# Extended essay cover

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Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: **English group 1**
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Title of the extended essay: **Journeys in The Inferno and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz**

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I confirm that this work is my own work and is the final version. I have acknowledged each use of the words or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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Journeys in The Inferno and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

Candidate Number

Literature
Abstract

I wrote my paper to describe how an epic poem about Hell and a children’s story can have similar ideas. In my paper, I compared *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by Frank L. Baum and *The Inferno* by Dante Alighieri. They are very different works because they were written in very different time periods and also because one is a classic children’s novel with a happy ending, and the other is about Hell. Although they are very different, they are both allegories and they have many of the same ideas and elements, such as good and evil. The main idea that I am comparing, though, is the idea that both of the main characters in the stories have to take journeys to get to their “happy endings.” Dorothy goes to Emerald City to get back to Kansas and Dante takes a tour through Hell to realize sin and get into Paradise. Throughout these journeys, the main characters experience dangerous obstacles, but they both learn about themselves and others, and in doing so, realize their own place of belonging.
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The Inferno by Dante Alighieri is an epic poem that begins with Dante’s finding himself lost in a dark, desolated forest on Good Friday in the year 1300. Dante finds the spirit of Virgil who guides him through Hell so he can gain the recognition of sin and get into Paradise. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz by L. Frank Baum is a classic children’s novel that begins with a girl named Dorothy and her dog Toto who live with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry on a farm in Kansas. Dorothy’s house is carried by a cyclone to a strange and beautiful place, the land of the Munchkins, where she is told by “the good” Witch of the North to go to Emerald City and ask the Wizard of Oz to help her find her way back to Kansas. How could an epic poem describing Hell and a children’s novel be alike in any way? Dante’s The Inferno and Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz are both allegories where the main character takes a journey of self-realization to get to a place that he/she most desires.

Dante’s The Inferno begins with Dante finding himself "within a forest dark, for the straightforward path had been lost" (Dante 3). Dante symbolizes “everyman” and the dark forest symbolizes the sins of mankind. Dante describes the forest as "savage, rough, and stern, which in the very thought renews the fear. So bitter is it, death is little more; But of the good to treat, which there I found" (Dante 3). Dante, the poet, describes the forest as if he was actually there, feeling the fear again as he recollects his experience, but even though the dark forest is a horrible place, the good that evolves from the journey makes it worth the suffering. Dante finds the shade of Virgil who tells him that he must descend into Hell and then go through Purgatory before he can reach Paradise. Virgil will be his guide through Hell, so Dante can gain the recognition of sin. Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz begins with Dorothy living in Kansas where everything is gray
and sad. When the cyclone picks up Dorothy's house, she falls asleep and wakes up finding herself "in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty" (Baum 22). Baum uses imagery to describe the sights Dorothy sees. In the land of the Munchkins:

"there were lovely patches of green sward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered in the trees and bushes. A little way off was a small brook, rushing and sparkling along between green banks, and murmuring in a voice very grateful to a little girl who had lived so long on the dry, gray prairies" (Baum 22).

Dorothy is told by the Munchkins that the Wicked Witch of the East is killed when Dorothy's house lands on her. She is frightened that she killed the Witch, but Dorothy then meets the good Witch of the North who assures her that it is better that way because the Munchkins are no longer in bondage. The good Witch of the North gives Dorothy the Wicked Witch's silver shoes and tells her the only way to get back to Kansas is to go to Emerald City to see the Wizard of Oz. She tells her she must walk along the yellow brick road where "it is a long journey, through a country that is sometimes pleasant and sometimes dark and terrible... but I will give you my kiss, and no one will dare injure a person who has been kissed by the Witch of the North" (Baum 31). Both Dante the Pilgrim and Dorothy experience a total change of atmosphere around them. Dante is living on earth until he finds himself in a dark forest, which is sin, and then he descends into Hell to get to Purgatory. Dorothy lives on a gray prairie in Kansas and finds herself in a strange, beautiful, and colorful place. Dante and Dorothy are also both guided and protected along their journey. The good Witch of the North tells Dorothy how to get to
Emerald City and protects her with her kiss. Virgil guides Dante through Hell and protects him from evil when they are in Hell. Dante and Dorothy both have to take a journey to get to the place where they will be happier. Dante takes a tour through Hell to get to Paradise and Dorothy goes on a trip to Emerald City to get back home to Kansas.

In *The Inferno*, Dante the Pilgrim and Virgil go through the nine circles of Hell and in each circle they find different people who are in Hell as a result of having committed sins. As the circles descend further into Hell, the punishments get more severe for the more severe sins. When Dante and Virgil get to the Gate of Hell, the sign reads:

"Through me the way is to the city dolent; through me the way is to eternal dole; through me the way among the people lost. Justice incited my sublime Creator; created me divine Omnipotence, the highest wisdom and the primal Love. Before me there were no created things, only etern, and I eternal last. All hope abandon, ye who enter in!" (Dante 14).

After Dante reads this, he's frightened by the harshness of the words and tells Virgil of his fear, but Virgil tells him that he must get rid of all fear and suspicion. When they enter, Dante weeps at the sounds of screaming and wailing souls, which shows that he has a lot to learn because one cannot feel compassion for souls that have sinned. As their journey continues, Dante the Pilgrim recognizes many people and he meets and talks to some.

Dante the Poet mentions many names throughout *The Inferno* and alludes to not only literature, but history, also. He mentions characters in many epic poems such as in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and Lucan's *Pharsalia*. He also mentions historical figures such as the poets themselves, people involved in government in Florence, where Dante lived, and many Florentines that Dante knew. In
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Dorothy begins her journey along the yellow brick road and after walking for awhile, finds a house with midgets dancing in front of it. They are pleased to see her and ask her to stay. The munchkin who owns the house is named Boq. He lets her stay the night to rest. When he shows her to her room, Dorothy asks him how far it is to Emerald City and he replies "I do not know... I have never been there. It is better for people to keep away from Oz, unless they have business with him. But it is a long way to the Emerald City, and it will take you many days. The country here is rich and pleasant, but you must pass through rough and dangerous places before you reach the end of your journey" (Baum 41-42). Dorothy is worried after she hears this, but the only hope of getting home is to go to see the Wizard of Oz, so she continues her journey. As she goes through the forest, she meets the scarecrow who decides to go with her so the Wizard of Oz can give him a brain. They then meet the Tin Woodman who joins them on their journey, so he can receive a heart from the Wizard. They later run into the Lion, who also comes along to get courage from the Wizard. When they finally get to the gates at Emerald City, there is a man who is the "Guardian of the Gates" (Baum 139) who tells them they can see the Wizard, but "He is powerful and terrible, and if you come on an idle or foolish errand to bother wise reflections of the Great Wizard, he might be angry and destroy you all in an instant" (Baum 138). Both Dante the Pilgrim and Dorothy are worried about their journeys ahead of them, yet continue to strive for what they want. They both also meet people along their journeys that help them, or tell them valuable information.

Dante the Pilgrim and Virgil in The Inferno also have to cross many rivers and pass obstacles to get to the next circles. When they have to get from Vestibule, which is
for the people who are indifferent or lukewarm Christians, to the first circle of Hell, they have to cross the Acheron. The ferryman Charon yells as he's coming towards them "I come to lead you to the other shore, to the eternal shades in heat and frost. And thou, that yonder standest, living soul, withdraw thee from these people, who are dead!" (Dante 16).

Virgil tells Charon that it is God's will for Dante to cross the river and enter into Hell. Virgil gets Dante through the obstacles that he faces in Hell. When they have gone through the first five circles, they have to cross the river Styx to get to the sixth circle, where there are the gates to the City of Dis, which is where the more severe sins are punished and Lucifer lives in the center. The gate is guarded by the angels who rebelled against God; "Out of the Heavens rained down, who angrily were saying, 'Who is this that without death goes through the kingdom of the people dead?'" (Dante 44). The angels refuse to let them into the gates, but Virgil says they will go through another gate because Dante is meant to go through Hell. They get in and continue with their journey, when Virgil all of a sudden starts "crying out: 'Beware! Beware! Drew me unto himself from where I stood'" (Dante 105). The angels are coming towards them and Virgil puts Dante behind him to protect him, almost as if he is Dante's father or protector. They try to make an agreement with them and don't succeed, but finally they get away. The obstacles that Dante and Virgil face are similar to those in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz when the four comrades have to get through forests, cross rivers, go through strange lands, and encounter bizarre animals along their journey. When they cross a river or get through a forest, it is usually a change in scenery or mood. As they are walking, they come across a river, where they have the lion get them to the other side by riding on his back. After they cross the river, "they found the forest very thick on this side, and it looked dark and
gloomy" (Baum 93). They're walking through the forest until they come across animals called Kalidahs that almost stop them from crossing the next river, but they cross the river by a tree and chop it after they cross so the Kalidahs fall in the river. On the "other side of the water they could see the road of yellow brick running through a beautiful country, with green meadows dotted with bright flowers and al the road bordered with trees hanging full of delicious fruits" (Baum 98). When they finally get to see the Wizard of Oz, he tells them they need to kill the Wicked Witch of the West before they can receive their wishes. So they head West and start toward her country. The Wicked Witch has a powerful eye that can see everywhere and can see them coming. Dorothy and her friends "were a long distance off, but the Wicked Witch was angry to find them in her country; so she blew upon a silver whistle that hung around her neck. At once there came running to her from all directions a pack of great wolves. They had long legs and fierce eyes and sharp teeth. 'Go to those people,' said the Witch, 'and tear them to pieces'" (Baum 167). The comrades defeat the wolves, so the Witch sends a large flock of crows, which are also defeated, so she sends a large swarm of bees, which are defeated, also. The Witch is so angry that she decides to send the Winged Monkeys, which destroy the Scarecrow, throw the Tin Woodman into sharp rocks, and tie up the lion, but when the leader of the Winged Monkeys sees that Dorothy has the kiss of the Good Witch on her forehead, he tells the other Winged Monkeys, "We dare not harm this little girl... for she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil. All we can do is to carry her to the castle of the Wicked Witch and leave her there" (Baum 174-177). As Dante the Pilgrim and Virgil go deeper into Hell, the punishments get worse, which causes the mood to be more depressing as they go through each circle. As Dorothy and her friends
continue along their journey, the mood also changes after they cross a river or go into or out of a forest. Dante is also protected by Virgil as they run into the angels and Dorothy is protected by the kiss of the Good Witch when the Winged Monkeys are sent to destroy Dorothy and her friends.

A major theme in the two works is good versus evil. The ideas of good and evil are mostly applied to characters in The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. There is “the good” Witch of the North and “the wicked” Witch of the East who are character foils. The wicked Witch of the East held the Munchkins in bondage and the good Witch of the North tried to help liberate them. The theme is also applied to the ideas of dark and light in the story. There is always trouble when the comrades enter a dark forest, but when they reach Emerald City, the city is very bright. The theme is displayed in in the beginning of The Inferno when Dante is in a dark forest, which resembles human sin, and he sees a mountain that is very bright, which is Paradise. Hell is evil and Paradise is good, but it is debatable whether a character is good or evil. For instance, Dante is not evil, but he is filled with human sin. Also, the shade of Virgil is considered good because he helps save Dante and gives him a tour through Hell, but Virgil himself is in Hell because he is a pagan.

The Inferno is the first part of The Divine Comedy, which was written by Dante around 1308 when he was traveling in Italy (Bondanella). The Inferno provides a very vivid idea of how Dante pictures Hell and is considered to be one of the greatest works of all time. The poem is written in Italian with a terza rima rhyme scheme, which is lost when translated in English (Bondanella XXXIII). The epic poem is an allegory of worldliness. It emphasizes the importance of the recognition of sin, so man can repent
and get into Heaven. Dante writes the poem making it seem as if it is a journey that he actually took and not just what he imagines. He writes that he finds himself in the forest of human sin and finds Virgil to show him the way through Hell. At the end of the poem, Dante and Virgil finally get out of Hell and Dante can see the stars. Dante has been in Hell throughout his journey and has been unable to see the sky, therefore, it is a happy ending when he can look up at the stars again. Dante the Poet makes it a happy ending because that is what he considers to be a comedy (Bondanella 286). The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, written by L. Frank Baum and illustrated by W.W. Denslow, who both decided to work together on the book, is considered the first true American fairy tale (Glassman 309). Fairytale stories written before Baum were based on European ideas, while Baum used American ideas and elements like a scarecrow, a tin woodman, and a wizard who's really an ordinary man (Glassman 309). Baum wrote the novel for children and has his characters set examples for the reader and display virtues. He displays the virtue of modesty by Dorothy thinking that she is only a little girl, when she is much more than that and he gives the characters unrealized virtues (Glassman 313). He also shows the virtues of wisdom and love through the four comrades and he also shows the virtue of good personal hygiene because he often has Dorothy washing herself throughout the story (Glassman 313). In the classic novel, Dorothy finds herself lost after a cyclone takes her house to a strange land. Dorothy is told the only way to get back to Kansas is to see the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy travels all the way to see the Wizard because even though she is in a beautiful land, she just wants to go back home. The novel is an allegory of the importance of where one belongs and feels comfortable. Baum definitely stresses the idea that "there's no place like home" and that everyone has a place where he or she feels
belonging (Glassman 314). At the end of the novel, Dorothy finally gets back home with the help of the good Witch of the South, and even though she meets her friends along her journey, she is happy to be home.

The Inferno by Dante Alighieri is an epic poem, which illustrates Dante's idea of Hell and shows the importance of man realizing his sin and repenting. Dante finds himself lost in human sin and is guided by Virgil through Hell to recognize his sinful nature and get into Paradise. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz is a children's fairytale where Dorothy is blown by a cyclone to a far away land and takes a journey to see the Wizard of Oz to get back to Kansas. Dorothy realizes that even though Kansas is a dull place to live, she wouldn't rather be anywhere but home. Although The Inferno and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz were written in very different time periods and have very different ideas, they also have many similar ideas. Both works are allegories and involve the main character taking a journey to be happier. During the journey, both characters learn about themselves and others as well. They also both experience different atmospheres throughout their journeys and are protected by their guides as they come across problems. Dante's The Inferno and Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz are both allegories where the main characters take a journey to find themselves and to get to where they most desire to be.
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