

REVIEW DETAILS

Status:



Review Headline:

Impossible to put down.

Review:

'The Divine Comedy', written by Dante Alighieri in the early 14th century, is an epic poem divided into three books. The story follows Dante, accompanied by the ancient Roman poet Virgil, through Hell, which we see in book one (Inferno) and Purgatory in book two (Purgatorio), before finally reaching Heaven in the final book (Paradiso), in which he is led by his lover, Beatrice. While it did take some deciphering and many Google searches, 'The Divine Comedy' was brilliant to read for a multitude of reasons.

The voicing of Dante's own political views and values can be seen very clearly, especially within his unique vision of what hell would look like. Within the first book primarily, many political and historical figures are encountered, some of which tie directly into the author's life. Perhaps most notably, the mention of Pope Boniface VIII, when Dante is mistaken for the religious leader by one of the damned, presuming that he had come before his time and implying that the Pope would too end up in Hell (Pope Boniface had, in reality exiled Alighieri, but had not yet died when 'The Divine Comedy' was written). In addition to this, Dante bases his vision of hell on his personal moral weighting of a variety of grave sins for the time period. I believe that this almost personal side of the epic was highly intriguing and added to the appeal of Inferno especially.

The description seen within these books was also lovely. Although perhaps lovely isn't the ideal word to convey the level of description seen within the first book. Inferno is extremely grim, but is painfully effective at painting an exact picture within the reader's mind, even without the illustrations (which are still a welcome addition). The other two books were described just as vividly, however for the most part the objects of this effective imagery were not as macabre.

This literary masterpiece was overall, wonderful to read. However, I will not deny, there were many obscure historical figures mentioned I was not able to recognise without quickly looking them up. In addition to this, the quality did, admittedly decline a bit after the first volume, reaching a bit of a dull end in Paradiso. But honestly, an increase in quality after Inferno would be an impossible request. Finally, a word of warning: if the brilliant decision to read this epic poem is made, the reader may lose all track of time and find themselves deciding that sleep is not really essential, after all.

Reviewed:

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