Some would say that Dante Alighieri’s, *The Divine Comedy*, is the best epic poem written. As a piece of literature that has transcended 700 years, there is no doubt that it has literary and religious merit. Dante used this epic poem as an allegory for his life and the life of all Christians. While maintaining the strong lens of the Christian view, Dante incorporated characters from classic Greek and Roman works. Dante used Greek and Roman figures and tales, for the same reason he wrote *The Divine Comedy* in Italian. He wanted the epic poem to be relatable to all Christians, of all classes.

In canto four, Virgil and Dante enter Limbo. Virgil explains to Dante that the people in Limbo “did not sin and yet, though they have merits, that is not enough, because they lacked baptism…they have lived before Christianity, they did not worship God in fitting ways” (Alighieri 33). While walking along the path in Limbo, four shades approached Dante and Virgil. The four shades were Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, all of which are renowned Greek or Roman poets. During this interaction Dante proclaims, “for they invited me to join their ranks- I was the sixth among such intellects” (34). When writing about Limbo, Dante included the famous Greek and Roman poets and philosophers to show that even though they were good people in life, their lack of baptism and faith towards God resulted in never ending longing. The readers of Dante’s poem would know about the good deeds that the pagans had done. As readers, they would be able to connect with these people as figures of importance. This emphasizes that in Dante’s Christianity, you must be baptized and worship God. Furthermore, Dante picked these representative poets because common people would have known their works and they were some of his inspirations. Like Virgil, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan’s poetry, Dante wanted his allegory for Christianity to last across generations.

Struggling through his own sins of lust for Beatrice, Dante makes the sin of lust only the second circle of hell. Walking through the second circle, Dante saw “more than a thousand shades departed from our life because of love” (43). In canto five, Francesca tells the story of how herself and her brother-in-law, Paolo fell in love. Dante says to Francesca, “your afflictions move me to tears of sorrow and of pity…with what and in what way did love allow you to recognize your still uncertain longings” (47). Francesca reports that the two were innocently reading a book out of boredom, but it turned into much more. Dante wants to show that many times the line between lust and love are blurred, but both are sins. The sin of carnal lust and the sin of love out of wedlock will lead you to the same destination. Using the love between Francesca and Paolo allows Dante to humanize lust and love. Continuously, because Dante’s sin was lust, he shows much more leniency when describing the acts of lust that landed the sinners in the second circle of hell.

Lastly, Dante describes the shades of Diomedes and Ulysses wrapped in flames. In the eighth circle, eighth pouch Dante and Virgil walk through the section of Hell reserved for the fraudulent counselors. As the two shades come closer, Virgil states that “they grieve over the horse’s fraud that caused a breach-the gate that let Rome’s noble seed escape” (241). Dante employees the use of the trojan horse as another way to connect with his readers. He knows that everyone who reads his book, will know the tale of the trojan horse and the fraudulent people who carried out the scheme. However, Dante continues the fraudulent theme as he rewrites the story of Ulysses as previously known. Ulysses tells Dante that “neither my fondness for my son nor pity for my old father nor the love I owed Penelope… was able to defeat in me the longing I had to gain experience of the world” (243). Not only did Ulysses plan the trojan horse, he never returns to his wife, son, or father. Dante ensures that there is no doubt his readers know that fraudulency is one of the worst sins.

Although Dante created this poem as an allegory for his life as a Christian, he wanted for all Christians to be able to relate to the logic behind each of the sins. By using the history of well-known Greeks and Romans, Dante ensured that people do not have to be highly educated to understand *The Divine Comedy*. Dante incorporated pagan themes with the Christian frame of reference in order to produce an epic poem that could withstand centuries.