



Publius Vergilius Maro

Virgil was a great Latin poet who wrote many of the greatest Latin poems. His most famous poems were Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid. Aeneid, which is considered the national epic of ancient Rome, depicts a story similar to that of Homer's Iliad and the Odyssey.

In Dante's *Inferno*, Virgil is Dante's guide through hell. Throughout their journey, Virgil keeps Dante safe and shows him everything in hell. Virgil explains the different parts of hell to Dante, and the reader

"Here pity only lives when it is dead; for who can be more impious than he who links God's judgment to passivity?"

Pietro Della Vigna

Pietro was an advisor to Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. When there was an attempted poisoning of Frederick II, Pietro was imprisoned for lèse majesté (treason). He was never able to defend himself to the emperor because the guards ripped out his eyes and killed himself to end his misery. Dante believes that Pietro is innocent by his choice to put him in the suicide circle rather than a betrayal circle.



Pietro was never able to explain to Frederick that he was innocent of his crimes, so he asks Dante to tell his story back on Earth.

*"I, by the roots of this unwonted wood,
Do swear to you that never broke I faith
Unto my Lord, who was so worthy of honor"*

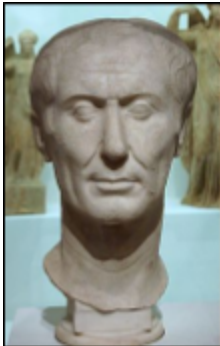
Pope Nicholas III

Pope Nicholas III was one of a long line of corrupt popes. Nicholas abused his power by giving things to family and other people he liked. He gave away or sold things like land and political offices. Dante puts all the corrupt popes in a level of hell for those that abuse power for personal gain.



Dante cleverly uses this Canto to express his disdain towards the current Pope, Boniface VIII. Nicholas expects Boniface to be the next person to come down into that level, so Nicholas mistakes Dante for Boniface.

*"Dost thou stand there already,
Dost thou stand there already Boniface?"*



Julius Caesar

Caesar was regarded as one of the greatest Roman leaders that ever ruled. Caesar ruled Rome with two other leaders, and eventually some people wanted to overthrow Caesar by staging an attack on him. Caesar saw this coming and led his army to defeat those trying to kill him, giving him absolute rule. In 44 BC, Roman senators including Brutus and Cassius assassinated Caesar at the Roman Senate.



Caesar was referenced by Dante in *Inferno*, comparing the magnitude of the betrayal of Caesar to that of Christ. Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* became a popular, tragic depiction of the assassination of Julius Caesar.

*"Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once." (Shakespeare,
Julius Caesar)*

Nessus

Nessus was a ferryman centaur in Greek mythology. One day he had to carry Heracles's wife Deianeira across a river, and Nessus tried to court her when they crossed the river. Heracles killed Nessus, but Nessus tricked Deianeira into thinking that his blood would insure Heracles's faith. She put some of his blood on a shirt, which killed Heracles when he wore it.



In Dante's *Inferno*, Chiron tells Nessus to ferry Dante and Virgil across the river of blood. Nessus tells the two about all the murderers flowing down the river.

*"This one is Nessus,
Who perished for the lovely Dejanira,
And for himself, himself did vengeance take."*



Judas Iscariot

Judas Iscariot was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. Judas was stubborn to accept Jesus's teachings, and he realized that Judas was a devil. Judas identified Jesus to Pontius Pilate by kissing him, which allowed Pilate's soldiers to identify and arrest him. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 silver coins and is known as the original betrayal.

In Dante's *Inferno*, Dante and Virgil see Satan chewing on the three greatest betrayers. Virgil points out that the one whose head is being chewed on is Judas.

*"That soul up there which has the greatest pain,"
The Master said, "is Judas Iscariot;
With head inside, he plies his legs without."*



Troilus and Cressida

Troilus and Cressida were tragic lovers in Troy during the Trojan war. Troilus, a prince, falls in love with Cressida. Shortly after Troilus and Cressida fall in love, Cressida is exchanged for a prisoner of war. Troilus visits Cressida, only to see that she has fallen in love with another man. Troilus attempts to kill the other man and win back Cressida, but he fails in his attempt.

In Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, two young lovers compare themselves to Troilus and Cressida, showing their young, foolish relationship.

*"Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents
Where Cressid lay that night."* (Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice)

Janus

Janus is a Roman God which looks both into the future and the past. Janus was often used to represent the change in things over time. Janus could represent the beginning and end of things, like war and peace, and could also represent change in age. The Romans built a temple to Janus, which would be open in times of war, but closed when not at war. Romans believed that Janus controlled the beginning of things such as days, months, and years.



In Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, Shakespeare uses an allusion to Janus to characterize Iago as two-faced, or a liar. Although Iago is not lying, he answers a question from Othello with:

"By Janus, I think no."
(Shakespeare, Othello, the Moor of Venice)



Hyperion

Hyperion was one of the 12 titan children of Gaia and Uranus. Hyperion was the titan of the east and father of all the lights of heaven. His children were Helios (the sun), Selene (the moon), and Eos (dawn).

In Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, Hamlet has a Soliloquy in which he makes comparisons between his father and his uncle. He compares his father to the great Titan, Hyperion, while he compares his uncle to a Satyr. Satyrs are half human and half goat creatures which are ugly, evil, and dangerous while also being very shy and cowardly.

*"So excellent a king, that was, to this
Hyperion to a satyr;"*