

Becky McCourt-----Frank McCourt

I would like to say I loved the book. It has been handed down to every member in the family. My grandfather George McCourt told us the very same stories. The way in which he tells of his horrific childhood is so true of McCourt form. My dad can tell a tale so absolutely ghastly, and some how you always come out with a smile. I love your web pages also. I found it looking for credits on Malachy.

Thank you.

Becky

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Christine

To Frank McCourt

I'm a norwegian schoolgirl and today I am going to write an essay on your book "Angelas Ashes".

My teacher recommended (well, she gave me no choice...) the book to me because she ment I would love it.

And it turns out my teacher is a very smart woman. "Angelas Ashes" is one of the very best books I have ever read, and is also what many of my friends and relatives will get for christmas this year. I'm hoping that you'll write a follower...

Christine (18)

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Joemay-----Roddy McCorley

This is not a book review, but an inquiry. I would like to know where I can obtain information about the Roddy McCorley that is mentioned frequently in the book. I have a friend whose last name is Corley and he thinks he may be decended. If you don't have the information, perhaps you can supply me with a lead.

The E-Mail address is: joemay@springnet1.com

Thank you.

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Mary Cleary

I was happy to find your website about Frank McCourt's "Angela's Ashes." It's been out for awhile, but it's always worth talking about. What a remarkable book from a remarkable writer. "Angela's Ashes" weaves together tragedy and comedy, making them at once inseperable and redeemingly distinct. The book is the reward of a forgiving eye and for us the gift of a generous storyteller.

Mary Cleary--Virginia

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Tammmaron

Konnici wa....

Ogenki desu ka? Anywhoo.... I am a student at Kenai central high school. I have just finished the book Angela's Ashes and I am writting a thesis essay now. One of the questions on my essay is how does the title of the book relate to the atually text. I know that Angela was Frank's mothers name, but why did he put "ashes" after that. If you could help me and explain why he called his book Angela's Ashes, it would really help. thanks!

tammmaron

e-mail: ladykard99@hotmail.com

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Larry\_Norris@cch.com

This book is absolutely haunting. I dreamed about this book every night for over a week. I highly recommend listening to the tape version which is narrated by himself. He is an absolute master in the reading.

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Jill Ross

A better book I have never read! I have immense admiration for Mr. McCourt for overcoming the hardships of his youth, and I am so happy for his successes in life. I, like other readers have indicated, will think of little Frank everytime I eat a soft-boiled egg. This book makes me feel ashamed for every feeling sorry for myself about anything. Highly enjoyable reading, and I'm so sad I've finished the book. I am pleased to see a movie is being made. I love Mr. McCourt's statement, "...the happy childhood is hardly worth your while." We who had such priviledged childhoods compared to little Frank and his siblings can hardly appreciate the wonderful foods and comforts we have. Mr. McCourt's story helps me appreciate the simple things of life so much more! Thank you, Mr. McCourt! If you liked this book, another great one I've read recently is ALL OVER BUT THE SHOUTIN'.

Jill Ross

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pedazo de pan y agua dulce. sobrevivieron a la humillaci\*n  
(From Webmaster: \* -- illegible Spanish letters at my PC system)

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Brian C-----Reaction to Angela's Ashes

What a shock! "Angela's Ashes" instantly transported me back to my own painful childhood in the North of Ireland. Frank McCourt's childhood very nearly parallels the misery, shame, low self-esteem, humiliation, and guilt that I experienced.

Most aspects of his life were worse than mine. But some were better. He at least had his mother's love to bolster him up. Like Frank, I was born into a poor Irish Catholic family, but in a Northern Irish coastal town. The eldest of four, two boys and two girls.

For the first seven years life was okay, but things changed for the worse, much worse, after our mother died, and my father wound up jobless for a good number of years afterwards. Two years after our mother's death he got remarried to a real bitch of a woman who was a combination of low intelligence, and surprisingly deep cunning. She was only interested in getting "her own man", but not in some other woman's brats.

Our family just spiraled into deeper poverty, with many experiences mirroring those of the McCourts, but with the deliberate cruelty of our stepmother thrown in. I painfully remember wearing clothes given to us by other people, boots and shoes that were either too big or too small, rags wrapped around my feet instead of socks, sometimes having to wear cast-off women's blouses as shirts. And always hungry. Begging for food from relatives and family friends. The St. Vincent de Paul Society helped a bit. They bought us new boots or shoes on at least two occasions, and I always give to them now for that reason. I continually promised myself that somehow I would escape and do well for myself, and mercifully I did manage to escape at the tender age of 15..

Ironically it was the oul' English, the same who had inflicted so much misery on Ireland, who provided me with a way out. I signed up with the British Royal Air Force as a boy entrant. They improved on my meager Irish Catholic education, and taught me a trade that became the basis for my carving out a successful life. But most immediately they gave me three square meals a day, warm clean clothing and decent footwear, all brand new, even if it was in the shape of a uniform. I also received modest weekly wage that I could spend on myself. Seven shillings and sixpence to start with, which mostly went on Wild Woodbines, the same as smoked by Angela. But there was always the guilt of having left my siblings behind to continue in misery.

A word about Woodbines. They were an evil little cigarette. Smaller and thinner than regular cigarettes, and unfiltered. The "working man's cigarette", reputedly made from the tobacco factory's sweepings-up (like the brawn in Angela's Ashes). They came in packs of five, ten, and twenty. A pack of five cost around 8 pence in the early 50's, but some small shops would even sell them singly for tuppence each. They must have been cheaper in the South, because people used to smuggle cigarettes across the border into the North. We used to smoke half of a Woodbine, and then "nick" it by squeezing the lighted ash from the end. The remaining part of the cigarette was then saved for later. I think that just about everybody who smoked Woodbines did this. Eventually I graduated to posher cigarettes like Players Navy Cut, when I got a little better off, but I haven't smoked a cigarette in nearly 20 years, and don't intend to take it up again any time soon.

I lived in England until I was 38, during which time I married my English wife. Between us we produced two beautiful daughters. I was always afraid of sinking back into the abyss of poverty, and in the late 70's I was finding it difficult to support my family on the salary that I was earning at the time. But God was watching out for me, and in 1979 I landed a job in the United States. We emigrated, and haven't looked back since.

I think that Frank McCourt would agree that given half a brain, the kind of childhood that we both suffered is a powerful incentive to escape to somewhere else, and do well. But there is always that fear of regression. That poor, lonely, suffering child still lurks in our subconscious, ever driving us, ever haunting us.

I tried to write my story, but it got too painful, and I had to quit. I admire Frank McCourt's writing because he not only tells the story in a readable way, but also has the courage and honesty to tell the kind of things that, to me, are the secrets that I will probably take to my grave. I have only spoken a little to my wife and family of the things that happened to me, and it has been a very sanitized version at that. Only my sisters know most of the things that really went on. My brother, God rest his soul, passed away at the age of 36. I was amazed at Frank's ability to recall all of those old memories. He mentioned things in the book that I had forgotten about until he laid them out before me. In exorcizing his own ghosts, he has also helped me to do the same, so I owe him my thanks.

A female acquaintance first told me about "Angela's Ashes" several months ago, but I thought that it would probably be some woman's type of book, so I didn't make any great effort to find it. I found it by

Clifford Finlay

Dear Frank,

I hope you'll be able to reply to this as I would really like your opinion on my English A level Coursework. I was so enthralled by 'Angela's Ashes' I read it in a day when I was on holidays in Donegal. Whilst reading it I was simply moved and loved the stylistic beauty of your memoir. It made me appreciate my comparatively luxurious childhood and so I decided to use it for my coursework. I had to compare it to something so I chose Roddy Doyle's Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha. It turned out to be a daunting task and my first draft was thrown back at me as I hadn't destroyed the text enough in both literature pieces. In my final draft I managed to give it a proper structure and got an immaterial A. I wasn't happy one bit with the work as what I once thought was incredibly funny was analytically sound. Just out of interest I'd love it if you could read my work, my e-mail address is:

clifford@corner95.freemove.co.uk

Many thanks,

Clifford Finlay

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From Webmaster: Malachy's new book (Quoted from Read Ireland; <http://www.readireland.ie>)

Through Irish Eyes: A Visual Companion to Angela McCourt's Ireland with a foreword by Malachy McCourt

(Hardback; 16.99 IRP / 23.50 USD)

This book adds a visual dimension to the Ireland that has so many readers of Angela's Ashes (Frank McCourt's luminous account of his Limerick childhood) have longed to know better. Stirring photography of Limerick in the 1930s and 1940s offers witness to the Irish way of life, its landscapes, its singular ways, its people and customs, its struggles, and its small and hard-wrought joys. Compelling images are coupled here with firsthand accounts of daily life in Limerick and the gorgeous words of such important writers as Yeats, Morton and Thackeray.

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John Cahill

Dear Frank

I want to say that all in my family enjoyed your masterpiece so well.

I come from Buttevant in North Cork and knew poverty like yours though none of us actually died, as a result of meeting a friend on the net, who also read your book, she encouraged and bullied me into writing my own account of my life, and that of our family.

I'd love to know what you think of it but I'm certain you are too busy, what you might be able to do is tell me how I might get it viewed by someone who would give me an honest appraisal.

By a strange quirk of fate I know your Limerick well as I had the job of setting up Limerick's new commercial radio station, new Limerick 95. see I am a broadcast engineer by profession but I'm sick of it now thanks again for such pleasure yours

John Cahill

jcahill@iol.ie

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Paul Wunsch-----My classmates and I

Dear Mr. McCourt,

Recently my classmates and I were given your amazing book "Angela's Ashes" for a summer reading assignment. We were all taken aback by the beauty and splendor of your writings. We were hoping that you could visit us some day this year and speak to us in reference to your book. We are located at the St. Francis high school in Fresh Meadows New York. It would give me much pleasure to receive even a response from you.

Whenever it best suits you, could you please email me at mcpopmart@aol.com?

Thank you for everything

Paul Wunsch

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DORE JOHN GERARD-----Limerick...

The end of the book is cool when Frank robs money to get out of Limerick to go to America!

Frank I know how you feel, I live here!!!

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Arregui Alvarez-----Cenizas de Angela en la mitad del mundo

Recib\* el libro como regalo de cumplea\*os al cumplir los 43, pero lo que verdaderamente he tenido en mis manos es una lecci\*n de vida. La franqueza de Frank Mc Court me hizo revivir momentos de mi ni\*ez en este pa\*s andino en el que los ni\*os son tan maltratados hasta el d\*a de hoy. Yo mismo tuve compa\*eros, valerosos ni\*os, que acud\*an a la escuela descalzos y enga\*ando al hambre con solo un

accident in an airport bookstore in Singapore when I was looking for something to read on the return journey of a business trip. A brief flick through the pages told me that this was something that I needed to read. The flight to Los Angeles was approximately 16 hours, and I could hardly bear to put the book down throughout the journey. By the time I reached L.A. I had read 90 percent.

May I offer my theory of an explanation for the book's title. Angela spent much of her time sitting in front of the fire, sometimes with women friends, and sometimes alone. My stepmother did the same. Angela probably gazed into the glowing ashes that collected at the bottom of the fire grate, just as my stepmother did. Many of the people of that time, women especially, could visualize objects and people in the flickering glow of ashes, so it was a hypnotic focus and escape for the imagination (before television was invented). The bare legs of women who did this took on a mottled appearance from being so close to the heat of the fire. Actually there are two possibilities. The other possibility is the ashes of her Woodbines, but like the first theory better because, in the book, Angela frequently stared into the ashes of the fire when her real world came knocking too hard.

My thanks, once again to the great writing by Frank McCourt, and domo arragato to the Japan-Ireland Friendly Club for putting together such a helpful website for Angela's Ashes fans.

Brian C

bca1933@aol.com

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#### The Biggins Children's Music Group

This may upset some of the diehard fans. I was forced to read the Novel for an exam. It was the shortest of the 3 books that I had to read.

After the first 10 pages I threw the book against the wall through frustration. When the first child died I sank into a state of depression and anger. Angry because I had to read it all for the exam.

After the deaths of the twins the fate of the book was sealed for me. It is a sad sad tale (truth) that one must prepare for. I believe that it a sad example of child abuse and neglect, which as a Preschool teacher I find hard to accept, but accept it I must. It is the truth.

They were sad sad times, but in how many years will we be reading novels such as this from currently developing countries. Although the novel is not romantic, we attach a degree of romanticism to it because many of us have Irish/Catholic roots or know someone who is/was. We can readily accept the novel because it represents people and places of whom we may know.

Would we be as accepting of a novel about a young boy growing up in a south American country?

....maybe so if he was Catholic.

A sad sad book, but well presented and honest. Definately no sugar coating there.

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