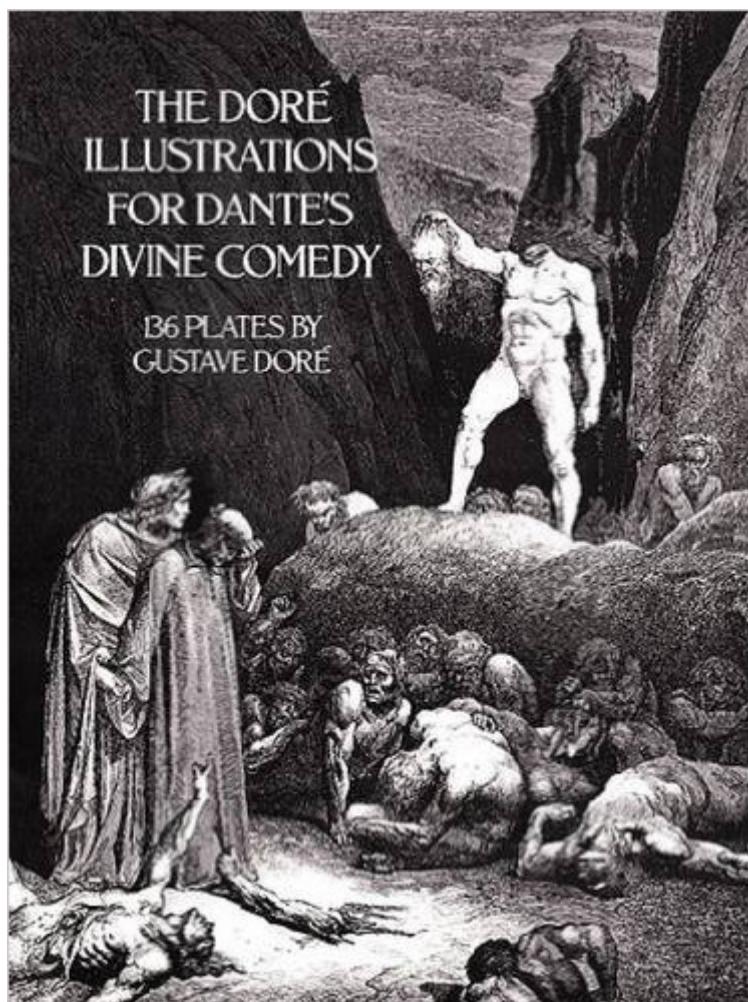


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The Dore Illustrations For Dante's Divine Comedy (136 Plates By Gustave Dore)



Synopsis

Gustave Doré (1832–83) was perhaps the most successful illustrator of the nineteenth century. His Doré Bible was a treasured possession in countless homes, and his best-received works continued to appear through the years in edition after edition. His illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy constitute one of his most highly regarded efforts and were Doré's personal favorites. The present volume reproduces with excellent clarity all 135 plates that Doré produced for The Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise. From the depths of hell onto the mountain of purgatory and up to the empyrean realms of paradise, Doré's illustrations depict the passion and grandeur of Dante's masterpiece in such famous scenes as the embarkation of the souls for hell, Paolo and Francesca (four plates), the forest of suicides, Thaïs the harlot, Bertram de Born holding his severed head aloft, Ugolino (four plates), the emergence of Dante and Virgil from hell, the ascent up the mountain, the flight of the eagle, Arachne, the lustful sinners being purged in the seventh circle, the appearance of Beatrice, the planet Mercury, and the first splendors of paradise, Christ on the cross, the stairway of Saturn, the final vision of the Queen of Heaven, and many more. Each plate is accompanied by appropriate lines from the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow translation of Dante's work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As I write this, I am a member of a book group that is working through the three parts of Dante's COMEDY. I am also a fan of Gustave Dore's illustrations, so it was a given that I would get a copy of this to accompany my trip through hell, purgatory, and the heavens with Dante. After having

worked through these illustrations, looking at each one as I read the relevant passage in Dante, I simultaneously feel that any enthusiastic reader of Dante should own this book, while at the same time harboring some mild disappointment. Most of the illustrations are marvelously done. Dore magnificently captures the inner spaciousness and abandonedness of hell. The landscapes, the pits, the caverns, the abysses are all marvelously drawn and conceived. I'm not sure there has ever been a better illustrator than Dore, and in this volume we have Dore at his best. Or, rather, near his best. In fact, I found these illustrations disappointing in two regards. First, virtually all of his human figures look like parodies of classical nude studies. One of the joys of illustrations by Dore to accompany DON QUIXOTE is the wonderful naturalness of his characters. Quixote looks very much like we imagine Quixote, and so does Sancho Panza. But in the COMEDY, Dore's figures look like slightly overweight body builders striking uncomfortable poses. There is an air of artificiality that I at times find somewhat overwhelming. The denizens of hell look spectacularly fit and well-fed. Where are the skinny sinners? The scrawny reprobates? The second way in which I found the illustrations disappointing is in the depiction of Dante, Virgil, and Beatrice. Dante is actually drawn to correspond as closely as possible with what we know about his appearance.

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