Daily lessons:

1. Distribute copies of the first sentence from *The Inferno* along with the associated focus. Print each focus on a different color. In other words, print copies of the paper about in medias res on blue, and copies of the paper about the word lost in green, etc. As the students come in at the beginning of class, give each of them a paper and have them jot down their responses silently on the paper. Give them about 5 minutes or so. Then have them find someone with the same color and exchange papers. Have them read one another’s responses and then discuss for a couple of minutes. Then have each pair get with a pair of students with a different color paper to read and discuss. Then have a whole class discussion.

Once the discussion has concluded, explain that we will focus on three aspects of Dante’s work: its identity as an allegory, its identity as an epic poem, and its identity as a hero journey. There is a great deal of overlap in these three ways of looking at the work, but the focus it a bit different. A study of allegory looks at the didactic and cautionary aspects of the work. A study of epic poetry elucidates the poet’s idea of national identity and nostalgia for a Golden Age (or in Christian terms, the time before The Fall.) A study of hero journey is interested in the universality or the work as it relates to human nature in general.

First we will begin with a study of allegory, so we will move away from Dante for a day or so and look at a short allegory by J.R.R. Tolkien. Distribute copies of “Leaf by Niggle” or send the students this link: <https://heroicjourneys.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/niggle.pdf>.

Students should read it by the next class period.

1. “Leaf by Niggle” Day 1

Divide the class into groups. One group will simply list the steps in the plot of the story. The other groups will be given specific aspects of the story to focus on (the characters, the objects, the places.) Then each group will present to the class. [See “Leaf by Niggle” charts.]

1. “Leaf by Niggle” Day 2

Divide the class into groups (different groups than the previous day). Each group will have to write a 2 sentence thesis about “Leaf by Niggle.” The first sentence will be:

*In “Leaf by Niggle,” the author J.R.R. Tolkien is addressing the concept of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

The second sentence will be:

*This story illustrates that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

or

*Niggle’s experience demonstrates that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

Once each group has written their theses, they will post them around the room for a whole class discussion.

1. What do you know about the Christian Hell? How much of that is attributable to Dante? [Do modified KWL chart.] The L column will be left blank until the end of this unit when we will revisit it.

Use a modified Affinity Mapping Protocol to have the students lists types of sins, group them, label them, and rank them. We will keep this displayed in the classroom and refer back to it as we move through Dante’s levels of Hell.

1. Background lecture about Dante, his influences, the political situation in Florence, the organization of *The Inferno*. Assign circles for presentations.
2. Refresh the students’ knowledge of the Hero’s Journey. Distribute a blank schematic and have them try to complete it from memory with a partner.
3. Review the elements of epic poetry and discuss how we see those elements in Dante’s *The Inferno.*
4. When a student presents, the other students use the note-taking form for taking notes. The presenter tells the class which canto (s)he is presenting and which circle of Hell and subcircle (for example, which pouch for circle 8). The student does not tell the class anything else at first, such as what sin is being addressed.

The presenter displays the initial image or quote, or plays the initial audio or video clip. Then the class is given a few minutes to write reactions to the initial item. After 3-4 minutes of writing, the presenter allows the class a few minutes to discuss their reactions. Then (s)he introduces the sin being addressed and presents the rest of his/her presentation.

Students take notes and then turn in their note-taking sheets to the teacher. When the teacher provides a grade to the presenter, (s)he includes a summary of the feedback that the students provided.

Then next day, students are given back their note-taking sheets and use them for the quiz over the previous day’s material.

1. Visual representation of Dante’s Hell. Gallery walk and celebration(!): Students will create their own visual representation of Dante’s Hell. This can be a physical model or diorama, chart or artistic image, or computer-generated model. We will set up these representations and have a gallery walk with opportunities for students and teachers to vote for their favorite (come up with categories.) The next day we will unveil the winners and have a celebration during lunch.
2. Provide examples of contemporary quotes/misquotes of Dante. Ask students to come up with their own humorous quotes.
3. As a review at the end of the semester, students will place literary characters into levels of Dante’s Hell.