

a. Ugolino in cold area

b. Frozen eyes of Ugolino

2. Punishment by demons, centaurs who are twists of nature

a. Kept in boiling river

b. Pricked their skins with arrows

***D. Person-against-self***

1. Noise from those in Vestibule

2. Unable to make a decision

3. Rush aimlessly about and never make a commitment

**III. Conflicts experienced by Dante**

***A. Person-against-nature***

1. Lost in dark woods

2. Sees leopard, lion, and wolf

***B. Person-against-society***

1. Experienced political parties in life

2. Exiled because of beliefs

C. Person-against-self

1. Had to struggle to control emotions

2. Had to struggle to stay on right road

***D. Person-against-person***

1. Conflicts with Virgil

a. Dante’s showing sorrow for sinners

b. Dante’s watching conflict among sinners

2. Conflicts with sinners

a. Becomes angry when sinner tells him fate of Guelphs

b. Demands to know names of sinner

***Topic #4***: Writers use many devices to reveal the main character to their readers. They may show the character in action, reveal the thoughts of the character, show what the character says to others, show what others say to the character, and show the character in various environments. Which of these devices does Dante use to expose himself to his reader? Explain your answer.

**Possible Outline for Topic #4**

**I. Thesis Statement**: To reveal himself completely to his reader, Dante shows himself in action,

reveals his thoughts, shares what he says to others, shares what others say to him, and presents himself in various environments.

II. **Shows himself in action**

A. Stumbles back when confronted by the wolf

B. Cries at plight of sinners in the beginning of his journey

III. **Reveals his thoughts**

A. Concerned when guide is angry with him

B. Despair and overwhelming terror when confronted by the wolf

IV. **Shares what he says to others**

A. Asks Virgil to have pity on him

B. Tells Virgil there may be a kinsman of his in Circle VIII

C. At times speechless

V. **Shares what others say to him**

A. Advice given him by Virgil

1. Told by Virgil not to take thought of who is there

2. Told by Virgil not to stare at those shades in conflict

B. Told by shade of the blow to stagger the Whites

VI. **Presents himself in various environments**

A. Frightened in woods

B. Tries to climb mountain but cannot

C. Misled by towers which are giants’ legs

D. Confused as to whether going up or down during exit

E. At mercy of guide on journey

F. Angry at shade who tells him fate of Whites

G. Distressed at plight of shades