

To explore the conversion of a ChatGPT-generated text into a narrative, let's examine the following passage. This excerpt was collaboratively composed by Enzo Bidin, Chiara Lipari, Maria Maddalena Perego, and ChatGPT during a Digital Storytelling Workshop. The students' objective was to craft stories targeting secondary school attendees, centered around the mythological characters found in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In the text, AI-contributed content is highlighted in red, while human authors' contributions are in black. Below, you'll find the initial queries posed to the AI and its corresponding responses.

The *Divine Mythology*:

an educational voyage in the discovery of mythological figures in Dante's *Commedia*

I am about to tell you the story of a man, a lost soul who must travel through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven to find his way back to God. He is Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet, politician, and philosopher who lived in the 14th Century.

He tells everything about his journey through the afterlife in his poem *La Divina Commedia*, which consists of three parts (*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*) divided into cantos. In his voyage, Dante encounters several figures, real and mythological, ancient or contemporary to him, who will tell the poet about their lives and why they are there.

My name is Virgil, I lived during the first century BC. Like Dante, I was also a poet and I am best known for my epic poem, the *Aeneid*. In this work, I accompanied Dante in his journey to Hell and Purgatory and today, just as in the *Commedia*, I will accompany you students to discover some mythological figures in the opera.

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Dante was lost and confused in a dark forest when I first saw him. He wandered for what seemed like hours until he came to the banks of a river. The water was dark and murky, and he could not see the other side. The area was struck by the eerie silence that hung over the desolate landscape. The air was thick with the stench of decay; the only sounds were the occasional groans and wails of the damned. The ground was rocky and uneven, with no signs of vegetation or life.

As he stood there, wondering what to do, he heard a voice behind him. "Who are you, and why are you here?"

Dante turned around to see a hooded figure standing behind him on a boat moored on the muddy shore. It was a sorry sight: the wooden planks were rotten and warped, and the oars were battered and frayed. The boat creaked and swayed in the choppy waters of the Styx.

"I am Dante," he said, "and I am lost. I do not know how I came to this place."

The hooded figure presented himself as **Charon**, the ferryman of the river Styx. He explained his role there was to guide souls across the river, but as Dante is not dead, he asked him why he was there. **Charon** was holding his long pole with one hand and gesturing impatiently with the other.

According to legend, Charon was the son of the primordial deities Erebus (the God of darkness) and Nyx (the Goddess of night). He was the ferryman, and the only mean of passage, for the dead as he transported the souls of the deceased across the river Styx and into the Underworld. In addition to the souls of the dead, Charon also transported living souls, heroes such as Persephone, Aeneas, Theseus, Pyritous, Hercules, Odysseus, Orpheus, the Cumaean sibyl Deiphobe and Dante Alighieri who had to perform feats.

Charon was punished by Hades for allowing Hercules, living, to enter the realm of the dead. The ferryman was put in irons for a year, which certainly must have created a long queue of souls waiting on the banks of the Acheron.

To ensure that Charon would take charge of someone on his ship to Hades, the Greeks buried the dead with a small coin in their mouths to allow the deceased to pay for their journey. Those who **could not afford to pay his fee were forced to wander the banks of the Styx for a hundred years, unable to find rest or peace.**

Charon is described as a demon with eyes of glowing coal. He is also said to have a long beard, which is greasy and vermilion. His overall appearance is thus menacing and repulsive. His personality is consistent with his look. Charon is depicted as being hostile and impatient towards the souls who approach him, "striking with his oar whoever lingers." He is also described as being fierce and ruff," and is said to "bark" at the souls, demanding that they enter his boat and cross the river to Hell's gates, just like he was about to do with Dante.

The mortal explained that he was on a journey to find his way back to the path of righteousness. Charon listened intently and then said, "I can help you, but you must first cross the river."

Dante hesitated. He had heard stories of the river Styx and the dangers that lay beyond it. But he knew that he had to continue on his journey, so he agreed to cross the river with Charon's help.

Just then, I decided to appear from the darkness: "Charon" I said, "I will be his guide from here on."

Charon looked at me warily: "Virgil," he said, "you know the rules. Only the dead may cross the river Styx."

But I was insistent. "This man is on a journey of great importance," I explained. "I have been sent to guide him. Will you deny me, Charon?" I knew that he would not have challenged my personality.

Charon hesitated, but then he nodded. "Very well," he said, "but I will not be held responsible for what happens to him beyond this point."

Did you know that Charon is one of the best-known figures in Greek mythology and in Dante's work?

He was a popular artistic subject in scenes painted on Greek ceramics to store fine oils and perfumes that were buried with the deceased. Then the Etruscans of central Italy had a very similar figure called Charu or Charun. He is also a ferryman of the dead, but in Etruscan art, he carries a hammer or a flashlight and often has an aquiline nose. The hammer was perhaps used to break down the door of the tomb or to break through the gates of Hades and allow the soul access.

Charo continued to be a prominent figure in the medieval world and appeared in many Renaissance artworks and in medieval literature.

Oh, and he also appears in pictorial works! The most famous of which include the "Last Judgment," located in the Sistine Chapel. In the painting, we can very clearly see the damned pushing each other, being dragged off the boat by Charon's assistant demons matching Dante's description of him. Another work is Salvador Dalí's "Charon," an illustration that is part of the cycle created by the artist to visually comment on Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. Charon is standing on the boat he steers and turns his back to the viewer of the drawing. His hair is as white as his beard and his woody, lean

body reveals his tireless efforts to ferry souls to hell. To the right, two travellers are barely hinted at sitting on the stern transom.

More recently, he is the origin of the figure of Charontas in Greek folklore: a kind of angel of death, believed to appear before a person's demise. Finally, the largest moon of the dwarf planet Pluto has been named Charon, an apt pairing since Pluto was, in many respects, the Roman equivalent of Hades. It is certainly remarkable to see how such ancient figures are still known and appreciated today. While our journey continues, try to think of other figures from the past who are still talked about today. What examples can you make?

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In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante and I encountered Minos in the second circle of Inferno, a dark and foreboding place where the poet heard the sound of lamentations, cries of despair, and the clashing of hands. The air was filled with a foul stench, and the ground was covered in mud and sludge.

He was said to be the son of Zeus and Europa, and the brother of Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon. According to the myth, after his death, he became one of the judges of the dead in the underworld.

Minos was known to be a great monarch as he conquered many Mediterranean coasts and rid them of pirates. He was said to be a king known for his wisdom and justice. Not only had he received the laws from Zeus himself, but he had also been educated in the art of government by the most just and wise figure of the Gods. Minos also ran the kingdom through two auxiliaries: Radamantus (a righteous man in charge of overseeing the courts) and Talus (who traversed the entire island of Crete with Minos' tables of laws known as the "Cretese Constitution").

Students usually remember him for building the Labyrinth, a complex maze designed by the architect Daedalus to imprison the monstrous Minotaur, a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a man.

He appears also in the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. Every nine years, Athens was forced to send seven young men and seven young women to Crete as a tribute, to be devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus, the son of the king of Athens, volunteered to go to Crete and kill the beast. With the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne, who gave him a ball of string to help him find his way out of the Labyrinth, Theseus was able to defeat the Minotaur and escape with the other Athenian youths.

Minos is also famous for his battles. In his pursuit of victory over King Nisus of Megara, he laid siege to the city. Scylla, Nisus' daughter, fell in love with Minos. The woman made a deal with him to betray her own father in exchange for his love and protection. However, when Scylla cut off a lock of her father's hair, the source of his power and invincibility, her treachery was exposed and she was rejected by Minos. Scylla is then transformed into a sea monster (half-human and half-fish) as punishment for her betrayal and is hunted by sailors. Dante mentions her story in Canto XVIII of the *Inferno*.

There, Minos served as the judge of the underworld. With his tail he coiled over himself several times, thus indicating the level of punishment the soul deserved based on the sins committed in life.

When Dante and I found ourselves lost in the dark forest, the poet immediately recognized Minos.

The king towered over the mortal, his massive form radiating power and authority. His skin was rough and scaled, like that of a serpent, and his eyes gleamed with a fierce intelligence. His tail, thick as a tree trunk, writhed and coiled around him like a living thing, ready to mete out justice.

"Confess your sins before me" Minos demanded, his voice like gravel.

Dante trembled, but he knew that there was no avoiding the judgment of Minos. Despite his intimidating appearance and manner, Minos was an impartial judge, who never makes fails his judgments and his appearance and behaviour reflected the seriousness of his task.

Wrapping his tail around himself several times, Minos listened carefully to Dante's confession, his face unreadable. When Dante had finished, Minos spoke.

"Your punishment will be just and appropriate" he said, his voice rumbling like thunder.

Dante studied Minos and the judge's eyes seemed to contain the wisdom of the ages, and his tail moved like a living thing.

"I am but a mortal, Minos," Dante said, his voice low and clearly confused "How can I hope to understand the ways of the divine?"

"The ways of the divine are not for mortals to understand," Minos said, his voice rough. "Nevertheless, your role here is to learn and to grow, to gain wisdom and understanding as far as you can possibly."

So, I grew impatient: "Minos, you who assign punishments based on divine justice, why are you blocking our path? Are you trying to prevent us from completing our journey through Hell?"

"I am only following the will of the Gods, Virgil" he replied "My task is to judge each sinner according to their deeds in life."

"And yet, you seem to take pleasure in your task, Minos. Do you not see the sorrow and pain that your judgments cause?" I provoked.

The Greek was visibly annoyed by my attitude and tried to justify his actions "It is not for me to question the will of the Gods. I am merely an instrument of their justice. "I will not stand for this insolence, Virgil! You may pass, but the sinner must face their punishment!"

"Your anger is misplaced, Minos. Remember that you too will face judgment one day, and your actions here in Hell will determine your fate." I replied and with that Dante and I passed through the entrance to the second circle of Hell, leaving Minos behind to ponder his own role in the eternal punishment of the damned.

In this canto, I want to highlight the concept of laws and regulations. Laws are a very important part of our lives that follow us everywhere: at home, at school, driving and even online there are rules of conduct that guide us, protect us and allow everyone access to the same rights. This is why laws and the constitution are not abstract entities at all, but concrete in that we put them into practice in our daily lives.

While this may seem obvious to us, we need to think about the fact that this has ancient roots as humans have always asked questions about what is "right" and what is "wrong," and about concepts such as freedom, equality and accountability.

We must also remember the importance of participation: times change, and it is essential that laws be updated so that communities can live in harmony and serenity. This is why every citizen is required to vote to ensure that their rights and the rights of others are always respected.

Unfortunately, however, there are still many people in the world today who do not have access to basic human rights because of unjust governments that do not care about the well-being of their citizens. Can you think of some current and past examples? What do you see as inalienable rights that you would be able to live without? If you could govern your country for a day, what rights would you change?

QUESTIONS WE ASKED CHATGPT

How is Charon described by Dante (both appearance and personality)?

Charon, the ferryman of the underworld in Greek mythology, is prominently featured in Dante's "The Divine Comedy" in the third canto of the Inferno, the first part of the trilogy. Here's how Dante describes Charon:

Appearance: Charon is described as a "demon" with "eyes of glowing coal," who steers his boat across the river Acheron. He is also said to have a long beard, which is "greasy and vermilion." His overall appearance is thus menacing and repulsive.

Personality: Dante's portrayal of Charon's personality is consistent with his appearance. Charon is depicted as being hostile and impatient towards the souls who approach him, "striking with his oar whoever lingers." He is also described as being "fierce" and "gruff," and is said to "bark" at the souls, demanding that they enter his boat and cross the river to Hell's gates.

In addition, Dante emphasizes Charon's role as a judge and enforcer of divine justice, stating that he "knows well the people who belong to his boat" and that he "does not take a soul across the river Acheron without collecting his fee," which represents the penalty for the soul's sins.

Overall, Dante's description of Charon portrays him as a frightening and formidable figure, embodying the harshness and severity of divine judgment in the underworld.

How is the setting where Charon stays in the Inferno?

In Dante's Inferno, Charon is depicted as the ferryman who transports the souls of the damned across the river Styx to the first circle of Hell. He is often portrayed as a dark and ominous figure, who guards the entrance to the underworld and demands payment from the souls he transports.

The setting where Charon stays is the riverbank of the Styx, which is located at the edge of the underworld. The river Styx is described as a dark and murky body of water that circles the entire underworld. The riverbank is barren and desolate, with no signs of life or vegetation. The air is filled with the cries of the damned souls who are waiting to cross the river, and the sound of Charon's oar as he ferries them across.

Charon's boat is described as a rickety and old vessel, made of rotting wood and patched with tar. The boat is constantly battered by the waves of the river Styx, and it creaks and groans with each stroke of Charon's oar. The boat is said to be able to carry only a limited number of souls, and those who cannot pay the fare are left stranded on the riverbank.

Overall, the setting where Charon stays in the Inferno is a grim and foreboding place, reflecting the bleakness and hopelessness of the souls who are trapped in the underworld.

Can you write the story of how Dante meets Charon including also Virgil?

Dante found himself lost in a dark forest, unsure of how he got there. He wandered for what seemed like hours until he came to the banks of a river. The water was dark and murky, and he couldn't see the other side.

As he stood there, wondering what to do, he heard a voice behind him.

Charon: "Who are you, and why are you here?"

Dante turned around to see a hooded figure standing behind him.

Dante: "I am Dante, and I am lost. I do not know how I came to this place."

The hooded figure introduced himself as Charon, the ferryman of the river Styx.

Charon: "But you are not dead, so why have you come here?"

Dante explained that he was on a journey to find his way back to the path of righteousness. Charon listened intently and then said, "I can help you, but you must first cross the river."

Dante hesitated but he knew that he had to continue on his journey, and so he agreed to cross the river with Charon's help.

Just then, a new figure appeared from the darkness. He was an old man with a long white beard and a regal bearing. "Charon," he said, "let this man pass. I will be his guide from here on."

Charon looked at the old man warily.

Charon: "Virgil, you know the rules. Only the dead may cross the river Styx."

Virgil: "This man is on a journey of great importance, I have been sent to guide him. Will you deny me, Charon?"

Charon hesitated, but then he nodded.

Charon: "Very well, but I will not be held responsible for what happens to him beyond this point."

Virgil led Dante away from the river and onto a path that wound its way through the darkness. Dante looked around him, awed by the sights and sounds of this strange place. He saw the shades of the damned, their cries echoing through the darkness.

But Virgil was a steady guide, and he led Dante safely through the dangers of the underworld. They passed through the gates of Hell and made their way through the various circles of torment. Dante saw the punishments inflicted upon the sinners, and he was filled with pity and horror.

At last, they reached the other side of the underworld. Dante stepped out of the darkness and into the light of the sun. He turned to Virgil and thanked him for his guidance.

"You have seen the horrors of Hell," Virgil said, "but your journey is far from over. You must now climb the mountain of Purgatory and be purified of your sins."

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Who is Minos?

Minos was a legendary king of Crete in Greek mythology. He was said to be the son of Zeus and Europa, and the brother of Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon. According to the myth, after his death, he became one of the judges of the dead in the underworld.

Minos was known for his wisdom and justice, and he was said to have received laws from Zeus himself. He was also famous for building the Labyrinth, a complex maze designed by the architect Daedalus to imprison the monstrous Minotaur, a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a man.

Minos is also known for his role in the story of Theseus and the Minotaur. Every nine years, Athens was forced to send seven young men and seven young women to Crete as a tribute, to be devoured by the Minotaur. Theseus, the son of the king of Athens, volunteered to go to Crete and kill the Minotaur. With the help of Minos' daughter Ariadne, who gave him a ball of string to help him find his way out of the Labyrinth, Theseus was able to defeat the Minotaur and escape with the other Athenian youths.

What role does Minos have in the *Divine Comedy*?

Minos appears in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, specifically in the Inferno, which is the first part of the poem. Minos is a mythical creature who serves as the judge of the underworld, assigning each soul to its appropriate level of punishment based on its sins.

In the Inferno, Dante encounters Minos at the entrance to the second circle of Hell. Minos judges the souls of the damned as they arrive, and he uses his tail to wrap around himself a number of times, indicating the level of punishment the soul deserves. Dante describes Minos as "an impartial and unerring arbiter," who never makes a mistake in his judgments.

Dante also provides some background information about Minos, saying that he was the son of Zeus and Europa, and that he was the king of Crete before becoming the judge of the underworld. Overall, Minos plays an important role in the Inferno, serving as a symbol of divine justice and the consequences of sin.

What is the relationship with Scylla daughter of Niso?

In Greek mythology, there is a story that involves a relationship between Minos and Scylla, daughter of King Nisus of Megara. The story goes that Minos, in his pursuit of victory over his enemies, laid siege to Megara. During the siege, Scylla fell in love with Minos and made a deal with him to betray her own father in exchange for his love and protection.

However, when Scylla cut off a lock of her father's hair, which was the source of his power and invincibility, her treachery was exposed and she was rejected by Minos. In some versions of the story, Scylla is transformed into a sea monster as punishment for her betrayal and is hunted by sailors, including the hero Odysseus.

It's worth noting that the relationship between Minos and Scylla is not directly referenced in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but Dante does mention the story of Scylla's betrayal in Canto XVIII of the Inferno. In this section, Dante describes the various traitors in Hell, including Scylla, who is depicted as a sea monster, half-human and half-fish, who devours sailors as they pass by her.

How is Minos described in the *Divine Comedy* (physically and personality standpoint)?

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante describes Minos as a "great judge" who sits at the entrance of the second circle of Hell, where the souls of the lustful are punished. He is depicted as having a fearsome

appearance, with a "huge" and "writhing" tail that he wraps around his body to determine the degree of punishment for each soul.

Dante also describes Minos as having a "coarse" and "harsh" voice, which he uses to demand that the souls confess their sins before him. Despite his intimidating appearance and manner, Minos is portrayed as an impartial and just judge, who never makes a mistake in his judgments.

In terms of his personality, Minos is depicted as being stern and unyielding in his role as a judge, but also as being obedient to the divine will. He is a symbol of divine justice and the consequences of sin, and his appearance and behaviour reflect the seriousness of his task.

Story with dialogues:

Once upon a time, Dante Alighieri found himself lost in a dark forest, unsure of how he had gotten there or how to escape. Suddenly, he was confronted by a great and fearsome beast, with a writhing tail and a coarse voice. Dante recognized the creature as Minos, the judge of the underworld, and he knew that he had entered into the realm of the dead.

"Confess your sins before me," Minos demanded, his voice like gravel.

Dante trembled, but he knew that there was no avoiding the judgment of Minos. "I have sinned in many ways," he said, his voice low.

"Wrapping his tail around himself several times, Minos listened carefully to Dante's confession, his face unreadable. When Dante had finished, Minos spoke. "Your punishment will be just and appropriate," he said, his voice rumbling like thunder.

Despite his fear, Dante could not help but be impressed by the impartial and unerring justice of Minos. Each soul that approached was judged with perfect fairness, and Dante came to understand the importance of divine justice in the afterlife.

As Dante journeyed deeper into the underworld, he encountered many other figures from myth and legend, each with their own role to play in the punishment and redemption of souls. But always in the background, watching over everything, was Minos, the great judge with the fearsome appearance and the harsh voice.

"I am but a mortal, Minos," Dante said one day, as they stood at the entrance to another circle of Hell. "How can I hope to understand the ways of the divine?"

"The ways of the divine are not for mortals to understand," Minos said, his voice rough. "Your role is to learn and to grow, to gain wisdom and understanding."

At last, Dante emerged from the underworld, changed and transformed by his experiences. He had gained a new understanding of the nature of sin and redemption, and he knew that he would carry the memory of Minos with him always, as a symbol of the power of divine justice to transform and redeem even the most wayward of souls.

What would Virgil say to Minos?

Virgil: "Minos, you who assign punishments based on divine justice, why are you blocking our path? Are you trying to prevent us from completing our journey through Hell?"

Minos: "I am only following the will of the gods, Virgil. My task is to judge each sinner according to their deeds in life."

Virgil: "And yet, you seem to take pleasure in your task, Minos. Do you not see the sorrow and pain that your judgments cause?"

Minos: "It is not for me to question the will of the gods. I am merely an instrument of their justice."

Virgil: "Your words are hollow, Minos. You act as if you have no choice in the matter, but I know that is not true. You take pleasure in assigning punishments, and that pleasure has led you down the path of sin."

Minos: "What do you mean, Virgil? I am merely doing my duty."

Virgil: "Your duty has become your downfall, Minos. You have allowed your desire for power and control to blind you to the suffering of those around you. You are a sinner, just like those whom you judge."

Minos: "I will not stand for this insolence, Virgil! You may pass, but the sinner must face their punishment!"

Virgil: "Your anger is misplaced, Minos. Remember that you too will face judgment one day, and your actions here in Hell will determine your fate."