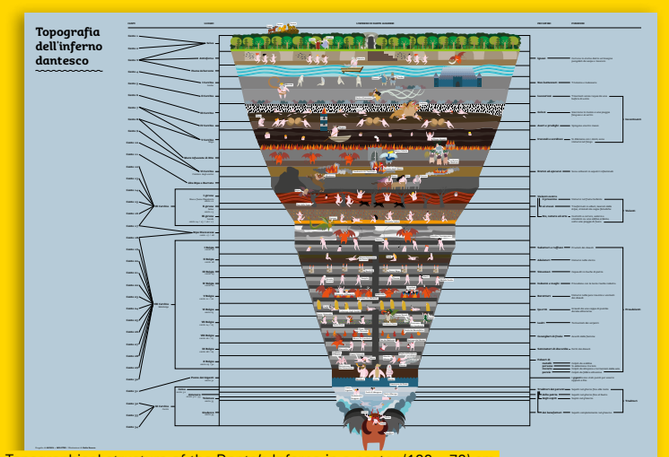
Category: **Didactics**

Project: **Dante's Inferno**

What was the challenge?
The aim of the project was to elaborate an alternative way to access Dante Alighieri's text, which could exploit the non linear display of information and the potential of digital tools.
The artifact is not meant to take the place of the traditional linear way of reading the poetic text, but to ease its navigation providing a visual topography.

What was the solution?
We have designed a poster and a website. These tools have been conceived as open laboratory projects, which is being improved through the support from the teachers and the students, as well as scholars and literary critics.
In the poster we have displayed the topographical structure of the Dante's Inferno.



Topographical structure of the Dante's Inferno in a poster (100 × 70) cm

Understanding the language of the Divine Comedy –the 14th century Italian– and reading texts for long time on a backlit screen might prove to be an arduous task for a 11-13 year-old student.
A non linear way to navigate through the informationallows the users to freely explore the topographic space defined by Dante and to spot all the verses, characters and sins they want. This method facilitates the connection between the visual memory and the text helping the learning process.

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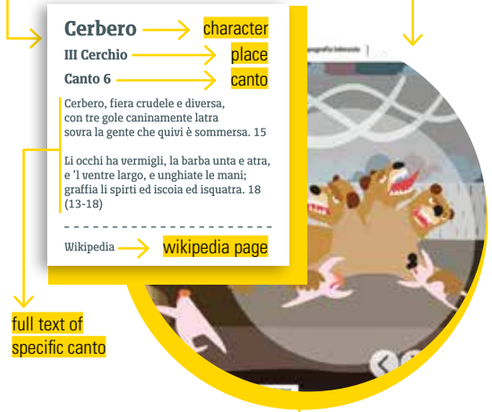
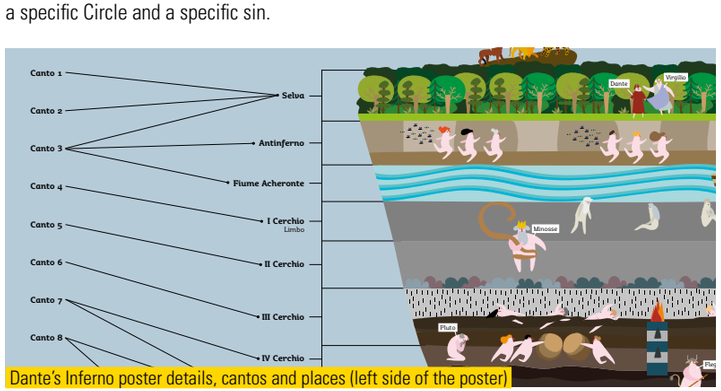
In that structure we have arranged characters, sins and places; all those elements were referenced to the cantica text. The website allows the users to explore the map and interact with the drawn characters. By clicking or tapping them their related tercets will be shown in a tab, together with links to their wikipedia pages and to the full text of their specific canto.
The use of expressive illustration is meant to maximize the involvement of 11-13 year-old student, who the work is mainly addressed to.



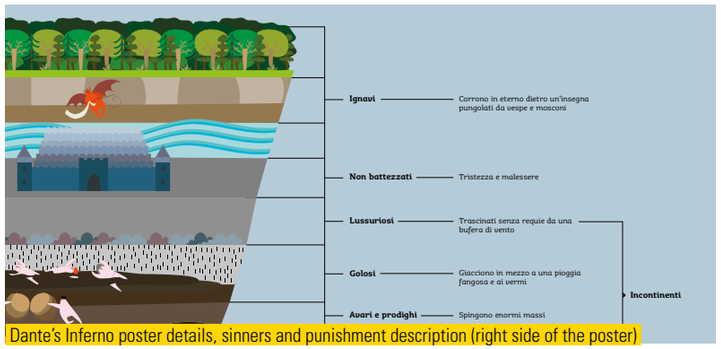
Dante's Inferno digital version (www.alpacaprojects.com/inferno)

In his "Rerum Natura", Titus Lucretius Carus highlighted he had used poetry to illustrate Epicurean theories just like doctors put honey on the edge of the glasses to make children drink absinthe. In the same way we have used illustration to make "edible" an obscure medieval poem to the teenagers.
The website responsive layout is optimized for desktop computers, tablets and interactive whiteboards (IWB). The website design accommodates also smartphones, but some navigation patterns are modified.

What was the effect?
The website and the poster were used as a supporting teaching tool in classroom environment by three teachers (in Bracciano, Treviso and Trento) with students with the support of an IWB. The teachers involved are writing for us qualitative reports.
Dante's Inferno website have been patronized by Società Dante Alighieri (a charitable trust, dedicated to protect and spread the Italian language and culture throughout the world), who supported us in the promotion of the website.
We are working on the assessment of the reading performance. The sample will consists of 30 subjects in the range 11-13 years old and 20 subjects in the range 14-15.
The subjects will wear an eye tracker and they will be asked to locate on the website a specific Circle and a specific sin.
Afterwards, the subjects will be asked to report also the sinners present in the Circle.
The quickness and accuracy of the answers will be recorded.
Before and after the experiment the subjects will be asked to play a game based on reflexes.
The following dependent variable will be recorded:
the time taken from the request to the location
the heat map of the eye movements
the accuracy of the answers (number of mistakes)
the fatigue (the difference between the first and second performance in the reflex test)
All the data collected will be compared with the tests on the following updates.



Dante's Inferno poster details, cantos and places (left side of the poster)



Dante's Inferno poster details, sinners and punishment description (right side of the poster)