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Research Report: Danteworlds

Summary and Objective Description: Created at the University of Texas, at Austin, Danteworlds is a website that interactively guides you through Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This virtual universe is an integrated multi-media journey that combines elements of artistic images, textual commentary, and audio recordings. Each sphere displays the three realms of the afterlife (Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise). UT students in the liberal arts program envisioned a reader's guide that did more than just provide plot summaries. Instead, this site also features a chronology of events in Dante's life, illustrations of Hell, a map of Italy in the 13th century, as well as study questions, and a bibliography of further Dante readings. At the bottom of the webpage, there are links to an Amazon profile, where you can order the books directly. This website provides a complete technological and visual-representation of each distinct world, giving viewers a precise look into who and what, appear where in relation to each particular aspect of the journey. The viewer experiences the journey with Dante while reading and participating in the story. The realms that are displayed include the circles of Hell, Terraces of Purgatory, and Spheres of Paradise. When clicking on these regions, larger images appear in pop-up windows, which are easily accessible and translatable. Danteworlds presents a new way of learning, combining elements of the stories that one could not experience by simply reading them; the use of audio, art visuals, as well as the actual text modernizes the way we view classic literature.

Research Context: Danteworlds is a fusion of antiquated practices of learning with contemporary methods. The intertwining of words and images describe intimate details of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The website should be considered a type of tool or aid in helping readers become completely enveloped in the "Dante Universe". This artifact pertains to literary studies, visual communications, as well as web design. From a literary perspective, this site serves as a tool in helping readers understand important concepts that may otherwise be misinterpreted. The visual components can be interpreted through an artistic lens, as each sphere presents the viewer with intricate images of Dante's world. This website would attract literary scholars, web design aficionados, and a combination of both: those interested in visual literary studies.

Technical Analysis: Danteworlds is a technological tool made on the internet to serve users globally. The website is divided into multiple facets: each page serving a different purpose. It combines visuals, sound effects, and textual aids in order to guide the viewer through the journey. Each sphere presents different aspects of the world it is describing. The first page, "Inferno", intimately divides each of the nine circles of hell. Within each ring, the viewer can select a level, transporting them to a separate page with a breakdown of the entire section. These selections are complete with textual analysis, images, summaries, and breakdowns of symbols. The text analyses summarize important areas the reader must be conscious of, breaking down critical points; this is more than a typical reading aid, in that it is a multi-faceted approach, incorporating aspects of visual and auditory aids. They even provide helpful study questions to further provoke analysis from the viewer and aid them in understanding the message.

The overall design of the webpage is highly artistic, and each page is tailored to embody the theme of that particular sphere. The first page, "Inferno" contains images fusing colors such as black, red, and orange, classic artistic depictions of Hell. Along with the visual embodiment of Inferno, the web designers also incorporate auditory aids. The dark and eerie music produces an ambiance, which guides the viewer into the depths of Hell. The second sphere, "Purgatory" presents images that are mystified, and assembled in the shape of a mountain, divided by different categorical terraces. The last sphere, "Paradiso" transports the viewer into

the celestial universe, in order to correlate with Dante's rising to the heavens of the ancient cosmos. These pages are filled with vibrant colors, which place the viewer into a galactic environment of the ten Heavens. Furthermore, throughout each of the spheres there are specific parts that are in Italian. These sections with Italian phrases have recordings of the proper pronunciation of such phrases, as well as a direct translation into English.

Evaluation of Research Opportunities: Danteworlds is different from other reading guides because it is completely interactive, and presents itself as a type of puzzle for the viewer to piece together. It takes the materiality of a classic novel such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and transforms it into a modern virtual journey. As opposed to other literary aids, Danteworlds is an instructional technological service, making it innovative and unique. This experience can be interactive as well, and accessed by all Dante fanatics, whether in a classroom or at your home computer. Danteworlds shares aspects of a virtual picture book, breaking down plot points through visual images.

Resources for Further Study:
Raffa, Guy. "Danteworlds." Utexas.edu. Instructional Technology Services, 2008. Web. 20 Mar. 2015.

Some other sites that are taking similar approaches to interpreting classic literary pieces include:

Shakespeare's Sonnets » A New Perspective on the Immortal Sonnets. Touchpress, n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

"Frankenstein." Inkle Studios. Profile Books, n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.