



## The Divine Comedy

*Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321), translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 - 1882)*

Read by:	Librivox readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	12 hours 18 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1004
Language:	English	UPC:	0684758935847
Style:	Collaborative	MSLP:	\$11.99
Genre:	Poetry		

*The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri is regarded as the centerpiece of Italian literature and one of the greatest works in world literature. Written between 1308 and 1321, at the end of the Middle Ages and the dawn of the Renaissance, it distills the essence of the medieval world-view. The poem is structured in three canticas that represent the three realms of the dead: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory) and *Paradiso* (Paradise). Each cantica is composed of 33 cantos, which, together with the introductory canto, comprise a total of 100 cantos.

The narrative describes Dante's own allegorical journey through the realms to salvation, accompanied first by the poet Virgil and later by his beloved Beatrice, and offers philosophical and moral commentary along the way. *The Divine Comedy* is a complex work full of symbol and allegory. Publication in Italian made the work accessible to a wide audience and contributed to the general growth in literacy. Its influence is nothing short of monumental. As T.S. Eliot wrote, "Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them, there is no third."

**Dante Alighieri** (c. 1265–1321), was born in Florence, Italy to a notable family in 1265. His family arranged his betrothal at age 12 to Gemma di Manetto Donati, though he was already in love with Beatrice Portinari. Although he saw little of her, he wrote of her throughout his life in his poems and in her major role in the *Divine Comedy*. His education was thorough, covering the Greek and Latin classics and Tuscan poetry, painting and music. He later studied philosophy and became a pharmacist. He was active in public affairs and fought in the cavalry in a political conflict between followers of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Papacy known as the Guelph-Ghibelline conflict. While in Rome with a delegation of allies to meet with the Pope his opponents seized control in Florence, seizing his assets and declaring him an absconder, condemning him to perpetual exile. It was during his exile that he wandered through Italy and conceived the *Divine Comedy*, which he wrote during the last eight years of his life. He was sentenced to death if he returned to Florence, a sentence extended to his sons as well. He remained involved in the continuing intrigue and was eventually offered amnesty under onerous terms, which he refused, preferring a painful exile which stripped him of his heritage and identity. He never returned to Florence. He died while returning to Ravenna from a diplomatic mission to Venice. In Italy he is known as il Sommo Poeta ("the Supreme Poet") and is also called the "Father of the Italian language."