

from *Angela's Ashes*

Memoir by Frank McCourt

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML9-924

How does **FRIENDSHIP** begin?



READING 2B Analyze the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on 20th and 21st century literature.

6 Analyze how literary essays interweave personal examples and ideas with factual information to explain, present a perspective, or describe a situation or event.

Old friends, new friends, close friends, best friends—what makes two people connect? Whether it's a simple act of kindness or the discovery of a shared interest, something special happens to turn a mere acquaintance into a friend. In his memoir *Angela's Ashes*, writer Frank McCourt describes two friendships that develop under unusual circumstances.

QUICKWRITE Have you ever formed an unlikely friendship? Perhaps it was with someone much older or much younger than you—or simply with someone very different from you. Write a paragraph about the circumstances under which your friendship formed.



LITERARY ANALYSIS: MEMOIR

Frank McCourt was born in New York, but he grew up in Limerick, Ireland, as he describes in his memoir *Angela's Ashes*. A **memoir** is a form of autobiographical writing in which a writer shares his or her personal experiences and observations of significant events and people. Memoirs usually give readers insights into the influence of history on people's lives.

In this selection, McCourt recalls being hospitalized with typhoid, a highly infectious, life-threatening illness. As you read, think about the impact of this event on his life. In addition, note what you learn about Irish history and culture, especially the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

READING SKILL: USE ALLUSIONS TO MAKE INFERENCES

One way Frank McCourt adds meaning to his writing is through allusions. An **allusion** is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, or literary work. For example, a writer might refer to a character as having the strength of Samson (a biblical figure granted great strength by God) or Hercules (a Greek hero famous for his strength). Writers use allusions

- to help characterize people or situations
- to evoke ideas or feelings in the reader's mind
- to clarify or highlight important ideas, including the theme

As you read, look for allusions. What can you infer from them? Develop a chart like the one shown.

Allusion	Significance	Inference
... I don't care because it's Shakespeare and it's like having jewels in my mouth when I say the words. (lines 159–160)	Refers to William Shakespeare, revered English poet and playwright of the Elizabethan era.	Frank loves language and poetry.

Review: Draw Conclusions

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Use context clues to figure out the meanings of the words in bold.

1. The **relapse** of his illness put him back in the hospital.
2. Her persuasive speech **induced** me to support her cause.
3. **Torrents** of rain caused the roads to flood.
4. The officer's **perfidy** led him to be charged with treason.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Frank McCourt

born 1930

A Spellbinding Storyteller

Frank McCourt worked as a messenger, a barkeeper, a laborer, and an actor, but it was as a high school writing teacher that he gained his reputation as a consummate storyteller. Columnist Dennis Dugan noted that McCourt “has a way of finding incredible humor in the worst situations”—a trait that has helped him throughout his life. McCourt’s advice to students to “write what you know” eventually led him to tell his own story.

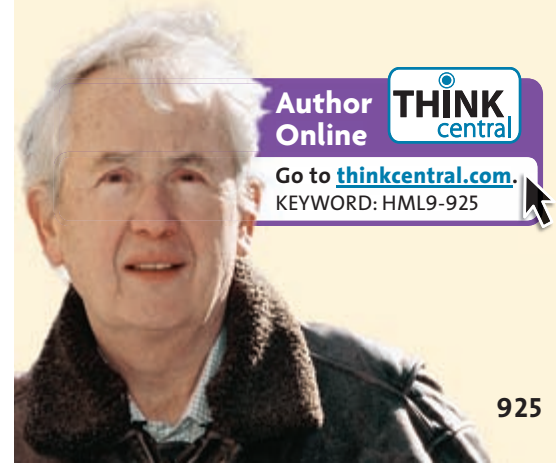
Late-Blooming Writer

Frank McCourt was 60 years old when he completed his first book, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angela's Ashes*. He waited so long to write this memoir of childhood because he needed time to come to terms with his early, poverty-stricken years with an alcoholic father. “I had attitudes and these attitudes had to be softened. I had to get rid of them, I had to become, as it says in the Bible, as a child. The child started to speak in this book. And that was the only way to do it, without judging.” The success of *Angela's Ashes* led him to continue his memoir in *'Tis*.

BACKGROUND TO THE MEMOIR

Catholic Ireland in the Mid-1900s

When Frank McCourt was growing up in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church held a firm grip on Irish society. Recognized by Ireland’s constitution as the “guardian of the faith,” the church operated the schools and hospitals; it had such pervasive influence on society that Irish law did not permit divorce, and censorship of books and films was common.



Author
Online



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Angela's Ashes

Frank McCourt

Mam comes with Dr. Troy. He feels my forehead, rolls up my eyelids, turns me over to see my back, picks me up and runs to his motor car. Mam runs after him and he tells her I have typhoid fever. Mam cries, . . . am I to lose the whole family? Will it ever end? She gets into the car, holds me in her lap and moans all the way to the Fever Hospital at the City Home.¹

The bed has cool white sheets. The nurses have clean white uniforms and the nun, Sister Rita, is all in white. Dr. Humphrey and Dr. Campbell have white coats and things hanging from their necks which they stick against my chest and all over. I sleep and sleep but I'm awake when they bring in jars of bright red stuff that hang from tall poles above my bed and they stick tubes into my ankles and the back of my right hand. Sister Rita says, You're getting blood, Francis. Soldier's blood from the Sarsfield Barracks.

Mam is sitting by the bed and the nurse is saying, You know, missus, this is very unusual. No one is ever allowed into the Fever Hospital for fear they'd catch something but they made an exception for you with his crisis coming. If he gets over this he'll surely recover. **A**

I fall asleep. Mam is gone when I wake but there's movement in the room and it's the priest, Father Gorey, from the Confraternity² saying Mass at a table in the corner. I drift off again and now they're waking me and pulling down the bedclothes. Father Gorey is touching me with oil and praying in Latin. I know it's Extreme Unction³ and that means I'm going to die and I don't care. They wake me again to receive Communion. I don't want it, I'm afraid I might get sick. I keep the wafer on my tongue and fall asleep and when I wake up again it's gone.

It's dark and Dr. Campbell is sitting by my bed. He's holding my wrist and looking at his watch. He has red hair and glasses and he always smiles when he talks to me. He sits now and hums and looks out the window. His eyes close and he snores a little. . . .

Analyze Visuals ▶

What does this class photograph tell you about the time period and subject of this memoir?

A MEMOIR

Reread lines 1–16. What **inferences** can you make about economic conditions in Ireland at this time?

Frank McCourt (right front) in the playground of Leamy's school in Limerick, Ireland, about 1938.

1. **Mam cries, . . . City Home:** The Fever Hospital was a special section of the Limerick City Home Hospital where patients who had fever-related illnesses like typhoid were treated. The McCourt family had already lost a baby daughter and twin boys to childhood disease.

2. **Confraternity** (kŏn'frə-tŭr'nĭ-tē): a religious society or association.

3. **Extreme Unction** (ŭngk'shən): a Roman Catholic sacrament given to a person thought to be near death.



30 **S**ister Rita's white habit is bright in the sun that comes in the window. She's holding my wrist, looking at her watch, smiling. Oh, she says, we're awake, are we? Well, Francis, I think we've come through the worst. Our prayers are answered and all the prayers of those hundreds of little boys at the Confraternity. Can you imagine that? Hundreds of boys saying the rosary⁴ for you and offering up their communion. **B**

My ankles and the back of my hand are throbbing from the tubes bringing in the blood and I don't care about boys praying for me. I can hear the swish of Sister Rita's habit and the click of her rosary beads when she leaves the room. I fall asleep and when I wake it's dark and Dad is sitting by the bed with his hand on mine.

40 Son, are you awake?

I try to talk but I'm dry, nothing will come out and I point to my mouth. He holds a glass of water to my lips and it's sweet and cool. He presses my hand and says I'm a great old soldier and why wouldn't I? Don't I have the soldier's blood in me?

The tubes are not in me anymore and the glass jars are gone.

Sister Rita comes in and tells Dad he has to go. I don't want him to go because he looks sad. When he looks sad it's the worst thing in the world and I start crying. Now what's this? says Sister Rita. Crying with all that soldier blood in you? There's a big surprise for you tomorrow, Francis. You'll never
50 guess. Well, I'll tell you, we're bringing you a nice biscuit⁵ with your tea in the morning. Isn't that a treat? And your father will be back in a day or two, won't you, Mr. McCourt?

Dad nods and puts his hand on mine again. He looks at me, steps away, stops, comes back, kisses me on the forehead for the first time in my life and I'm so happy I feel like floating out of the bed. **C**

The other two beds in my room are empty. The nurse says I'm the only typhoid patient and I'm a miracle for getting over the crisis.

The room next to me is empty till one morning a girl's voice says, Yoo hoo, who's there?

60 I'm not sure if she's talking to me or someone in the room beyond.

Yoo hoo, boy with the typhoid, are you awake?

I am.

Are you better?

I am.

Well, why are you here?

I don't know. I'm still in the bed. They stick needles in me and give me medicine.

What do you look like?

I wonder, What kind of a question is that? I don't know what to tell her.

B MEMOIR

Reread lines 28–34.

What do you learn about the Catholic Church's influence over Irish children and their education at this time?

C DRAW CONCLUSIONS

How would you describe Frank's relationship with his father? Cite details to support your answer.

4. **rosary** (rō'zə-rē): a series of prayers repeated by Roman Catholics as a form of devotion to the Virgin Mary—usually counted off on a string of beads as they are said.

5. **biscuit**: cookie.

70 Yoo hoo, are you there, typhoid boy?
 I am.
 What's your name?
 Frank.
 That's a good name. My name is Patricia Madigan. How old are you?
 Ten.
 Oh. She sounds disappointed.
 But I'll be eleven in August, next month.
 Well, that's better than ten. I'll be fourteen in September. Do you want to
 know why I'm in the Fever Hospital?
 80 I do.
 I have diphtheria⁶ and something else.
 What's something else?
 They don't know. They think I have a disease from foreign parts because my
 father used to be in Africa. I nearly died. Are you going to tell me what you
 look like?
 I have black hair.
 You and millions.
 I have brown eyes with bits of green that's called hazel.
 You and thousands.
 90 I have stitches on the back of my right hand and my two feet where they put
 in the soldier's blood.
 Oh, . . . did they?
 They did.
 You won't be able to stop marching and saluting.
 There's a swish of habit and click of beads and then Sister Rita's voice. Now,
 now, what's this? There's to be no talking between two rooms especially when
 it's a boy and a girl. Do you hear me, Patricia?
 I do, Sister.
 Do you hear me, Francis?
 100 I do, Sister.
 You could be giving thanks for your two remarkable recoveries. You could be
 saying the rosary. You could be reading *The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*⁷
 that's beside your beds. Don't let me come back and find you talking. She
 comes into my room and wags her finger at me. Especially you, Francis, after
 thousands of boys prayed for you at the Confraternity. Give thanks, Francis,
 give thanks. She leaves and there's silence for awhile. Then Patricia whispers,
 Give thanks, Francis, give thanks, and say your rosary, Francis, and I laugh
 so hard a nurse runs in to see if I'm all right. She's a very stern nurse from the
 County Kerry⁸ and she frightens me. What's this, Francis? Laughing? What is
 110 there to laugh about? Are you and that Madigan girl talking? I'll report you to

Language Coach

Word Definitions The use of a word whose sound echoes its meaning (such as *buzz*, *hiss*, or *whisper*) is called **onomatopoeia**. Which words in line 95 are examples of onomatopoeia?

6. **diphtheria** (dīf-thīr'ē-ə): a highly infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. It is spread by infected secretions from the nose and throat and can create toxins that destroy the heart and nervous system.

7. **The Little . . . Heart**: a Roman Catholic magazine.

8. **County Kerry**: a largely rural county to the west of Limerick.



A Limerick hospital in the early part of the 20th century

Sister Rita. There's to be no laughing for you could be doing serious damage to your internal apparatus.⁹

She plods out and Patricia whispers again in a heavy Kerry accent, No laughing, Francis, you could be doin' serious damage to your internal apparatus. Say your rosary, Francis, and pray for your internal apparatus.

Mam visits me on Thursdays, I'd like to see my father, too, but I'm out of danger, crisis time is over, and I'm allowed only one visitor. Besides, she says, he's back at work at Rank's Flour Mills and please God this job will last a while with the war on and the English desperate for flour. She brings me a chocolate
120 bar and that proves Dad is working. She could never afford it on the dole.¹⁰ He sends me notes. He tells me my brothers are all praying for me, that I should be a good boy, obey the doctors, the nuns, the nurses, and don't forget to say my prayers. He's sure St. Jude pulled me through the crisis because he's the patron saint of desperate cases and I was indeed a desperate case. **D**

Patricia says she has two books by her bed. One is a poetry book and that's the one she loves. The other is a short history of England and do I want it? She gives it to Seamus,¹¹ the man who mops the floors every day, and he brings it to me. He says, I'm not supposed to be bringing anything from a diphtheria
130 room to a typhoid room with all the germs flying around and hiding between the pages and if you ever catch diphtheria on top of the typhoid they'll know and I'll lose my good job and be out on the street singing patriotic songs with a tin cup in my hand, which I could easily do because there isn't a song ever written about Ireland's sufferings I don't know. . . .

Oh, yes, he knows Roddy McCorley.¹² He'll sing it for me right enough but he's barely into the first verse when the Kerry nurse rushes in. What's this,

D MEMOIR

Reread lines 116–124.

What details describe Frank's family and the role of religion in their lives?

9. **internal apparatus:** the internal organs of the body.

10. **on the dole:** living on government unemployment payments.

11. **Seamus** (shā'məs).

12. **Roddy McCorley:** a song about Roddy McCorley, a local leader during an Irish uprising. McCorley was hanged by the English in 1798.

Seamus? Singing? Of all the people in this hospital you should know the rules against singing. I have a good mind to report you to Sister Rita.

Ah, . . . don't do that, nurse.

Very well, Seamus. I'll let it go this one time. You know the singing could
140 lead to a **relapse** in these patients.

When she leaves he whispers he'll teach me a few songs because singing is good for passing the time when you're by yourself in a typhoid room. He **E** says Patricia is a lovely girl the way she often gives him sweets from the parcel her mother sends every fortnight.¹³ He stops mopping the floor and calls to Patricia in the next room, I was telling Frankie you're a lovely girl, Patricia, and she says, You're a lovely man, Seamus. He smiles because he's an old man of forty and he never had children but the ones he can talk to here in the Fever Hospital. He says, Here's the book, Frankie. Isn't it a great pity you have to be reading all about England after all they did to us, that there isn't a history of
150 Ireland to be had in this hospital. **F**

The book tells me all about King Alfred and William the Conqueror and all the kings and queens down to Edward, who had to wait forever for his mother, Victoria, to die before he could be king. The book has the first bit of Shakespeare I ever read.

*I do believe, **induced** by potent circumstances
That thou art mine enemy.*

The history writer says this is what Catherine, who is a wife of Henry the Eighth, says to Cardinal Wolsey, who is trying to have her head cut off. I don't know what it means and I don't care because it's Shakespeare and it's like
160 having jewels in my mouth when I say the words. If I had a whole book of Shakespeare they could keep me in the hospital for a year. **G**

Patricia says she doesn't know what induced means or potent circumstances and she doesn't care about Shakespeare, she has her poetry book and she reads to me from beyond the wall a poem about an owl and a pussycat that went to sea in a green boat with honey and money¹⁴ and it makes no sense and when I say that Patricia gets huffy and says that's the last poem she'll ever read to me. She says I'm always reciting the lines from Shakespeare and they make no sense either. Seamus stops mopping again and tells us we shouldn't be fighting over poetry because we'll have enough to fight about when we grow up and
170 get married. Patricia says she's sorry and I'm sorry too so she reads me part of another poem which I have to remember so I can say it back to her early in the morning or late at night when there are no nuns or nurses about,

*The wind was a **torrent** of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,*

relapse (rē'lāps) *n.* a worsening of an illness after a partial recovery

E GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 139–142. Notice McCourt's use of the **gerund** *singing*. A gerund is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and is used as a noun.

F ALLUSIONS

Here Seamus refers to the troubled relationship between England and Ireland. What does this reveal about him? about Irish culture?

induced (ĩn-dōōst') *adj.* led on; persuaded
induce *v.*

G MEMOIR

What does this first encounter with Shakespeare reveal about Frank?

torrent (tōr'ent) *n.* a heavy, uncontrolled outpouring

13. **fortnight**: two weeks.

14. **a poem . . . money**: "The Owl and the Pussycat," a humorous poem by the 19th-century British poet and artist Edward Lear.

And the highwayman came riding
Riding riding
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.
He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead,
180 a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin,
They fitted with never a wrinkle, his boots were up to the thigh.
And he rode with a jeweled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jeweled sky.¹⁵

Every day I can't wait for the doctors and nurses to leave me alone so I can learn a new verse from Patricia and find out what's happening to the highwayman and the landlord's red-lipped daughter. I love the poem because it's exciting and almost as good as my two lines of Shakespeare. The redcoats
190 are after the highwayman because they know he told her, I'll come to thee by moonlight. . . . **H**

I'd love to do that myself, come by moonlight for Patricia in the next room. . . . She's ready to read the last few verses when in comes the nurse from Kerry shouting at her, shouting at me, I told ye there was to be no talking between rooms. Diphtheria is never allowed to talk to typhoid and visa versa. I warned ye. And she calls out, Seamus, take this one. Take the by.¹⁶ Sister Rita said one more word out of him and upstairs with him. We gave ye a warning to stop the blathering but ye wouldn't. Take the by, Seamus, take him.

Ah, now, nurse, sure isn't he harmless. 'Tis only a bit o' poetry.

200 Take that by, Seamus, take him at once. **I**

He bends over me and whispers, Ah, . . . I'm sorry, Frankie. Here's your English history book. He slips the book under my shirt and lifts me from the bed. He whispers that I'm a feather. I try to see Patricia when we pass through her room but all I can make out is a blur of dark head on a pillow.

Sister Rita stops us in the hall to tell me I'm a great disappointment to her, that she expected me to be a good boy after what God had done for me, after all the prayers said by hundreds of boys at the Confraternity, after all the care from the nuns and nurses of the Fever Hospital, after the way they let my mother and father in to see me, a thing rarely allowed, and this is how I
210 repaid them lying in the bed reciting silly poetry back and forth with Patricia Madigan knowing very well there was a ban on all talk between typhoid and diphtheria. She says I'll have plenty of time to reflect on my sins in the big ward upstairs and I should beg forgiveness for my disobedience reciting a pagan English poem about a thief on a horse and a maiden with red lips who commits a terrible sin when I could have been praying or reading the life of a saint. She made it her business to read that poem so she did and I'd be well advised to tell the priest in confession.

H MEMOIR

In what ways is Frank and Patricia's situation like that of the characters in "The Highwayman"?

I MEMOIR

Reread lines 193–200. McCourt uses **dialect** to provide a realistic portrayal of the nurse. How does this influence your reaction to her?

15. **The wind . . . jeweled sky:** the opening lines of "The Highwayman," a romantic, action-packed narrative poem by the 20th-century British writer Alfred Noyes.

16. **by:** boy (spelled to indicate the nurse's dialectal pronunciation).



A children's ward typical of British and Irish hospitals in the 1940s

The Kerry nurse follows us upstairs gasping and holding on to the banister. She tells me I better not get the notion she'll be running up to this part of the
220 world every time I have a little pain or a twinge.

There are twenty beds in the ward, all white, all empty. The nurse tells Seamus put me at the far end of the ward against the wall to make sure I don't talk to anyone who might be passing the door, which is very unlikely since there isn't another soul on this whole floor. She tells Seamus this was the fever ward during the Great Famine¹⁷ long ago and only God knows how many died here brought in too late for anything but a wash before they were buried and there are stories of cries and moans in the far reaches of the night. She says 'twould break your heart to think of what the English did to us, that if they didn't put the blight¹⁸ on the potato they didn't do much to take it off.
230 No pity. No feeling at all for the people that died in this very ward, children suffering and dying here while the English feasted on roast beef and guzzled the best of wine in their big houses, little children with their mouths all green from trying to eat the grass in the fields beyond, God bless us and save us and guard us from future famines. **J**

Seamus says 'twas a terrible thing indeed and he wouldn't want to be walking these halls in the dark with all the little green mouths gaping at him. The nurse takes my temperature, 'Tis up a bit, have a good sleep for yourself now that you're away from the chatter with Patricia Madigan below who will never know a gray hair.¹⁹

240 She shakes her head at Seamus and he gives her a sad shake back.

J MEMOIR

Reread lines 221–234. What insights do you get about the sufferings the Irish endured during the famine and its lasting effect on their culture?

17. **Great Famine** (fām'īn): a devastating food shortage in Ireland in the late 1840s, caused by a failure of the potato crop. Over a million Irish people died of starvation during the famine, and about 1.5 million emigrated, mainly to the United States.

18. **blight**: a plant disease—in this case, the one that destroyed the Irish potato crop.

19. **never know a gray hair**: won't live to be old.

Nurses and nuns never think you know what they're talking about. If you're ten going on eleven you're supposed to be simple like my uncle Pat Sheehan who was dropped on his head. You can't ask questions. You can't show you understand what the nurse said about Patricia Madigan, that she's going to die, and you can't show you want to cry over this girl who taught you a lovely poem which the nun says is bad.

The nurse tells Seamus she has to go and he's to sweep the lint from under my bed and mop up a bit around the ward. Seamus tells me . . . that you can't catch a disease from a poem. . . . He never heard the likes of it, a little
250 fella shifted upstairs for saying a poem and he has a good mind to go to the *Limerick Leader*²⁰ and tell them print the whole thing except he has this job and he'd lose it if ever Sister Rita found out. Anyway, Frankie, you'll be outa here one of these fine days and you can read all the poetry you want though I don't know about Patricia below, I don't know about Patricia. . . .

He knows about Patricia in two days because she got out of the bed to go to the lavatory when she was supposed to use a bedpan and collapsed and died in the lavatory. Seamus is mopping the floor and there are tears on his cheeks and he's saying, 'Tis a dirty rotten thing to die in a lavatory when you're lovely in yourself. She told me she was sorry she had you reciting that poem and getting
260 you shifted from the room, Frankie. She said 'twas all her fault.

It wasn't, Seamus.

I know and didn't I tell her that.

Patricia is gone and I'll never know what happened to the highwayman and Bess, the landlord's daughter. I ask Seamus but he doesn't know any poetry at all especially English poetry. He knew an Irish poem once but it was about fairies and had no sign of a highwayman in it. Still he'll ask the men in his local pub where there's always someone reciting something and he'll bring it back to me. Won't I be busy meanwhile reading my short history of England
270 and finding out all about their **perfidy**. That's what Seamus says, perfidy, and I don't know what it means and he doesn't know what it means but if it's something the English do it must be terrible.

He comes three times a week to mop the floor and the nurse is there every morning to take my temperature and pulse. The doctor listens to my chest with the thing hanging from his neck. They all say, And how's our little soldier today? A girl with a blue dress brings meals three times a day and never talks to me. Seamus says she's not right in the head so don't say a word to her.

The July days are long and I fear the dark. There are only two ceiling lights in the ward and they're switched off when the tea tray is taken away
280 and the nurse gives me pills. The nurse tells me go to sleep but I can't because I see people in the nineteen beds in the ward all dying and green around their mouths where they tried to eat grass and moaning for soup


Language Coach

Informal Language

This kind of language differs from the formal language of school writing. In lines 249–252, the expressions *the likes of* (“anything like”) and *fella* (“fellow”) re-create the sound of Seamus’s informal, Irish-accented speech. Find examples of informal language in lines 252–254 and 258–260.

perfidy (pûr'fî-dê) *n.*
treachery; betrayal of trust

20. *Limerick Leader*: a newspaper published in Limerick.

Protestant soup²¹ any soup and I cover my face with the pillow hoping they won't come and stand around the bed clawing at me and howling for bits of the chocolate bar my mother brought last week. 

No, she didn't bring it. She had to send it in because I can't have any more visitors. Sister Rita tells me a visit to the Fever Hospital is a privilege and after my bad behavior with Patricia Madigan and that poem I can't have the privilege anymore. She says I'll be going home in a few weeks and my job is
290 to concentrate on getting better and learn to walk again after being in bed for six weeks and I can get out of bed tomorrow after breakfast. I don't know why she says I have to learn how to walk when I've been walking since I was a baby but when the nurse stands me by the side of the bed I fall to the floor and the nurse laughs, See, you're a baby again.

I practice walking from bed to bed back and forth back and forth. I don't want to be a baby. I don't want to be in this empty ward with no Patricia and no highwayman and no red-lipped landlord's daughter. I don't want the ghosts of children with green mouths pointing bony fingers at me and clamoring for bits of my chocolate bar.


300 Seamus says a man in his pub knew all the verses of the highwayman poem and it has a very sad end. Would I like him to say it because he never learned how to read and he had to carry the poem in his head? He stands in the middle of the ward leaning on his mop and recites,

*Flot-flot, in the frosty silence! Flot-flot in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment, she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.*

310 He hears the shot and escapes but when he learns at dawn how Bess died he goes into a rage and returns for revenge only to be shot down by the redcoats.

*Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,
When they shot him down on the highway,
Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.*

Seamus wipes his sleeve across his face and snuffles. He says, There was no call at all to shift you up here away from Patricia when you didn't even know what happened to the highwayman and Bess. 'Tis a very sad story and when I said it to my wife she wouldn't stop crying the whole night till we went to bed.

320 She said there was no call for them redcoats to shoot that highwayman, they are responsible for half the troubles of the world and they never had any pity on the Irish, either. Now if you want to know any more poems, Frankie, tell me and I'll get them from the pub and bring 'em back in my head. 

ALLUSIONS

Reread lines 280–285 and identify the allusions McCourt makes to tragic events that occurred during the Great Famine. Why do you think McCourt includes these references?

21. **Protestant soup:** soup provided by the English to the starving Irish during the famine, often in return for renouncing Catholicism and joining the Protestant faith.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE As a high school teacher, Frank McCourt encouraged his students to write from their experiences. Years later, he recalled the honesty and bravery of their writing and found the inspiration to write his own memoir.

THE EDUCATION *of* Frank McCourt

By Barbara Sande Dimmitt

The bell rang in the faculty lounge at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. When McCourt began teaching at the prestigious public high school in 1972, he joked that he'd finally made it to paradise. . . .

The bits and pieces that bubbled into his consciousness enlivened the stories he told in class. "Everyone has a story to tell," he said. "Write about what you know with conviction, from the heart. Dig deep," he urged. "Find your own voice and dance your own dance!"

On Fridays the students read their compositions aloud. To draw them out, McCourt would read excerpts from his duffel bag full of notebooks. "You had such an interesting childhood, Mr. McCourt," they said. "Why don't you write a book?" They threw his own words back at him: "It sounds like there's more to that story; dig deeper. . . ."

McCourt was past 50 and painfully aware of the passage of time. But despite his growing frustration at his [own memoir begun six years earlier], he never tired of his students' work.

Over the years some talented writers passed through McCourt's popular classes. Laurie Gwen Shapiro was one of them. He decided she was coasting along on her technical skills. "You're capable of much more," McCourt told her. "Try writing something that's meaningful to you for a change."

Near the end of the semester, McCourt laid an essay—graded 100—on Laurie's desk. "If Laurie is willing to read her essay," he announced to the class, "I think we'll all benefit."

Laurie began to read a portrait of love clouded by anger and shame. She told of her father, partially paralyzed, and of resenting

his inability to play with her or help her ride a bicycle. The paper shook in her trembling hands, and McCourt understood all too well what it cost her to continue. She also admitted she was embarrassed by her father's limp. The words, McCourt knew, were torn straight from her soul.

When Laurie finished, with tears streaming down her face, the students broke into applause. McCourt looked around the room, his own vision blurred.

These young people have been giving you lessons in courage, he thought. When will you dare as mightily as they?

It was October 1994. Frank McCourt, now retired, sat down and read his book's new opening, which he had written a few days before and still found satisfying. But many blank pages lay before him. *What if I never get it right?* he wondered grimly.

He stared at the logs glowing in the fireplace and could almost hear students' voices from years past, some angry, some defeated, others confused and seeking guidance. "It's no good, Mr. McCourt. I don't have what it takes."

Then Frank McCourt, author, heard the steady tones of Frank McCourt, teacher:

Of course you do. Dig deeper. Find your own voice and dance your own dance.

He scribbled a few lines. "I'm in a playground on Classon Avenue in Brooklyn with my brother Malachy. He's two, I'm three. We're on the seesaw." In the innocent voice of an unprotected child who could neither comprehend nor control the world around him, Frank McCourt told his tale of poverty and abandonment.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Frank in the hospital?
2. **Recall** What rules does Frank break?
3. **Clarify** What happens to Patricia Madigan?
4. **Clarify** According to “The Education of Frank McCourt,” who or what finally prompted McCourt to complete *Angela’s Ashes*?

Literary Analysis

5. **Understand Memoir** Frank develops two friendships in the hospital. What is the basis for each friendship? Give reasons to support your response.
6. **Draw Conclusions About Character** What kind of a man is Seamus? Support your answer with examples of his actions and his words.
7. **Analyze Character Motives** What motivates Sister Rita to forbid Frank to talk to Patricia? Considering Patricia’s fate, were Sister Rita’s actions justified? Cite details to support your response.
8. **Use Allusions to Make Inferences** Review the allusions and inferences you recorded in your chart as you read. What would your reading experience have been like if McCourt had not included these allusions?
9. **Identify Author’s Perspective** On the basis of the numerous **allusions** to Catholic clergy, rituals, practices, and beliefs in this selection, what do you think is McCourt’s view of the Catholic Church and its influence on Irish culture and society in the 1940s? Explain your answer.
10. **Evaluate Voice** A writer’s unique style of expression is called voice. In *Angela’s Ashes*, McCourt writes in the “innocent voice of an unprotected child.” How effective is this voice in relating not only events from McCourt’s childhood but also his adult feelings about these events?

Literary Criticism

11. **Critical Interpretations** One critic has said that while reading *Angela’s Ashes* “you never know whether to weep or roar—and find yourself doing both at once.” Did you think any of the incidents described in this selection were at the same time sad and humorous? Cite examples to support your answer.

How does **FRIENDSHIP** begin?

How does friendship end?



READING 2B Analyze the influence of mythic, classical and traditional literature on 20th and 21st century literature.

6 Analyze how literary essays interweave personal examples and ideas with factual information to explain, present a perspective, or describe a situation or event.

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Write the letter of the phrase that best clarifies the meaning of the boldfaced word.

1. Experiencing a **relapse** of the flu usually means that (a) one will be sick for a little longer, (b) it is time for a flu shot, (c) it is time to go back to school or work.
2. A **torrent** of water could most likely be produced by (a) a leaky hose, (b) a large rain cloud, (c) a spray bottle.
3. Experiencing an act of **perfidy** might make you (a) get interested in mountain climbing, (b) feel angry and betrayed, (c) decide to read historical fiction.
4. If you have **induced** a friend to join you on a boring errand, you are probably good at (a) persuading others, (b) staying on schedule, (c) working alone.

WORD LIST

induced
perfidy
relapse
torrent

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

- contrast
- environment
- factor
- incorporate
- predominant

In a brief essay, **contrast** McCourt’s experience in the first hospital room with his experience after he is moved upstairs. **Incorporate** information about his surroundings as well as his thoughts and feelings. Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your response.



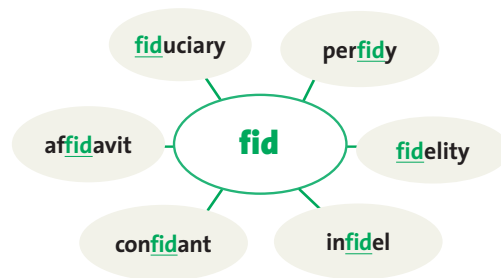
READING 1A Determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin roots.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE LATIN ROOT *fid*

The word *perfidy* contains the Latin root *fid*, which means “faith; trust; belief.” This root is found in a number of English words. To understand the meaning of words with *fid*, use context clues as well as your knowledge of the root.

PRACTICE Write the word from the word web that best completes each sentence. Use context clues to help you or, if necessary, consult a dictionary.

1. The _____ of the sound from those speakers is amazing; the music sounds like a live concert.
2. Everyone needs a trusted _____, someone to rely on.
3. A (An) _____ is usually sworn to in front of a public official.
4. In a (an) _____ agreement, one party holds money or property in trust for another.
5. You shouldn’t call Leo a (an) _____ just because he doesn’t believe in your religion.



Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML9-938

Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Write Concisely

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 931. A gerund is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and acts as a noun. A **gerund phrase** consists of a gerund plus its modifiers and complements. Because gerunds can be used to replace entire groups of words, they often help to make writing more concise.

Here are two examples of McCourt’s use of gerund phrases:

I practice walking from bed to bed back and forth back and forth.

(line 295)

He stops mopping the floor and calls to Patricia. . . . (lines 144–145)

Notice how the revisions in blue insert gerunds and a gerund phrase to make the writing more concise. Revise your response to the prompt below by employing similar techniques.

STUDENT MODEL

Seamus thinks that ^{reciting poetry is good for} Patricia and Frank ~~should be able to recite~~
~~poetry to each other~~ while Sister Rita believes that patients
^{refrain from talking or laughing,}
~~shouldn't talk with each other or laugh with each other.~~

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Increase your understanding of the people portrayed in *Angela’s Ashes* by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Short Response: Write an Argument

Sister Rita is in charge of patient care, while Seamus takes care of the building. Who is the more caring person? Write **one or two paragraphs** in which you explain why Sister Rita or Seamus is the more compassionate person.

REVISING TIP

Review your argument. Have you used gerund phrases to make your writing more concise? If not, revise your response.



WRITING 15C Write an interpretative response to an expository text that extends beyond a summary and literal analysis.

ORAL AND WRITTEN

CONVENTIONS 17A Use and understand the function of verbals (gerunds).

Interactive
Revision



Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML9-939