# Dante's *Inferno*: Upper Hell

With the exception of the Vestibule and Limbo, upper hell is reserved for sins of incontinence (sins that originate from unbalanced passions, emotions, and desires). There are few demons here, though Minos does assign sinners to their place in hell when they come to the Vestibule. Most of these sins harmed nobody other than the sinner himself or herself.

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| **REGION** | **SINNERS** | **PUNISHMENT** |
| **Vestibule: (Waiting area)** | **Neutrals**, indecisive angels who would not fight for God or Lucifer. | Stung by insects, endlessly chase banners |
| **Circle I: Limbo** | **Virtuous Pagans**, **Unbaptized Infants** | Boredom, not knowing God. |
| **Circle II** | **The Lustful** | Blown forever by storm winds |
| **Circle III** | **The Gluttons** | Discomfort, lying in filth and muck like pigs, senses assaulted |
| **Circle IV** | **The Greedy and the Spendthrifts** | Pushing rocks, useless labor that frustrates others near them for no good end |
| **Circle V** | **The Angry and the Sullen** | The angry thrash about in frustration and fight each other; the sullen sulk under water sighing, blowing bubbles, and refusing all action. |

# Lower Hell: The City of Dis

Lower Hell is the City of *Dis*. In Dante's scheme, *Dis* is mostly reserved for intellectual sins rather than mere sins of passion. Demons congregate here. The suburbs include heretics, violent criminals, and various frauds.

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| **REGION** | **SINNERS** | **PUNISHMENT** |
| **Circle VI** | **Heretics** | Trapped in burning tombs |
| **Circle VII**: Divided into three rings. | **The Violent** | (Three types of punishment) |
| ***Ring 1*:** Violent against acquaintances and strangers. | | Killers submerged in blood--the more people they have killed, the deeper the blood. |
| ***Ring 2*:** Violent against self (suicides) | | The souls trapped in inanimate objects like trees, and their old discarded bodies left impaled nearby. |
| ***Ring 3*:** Violent against nature (blasphemers, sodomites, usurers) | | Left naked on burning sand with fire  raining down from unnatural clouds |
| **Circle VIII**: Divided into ten ditches | **Fraud against those who share no special trust** | **(Ten types of punishment)** |
| **Ditch 1** | **Pimps and seductresses** | Whipped by devils |
| **Ditch 2** | **Flatterers** | Covered with excrement |
| **Ditch 3** | **Simonists** (Church officials who engage in bribery or buy church offices) | Flipped upside down in holes and their feet set on fire. |
| **Ditch 4** | **Barraters** (Government officials, lawyers, and judges who take bribes) | Covered in boiling pitch, poked with pitchforks by demons. |
| **Ditch 5** | **Soothsayers** (False prophets, astrologers, and predictors of the future) | Heads twisted around backward so they can only see what's behind them, not what's in front of them. |
| **Ditch 6** | **Hypocrites** | Forced to wear lead coverings |
| **Ditch 7** | **Thieves and Robbers** | In snake pit, half of them transformed into snakes. Can only regain human form by stealing it from the other half with a snakebite. |
| **Ditch 8** | **Evil counselors** | True nature concealed in flames |
| **Ditch 9** | **Sowers of Discord**, Troublemakers | Wounds, mutilations |
| **Ditch 10** | **Falsifiers** (alchemists, quacks, impersonators, counterfeiters, liars) | Afflicted with same ailments resulting from their treatments (leprosy, madness, swollen body parts, fevers) |

# Circle Nine: The Center of Hell

Circle Nine is divided into four areas named after famous traitors who betrayed their family, their country, their dependents, or their proper lords and benefactors. Rather than being hot, this area is freezing cold. Many of the demons here are giant-sized beings, and Satan's batwings endlessly stir up chilling winds to renew the chill.

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| **REGION** | **SINNERS** | **PUNISHMENT** |
| **Caïna** (named after Cain) | Murderers of family-members | Frozen in ice up to the neck with heads bent forward. |
| **Antenora** | Traitors to political party or to country | Frozen in ice up to the neck. |
| **Ptolomea** | Murderers of guests and dependents | Frozen in ice up to the neck with heads bent backward. |
| **Guidecca** | Traitors to lords and benefactors. | Completely submerged in ice. |
| **Center of Earth** | Satan, Judas, Brutus, and Cassius | Satan is stuck up to the waist in the center of the universe he sought to control. He chews on Judas, Brutus, and Cassius with his three mouths, and with three wings sends forth freezing blasts of impotence, ignorance, and hatred. |

**Questions**:

1. Why do you suppose Dante puts usury (charging interest) in the category of "crimes that violate nature"?
2. Why do you suppose the subdivisions for intellectual sins are so much more complex than the sins in upper hell?
3. Why make the ninth circle cold when the earlier violent rings were hot?
4. Why do you suppose Dante depicts Satan with three heads?
5. How does the number three play a pertinent part in the structure of Dante's poem and his depiction of hell?