

12TH GRADE ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST
LITERATURE SELECTION
The Inferno, Chapter: Canto XXVI, Pgs. 235-237

And, like a speaking tongue vibrant to frame
Language, the tip of it flickering to and fro
Threw out a voice and answered: "When I came

From Circe at last, who would not let me go,
But twelve months near Caieta hindered me
Before Aeneas ever named it so,

No tenderness for my son, nor piety
To my old father, nor the wedded love
That should have comforted Penelope

Could conquer in me the restless itch to rove
And rummage through the world exploring it,
All human worth and wickedness to prove.

So on the deep and open sea I set
Forth, with a single ship and that small band
Of comrades that had never left me yet.

Far as Morocco, far as Spain I scanned
Both shores; I saw the island of the Sardi,
And all that sea, and every wave-girt land.

I and my fellows were grown old and tardy
Or ere we made the straits where Hercules
Set up his marks, that none should prove so hardy

To venture the uncharted distances;
Ceuta I'd left to larboard, sailing by,
Seville I now left in the starboard seas.

'Brothers,' said I, 'that have come valiantly
Through hundred thousand jeopardies undergone
To reach the West, you will not now deny

To this last little vigil left to run

Of the uninhabited world behind the sun.

Think of your breed; for brutish ignorance
Your mettle was not made; you were made men,
To follow after knowledge and excellence.'

My little speech made every one so keen
To forge ahead, that even if I'd tried
I hardly think I could have held them in.

So, with our poop shouldering the dawn, we plied,
Making our oars wings to the witless flight,
And steadily gaining on the larboard side.

Already the other pole was up by night
With all its stars, and ours had sunk so low,
It rose no more from the ocean-floor to sight;

Five times we had seen the light kindle and grow
Beneath the moon, and five times wane away,
Since to the deep we had set course to go,

When at long last hove up a mountain, grey
With distance, and so lofty and so steep,
I never had seen the like on any day.

Then we rejoiced; but soon we had to weep,
For out of the unknown land there blew foul weather,
And a whirlwind struck the forepart of the ship;

And three times round she went in a roaring smother
With all the waters; at the fourth, the poop
Rose, and the prow went down, as pleased Another,

And over our heads the hollow seas closed up."