

The Inferno – Group Work – use this work and your results in your presentations

1. Look at the opening of “The Inferno.” Why is everything so dramatic (the wood – so drear, so rank; so arduous a wilderness)? What does this have to do with Dante’s (the character in the story, not the author’s) state of mind – be specific.
- 1b. Line 14 – why a maze? Allegorically speaking how does this fit in with his situation? Be specific.



1c. Explain in metaphorical terms – the best way that you can based on the specifics of the text – the meaning of the animals that block Dante’s egress from the tangled woods. Be specific – why a “spotted leopard” with a gaudy coat? How can “things” (like White Escalades) get in the way of our life’s journey – be insightful and specific for each of the animals he faces down. Remember this in a few months when we read about a character who sees a white peacock alight on his car (a Buick).

2. What is Dante’s attitude towards Paolo and Francesca? First, as the character in the Inferno, how does the character travelling with Virgil view them? What are his feelings towards them – his sympathies? Be specific and include 2 quotes to support your views. Next as an author, how does Dante view them? What is the

situation or punishment that he allows them to occupy? Include at least one quote in explaining your answer. Be sure to consider Dante’s choice to make the sin of love (lust) outside of marriage the highest (least punishing) plane of hell. The lowest plane of hell (accompanied by the worst punishment) is reserved for those who betray their friends or their leaders (Dante encounters Judas there). Given that information – in which respective planes might Monica Lewinsky (had an affair with President Clinton) & Linda Tripp (Lewinsky’s best friend who reported the affair behind her friend’s (who never spoke to her again) back) be given by Dante?



3. **(18 minutes – do a close viewing of these pictures)** Closely examine the enclosed pictures, biography, and poem of *Paolo & Francesca*. Also include Plath’s poem from your bookmark Explain how each picture, sculpture, or text (including the biography) captures a piece of their story, and which picture your group feels does it best. Which are happy, sad, or foretell of sadness to come? Write a brief explanation of how different styles and types of pictures as well as different medium help explicate other arts (such as literature). How do they limit our view of that same literature (ah ha! – a bit tougher). Toughest of all: How are these various pictures takes on the two lovers like the countless translations that exist of Dante’s work (or any translation of any great piece of literature). Relate what you’ve answered so far in this question, specifically to answering this question.

4. Quickly go over the attached sheet on the life of Dante and Beatrice (you were given it for today’s reading). After most of your group finishes – answer the following. Why do you believe that Dante has such sympathy for thwarted (though sinful) lovers? See your answer to number 1. How is there punishment (being close, yet never able to touch) fitting given what we know about Dante and Beatrice? Don’t be afraid to go beyond the obvious. Use at least two quotes from Dante and two quotes from your handouts in answering this question.

5. Relate any (and as many) of the following characters as you can to Dante (as portrayed in your excerpt) and/or ideas or situations from that excerpt: The boy who was bullied (Jimmy Meuller), Paul Baumer, the Jewish Giant, Candide (any or anything else we’ve covered that you think is significant).



- 5b. How does *Everything is Illuminated* specifically follow the trajectory of Dante, Virgil, and his journey – be as specific as you can – both with Dante and with the film.