

English 10
Purgatorio Journals
Idea Generation

Brainstorm here for your *Purgatorio* journals. Some students think they are being asked to do an examination of conscience and talk about their different tendencies toward sin. While it seems appropriate to think that way a little, the journals aren't meant to focus on guilt, necessarily. Feel free to think through the sins and to write about one or more that speaks to you, but also consider other ways into the assignment.

1. List three characters you find relatable or even just interesting and explain why. Consider main characters, figures mentioned in the goads and checks, and penitents met along the way. Go back and anchor what you remember in the text, and then use what you read in the text as a springboard for more ideas. Don't forget to use Esolen's notes in the back of the book.

a.

b.

c.

2. List three themes that seem prominent in the text. Once you have a theme, consider what instances in the text you associate with it and use those instances to anchor your idea. Ideas that spring to mind: friendship, mentorship, poetry, education, alignment and proportion, self-restraint, fate and free will, reason and faith, the individual and community, appearances and reality, spiritual warfare, the situation of the quest...

Theme 1: _____

Instances:

Meaning to you:

Theme 2: _____

Instances:

Meaning to you:

Theme 3: _____

Instances:

Meaning to you:

3. Setting. Are there settings in the text (mountain, river) or weather conditions (fog, fire, earthquake) that you find to be particularly relatable or interesting? Consider why spiritual retreats often bring together the solitary and the communal and take place in remote areas.

Brainstorm here:

4. Feel free to bring in artwork, as I did at the beginning of our unit, or even to draw a journal entry (do this no more than once, as we are primarily verbal here in English class) and write a paragraph about what you have done, inspired by the text. If you find and use visual art, discuss the connection and what you think the piece brings to the discussion.

5. Focus on an important portion of the text you had a strong reaction to, on your first read. N.B.: Do not take an evaluative approach to Dante. Critiquing/evaluating great works of literature is not appropriate for tenth graders. BUT you may discuss your own reaction to a portion of the text, being careful that you understand it properly.

6. Discuss your proposed costume for the Dante Costume Party. Why are you considering it? What does it bring? Why is it right for you? Consider contrapasso, features of setting, goads, checks, characters... (If you are stuck, I can assign you something.)

7. Remember that a journal entry should relate to your personal experience or ideas, but remember that your experience also includes what you have read and watched. Possibly there's a tv show you watch that suggests something from Dante or even alludes to *The Divine Comedy*. What experiences seem Dante-esque to you?

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Checklist

I. Completion of the task

- _____ five short journals (150-200 words)
- _____ five longer journals (400+ words)

II. Scholarly approach

- _____ includes short, frequent quotations from text (passage + 1 for short; passage +3 for long)
- _____ written in a lucid, reasonable way

III. Depth of insight

- _____ brings ideas together in a coherent way
- _____ contains reflections that are in line with the knowable purpose of *Purgatorio*
- _____ shows an understanding of text
- _____ shows nuance, sophistication, and a depth of understanding