

Perfect Example



Canto 7

Dante and his guide pass a beastly man named Plutus as they are walking down^{to} the fourth layer of hell. Plutus frightens Dante, and Dante shows concern that Plutus will not allow them to pass to the next circle. Virgil, his guide, reassures Dante and tells him that Plutus can do nothing to stop them from continuing on. They enter the fourth layer, and Dante observes two groups of people on either side of each other. They are yelling across to each other and throwing boulders across to the other side. One side is shouting, "Why holdest thou so fast?" while the other side ^{shouts} "And why castest thou away?" Dante asks Virgil who these people are, and Virgil explains that in their previous life, they were people who hoarded their wealth and did not share it. This is the circle of Hell that represents avarice and greed. Virgil also mentions that these people were mostly Popes and cardinals, "o'er whom Av'rice dominion absolute maintained." Virgil continues on to say that they ^{got} what they deserved, and that the wealth they squandered in their previous lives cannot save them now. As they are continuing on to the Fifth level, Virgil describes Fortune as a ^{woman} human, and talks about how she deals out wealth and success to various nations and people. Although humans may curse and despise Fortune, she ignores them and continues to do her work. After this conversation, they go to the fifth level, where they encounter a lake. The lake is full of angry people who are thrashing about and fighting each other. Virgil explains that these people were angry in their previous lives, and their fury consumed them. At the end of the canto, Virgil and Dante are standing at the base of a tower.

Canto 15

In this layer of Hell, there are large expanses of burning sands. Virgil and Dante stay close to the pier and the water to avoid the sands. As they are walking through, Dante meets a man whom he recognizes. The man, Brunetto Latini, grabs his arm and when Dante recognizes him they have a conversation. Brunetto tells Dante that he cannot stop walking because he must continually move or the hellfires of the sand will burn him. Dante stays on the path and leans over to talk to Brunetto. Dante explains that Virgil is showing him the way to return home because Dante got lost in a valley and did not know where he was. When Dante questions Brunetto about who the other people walking in the sands are, Brunetto says that they were clerks in their ^{previous} lives, and that their sin was all the same. Brunetto also tells Dante that he must be careful, and forewarns him of perils that may lie ahead. Dante seems to respect Brunetto and heeds his advice. Brunetto has to leave and rejoin the others, and he runs off back to the sands.