

ANGELA'S ASHES

– EXTRA

Level 3

This level is suitable for students who have been learning English for at least three years and up to four years. It corresponds with the Common European Framework level B1.

SYNOPSIS

Frank McCourt's story takes place in the 1930s and 40s, a time of extreme hardship for many working families both in America and Ireland.

Angela Sheehan, Frank's mother, leaves a desperately poor homelife in the South of Ireland and arrives in America, full of dreams. Within a few weeks she is pregnant and forever tied to a man from the North of Ireland, Malachy McCourt, a man who deals with everything in life by getting drunk. Their family grows and they live in a two-room apartment in Brooklyn. When Malachy actually gets a job, it never lasts more than three weeks. Most of the time they have no food, no money and no hope.

Frankie is only four when the family return to Limerick in the south of Ireland, where they find the poverty is worse than in Brooklyn. It is even harder for Malachy to get a job because he is from the North. He regularly drinks the family's dole money provided by the government, and Angela and the boys have to beg for food.

We live with Frankie through the death of his sister and brothers and humiliation at school. We feel the powerful hand of the Catholic Church and witness the strange behaviour of grown-ups. We follow him into the adolescent world of work, girls and his first pint of beer. We experience the deprivation of Frankie's world and we share his hope when he finally has enough money saved for a boat ticket back to America.

LANGUAGE

In *Angela's Ashes*, Frank McCourt uses a very direct and simple style. He tells most of his story in the present tense, expressing his thoughts just as he did at the time. As we read, we feel we are inside Frankie's head, looking out at the world through the eyes of the growing boy. This adaptation simplifies the language, but keeps a flavour of the speech patterns of the Irish people in the 1930s and 40s. For example, when someone is asked a Yes/No question, such as 'Is that a cheese sandwich?', they answer, 'It is.' instead of 'Yes.' Ireland was a very religious country at this time. The adults in Frank's story often call on the holy family when they are angry or shocked. Grandma, for example, often says, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph!' when a member of Angela's family has done yet another 'terrible' thing.

MEDIA LINKS

DVD: *Angela's Ashes* is available on DVD.

CD: A recording of *Angela's Ashes*, read by Frank McCourt, is available to accompany the Richmond reader.

Books: Frank McCourt has published two more volumes about his life, as well as *Angela's Ashes* (HarperCollins): *'Tis* (HarperCollins) continues with the young Frank arriving back in New York; *Teacher Man* (HarperCollins) is about his career teaching English in New York.

HOW TO USE YOUR RICHMOND MEDIA READER

Choosing and motivating

Angela's Ashes is an unusual story. If your class haven't seen the film or read the book in translation, read aloud the first few pages to them. Read part of the synopsis above to motivate them. Or show an extract from the DVD to set the scene for the book.

Organising

Plan a class reading schedule. Decide how many pages to set for reading each week. Select exercises from the back of the reader (see pages 86–8) and extra activities from this resource sheet to go with each chunk of reading. Have regular class feedback sessions. (All answers are on page 4 of this resource sheet.)

Using the DVD

If you plan to use the DVD, watch it yourself first to check that it is suitable for your class. Show it in chunks of, say, 20 minutes in parallel with the class reading schedule, pausing at the end of a scene. Alternatively, show the whole film after students have finished the book, as a reward. Explain that the Irish accents are strong and the language is very colloquial, so students shouldn't worry if they find it difficult to follow at first. The reader is written in British English, but retains some of the Irish patterns of speech. There are ideas for using the DVD on page 4 of this resource sheet.

Glossary and casual language

Go to 'New Words' at the back of the reader. Translate the words with the class or get students to find meanings at home.

Quite a lot of informal language is used in *Angela's Ashes* – not all of it is suitable for students to use themselves. (see Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource). Tell students to look out for examples as they read. Discuss their examples in context and decide when they are/are not appropriate.

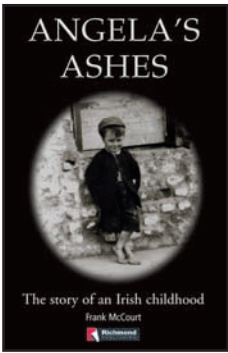
Fact Files

Set these as self-study or use for whole class work. The first two files (pages 80–3) are about the making of the film of *Angela's Ashes*. If you are planning to show the film to your class, use the fact files as extension work. Project ideas are on page 4 of this resource sheet.

What did they think?

Get everyone to do a written or verbal review of *Angela's Ashes*. Compare opinions. Will they try reading the original book some time? Will they read more books by Frank McCourt? Did you like it? Did you enjoy studying it with the class?

RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES



ANGELA'S ASHES

– EXTRA

People and places

1 Who ...

- a) was from the North of Ireland? *Malachy McCourt*
- b) was from the South of Ireland?
- c) was born in America?
- d) were more important in Limerick – priests or policemen?

Where ...

- e) were there secret drinking clubs?
- f) did the McCourts go to look for work?
- g) did people in Limerick keep dry?

Prologue–Chapter 2

1 Complete the sentences about Malachy with past tense forms of these verbs.

have to leave spend try

- a) Malachy three months in prison for stealing a lorry.
- b) He marry Angela because she was expecting his baby.
- c) He to start a fight in the church.
- d) He Philomena's party to get a drink.

2 Answer these questions.

- a) When is Friday a good day for Frankie's family?
- b) When is Friday a bad day?
- c) How many children does Angela give birth to in New York?
- d) How does Malachy change after Margaret is born?
- e) Why does Mrs Liebowitz want to find Angela's cousins?
- f) Who pays for the McCourts to travel back to Ireland?

3 Circle the correct answers.

- a) Grandma Sheehan's house *is* / isn't a happy house.
- b) Religion is *more* / *less* important in Limerick than in New York.
- c) Malachy *worries* / *doesn't worry* about food and clothes for the family.
- d) Angela *gets* / *doesn't get* help from the St Vincent de Paul Society.
- e) They *want* / *don't want* to check that the family really *needs* / *doesn't need* their help.

Chapters 3–5

1 Put these adjectives in the right spaces.

funny jealous mean proud sorry

- a) Malachy is too *proud* to pick up coal off the road.
- b) Aunt Aggie is too to give the boys sugar and milk on their porridge.
- c) The boys like Uncle Pa because he makes faces at them.
- d) Aggie is of Angela because she has a family.
- e) The men in the pub are for Malachy and buy him too many pints.

2 At the end of Chapter 3, Dr Troy says, 'God is asking too much.' What does he mean?

3 Which of these would you hate most? Put them in order – 1 (hate most) – 6 (hate least).

- a) Everyone in your street using your toilet.
- b) Having a pig's head for Christmas dinner.
- c) Begging for money on the street.
- d) Boys from school seeing you begging.
- e) Your dad spending the family's money on whisky.

4 Who says to Frankie ...

- a) 'You don't know your arse from your elbow.' ? *..... Mikey Molloy.....*
- b) 'I'll kill if you say a single word on the way to the church.' ?
- c) 'You have a long way to go.' ?
- d) 'Ye're not a real Catholic.' ?

Chapters 6–8

1 Circle the wrong words in these sentences. Write the correct words.

- a) A dog eats Bill Galvin's dinner. *..... Frankie.....*
- b) Dad takes Malachy to the doctor because he has sore tonsils.
- c) A boy from the dancing class tells Frankie's Mam and Dad about Frankie and the cinema.
- d) The priest doesn't want Frankie as an altar boy because he doesn't know the Mass in Latin.

2 Put these words in the right spaces.

after because before since when

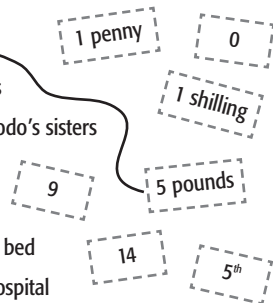
- a) The other boys in the class laugh Fintan gives pieces of apple to Frankie and Paddy.
- b) Paddy and Frankie bunk off school they haven't had any lunch.
- c) Frankie is afraid to go home their afternoon in the countryside.

RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- d) Paddy's father hasn't seen Frankie's mother she 'ran off' to America.
- e) Angela cries when she thinks about her life she went to America.

3 Make pairs.

- a) money for the baby
- b) number of Quasimodo's sisters
- c) the price of looking at Quasimodo's sisters
- d) money for St Francis
- e) Malachy's class
- f) number of fleas in the hospital bed
- g) number of weeks Frank is in hospital



Chapters 9–11

1 Who ...

- a) says that Frankie reads too many books?
- b) tells Angela to give Frankie lots of meat and eggs?
- c) tells Angela that Malachy is drinking all his money?
- d) does Frankie steal bread from?
- e) sends Angela three pounds in a telegram?

2 Answer Yes (Y) or No (N) to these questions.

- a) Mr Hannon is a coal man. Does he think it's a good job?
- b) Do Mr and Mrs Hannon have any children?
- c) Does Malachy bring any money back from England?
- d) Do the boys want to taste the sheep's eyes?
- e) Would you?

3 Find a time expression to complete these sentences.

- a) Frank listens to Shakespeare plays on the radio *on Sunday night*
- b) Laman Griffin hasn't cleaned his house
- c) Laman Griffin stays in bed
- d) Frank can start as a telegram boy
- e) Frank tells his sins to an old priest
- f) Uncle Pat says that Frank can sleep in Grandma's bed

Chapters 12–14

Answer these questions.

- a) What look like dead dogs and smell like dead birds?
- b) Where does Aggie buy Frank's new clothes?
- c) What kills Theresa Carmody?
- d) Where does Frank save his money for America?
- e) How many pints does Frank drink with Uncle Pa?
- f) What three things does Frank take from Mrs Finucane's house after he finds her dead?

FINAL TASKS

Writing

1 In *Angela's Ashes*, Frank McCourt describes ordinary days from his life. He puts lots of details in. What is an ordinary day in your life like? Describe it in the same way. Start with, for example, what you ate for breakfast. Who said what at the breakfast table? Example: *I hate breakfast. We all have to sit at the table. I'm never hungry in the morning, but my mum says I have to eat. And so on.*

2 Choose one of the photographs in the book. Write about how it relates to Frankie and his life.

3 In Chapter 4 Malachy tells Frankie that the Saint of the Seventh Step brings new babies, like their baby brother Michael. What stories did your parents tell you when you were small? Imagine you are a parent. Tell a story to your children.

4 What were the good things in Frankie's childhood? Make a list.

5 The McCourts have a family party for Frank. What do you think of their party? What's a family party like in your house?

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Find 'New Words' at the back of the book for each of these definitions.

1. Something you have for breakfast.
2. To ask God for something.
3. A place you go if you have been good in this life.
4. A place you go if you have been bad in this life.
5. If you drop something heavy on your toe, it feels like this.
6. An illness where you cough up blood.
7. Before we had mobile phones and text messaging, people sent these.
8. If you do something wrong, the church calls it this.
9. These live in carpets and beds and bite people.
10. We get this out of the ground and burn it to keep warm.

Casual language

Look for examples of these expressions while you're reading.

1. 'Get off your arse.'
2. 'Don't be a baby.'
3. 'What's up with you?'
4. 'You don't know your arse from your elbow.'
5. 'I'll break your face.'

Match the expressions to these sentences.

- a) 'You don't know anything.'
- b) 'I will beat you.'
- c) 'Go out and do something with your life.'
- d) 'What is wrong with you?'
- e) 'You're not behaving like an adult.'

Underline the expressions you shouldn't use yourself!

BOOK TO FILM 1 (pages 80–1)

Discussion

Students work in groups. Each group chooses a book they can adapt for the big screen. If they can't think of a book they all know, they can choose a popular myth or a folk tale. They decide on the director, the locations and the actors. They decide if they should change the story. Each group presents their idea to the rest of the class.

BOOK TO FILM 2 (pages 82–3)

Presenting

Frank's story is made up of funny and sad moments. Students choose their favourite funny and sad moment, either from the book or the film. They present their choices to the class and say why they have chosen them and how they felt when they read/watched them.

Research

Ask students to use the Internet and library to find out about the 1930s and 40s in their country. Was it a time of great hardship for ordinary families, like it was in Ireland and America? Have a whole class session where everyone shares their information.

THE IRISH QUESTION (pages 84–5)

Roleplay

There are conflicts like the Irish Question over power, land and resources all around the world. Encourage students to recognise these issues on a simple level with this negotiating roleplay. Divide students into the Red Team, the Blue Team and the Referee. Give them these notes. They shouldn't see each other's notes.

Red Team: You own a big farm in the middle of the countryside. Blue Team want to hold a festival on the land. You are worried about noise, the land, the local people, the traffic, drugs and general behaviour. But it's very difficult to make money in the country these days. Agree to the festival, but make rules about all the things you are worried about and don't accept less than 10,000 dollars from the Blue Team.

Blue Team: You want to hold a festival this summer. You have found a good place – a big farm in the middle of the countryside. Red Team own it. The site is perfect – there are good roads, not many houses nearby, a big flat area with hills around. You know the Red Team need the money. Make the best deal. Try not to pay more than 8,000 dollars to rent the land for the festival.

Referee: Listen to Red Team and Blue Team negotiate a deal. Only interfere if they get stuck. A fair rent would be 9,000 dollars.

FILM FOLLOW-UP

If you plan to show the film in class, watch it yourself first and check that it is suitable. Students may find the Irish accents and colloquialisms difficult.

Discussion and review

Students are film critics for a local newspaper or film website. What do they think of the film? Talk about actors, locations, length, compare the book to the film. After the discussion, students write a review of the film for their newspaper/website.

Observing details

Choose a scene before class and prepare questions on it. Tell students to watch very carefully, noting down details about clothes, props, people in the room, etc. Play the scene a couple of times and then ask your questions, e.g. *What was Frankie eating? Was Angela smoking? Who was wearing a hat?* Check answers with the whole class.

ANSWER KEY

Self-Study Activities (pages 86–8)

- 1 a) porridge b) whisky c) coal d) bucket e) prayer f) flea g) consumption
- 2 a) priest b) beggar c) saint
- 3 a-i, b-i, c-i
- 5 *Possible answers:* a) Because Malachy goes drinking. b) Because she makes lovely soup. c) She loses a baby./Her baby is born dead. d) Because she can't have children of her own/she is jealous of her sister. e) Because the other boys will laugh at the bits of rubber on his shoes. f) He's laughing at Frankie's rude story.
- 7 a) telegram b) tonsils c) stuff d) typhoid fever
- 9 a) are > aren't b) shares > doesn't share c) have never > have d) after > until e) think > don't think f) call > don't call
- 14 *Possible answers:* a) Because they haven't got any money to pay for it/they burned the wall on the fire. b) Because Frank is too clever to be a telegram boy. He would get a much better job if he wasn't poor. c) Because she buys him new clothes for his first job and she gives him two shillings for his birthday. d) Because he hasn't told a priest about his sins and he thinks he will go to hell.

Resource Sheet Activities

People and places

- 1 a) Malachy McCourt b) Angela Sheehan c) Frank d) priests e) New York f) Limerick, Ireland g) in church

Prologue–Chapter 2

- 1 a) spent b) had to c) tried d) left
- 2 a) When Dad brings home a week's money. b) When Dad doesn't bring home a week's money. c) Five, but Margaret dies. d) He stops drinking. e) Because Angela and Malachy aren't looking after the children. f) Angela's mother, Grandma Sheehan.
- 3 a) isn't b) more c) doesn't worry d) gets e) want, needs

Chapters 3–5

- 1 a) proud b) mean c) funny d) jealous e) sorry
- 2 *Possible answer:* 'God has taken two of Angela's children in one year. He still expects her to believe in Him.'
- 4 a) Mikey Molloy b) Mr Benson c) the priest d) Grandma

Chapters 6–8

- 1 a) A dog > Frankie b) sore tonsils > his Dad's teeth stuck in his mouth c) A boy from the dancing class > Mrs O'Connor OR Frankie's Mam and Dad > Mrs O'Connor d) he doesn't know the Mass in Latin > he's from the lanes OR because he doesn't > although he does
- 2 a) when b) because c) after d) since e) before
- 3 a) 5 pounds b) 9 c) 1 shilling d) 1 penny e) 5th f) 0 g) 14 h) 3 i) 2

Chapters 9–11

- 1 a) Grandma b) the eye doctor c) Bridey d) Kathleen e) Dad
- 2 a) No. b) Yes, two daughters. c) No, only half a box of chocolates d) No.
- 3 a) on Sunday nights b) since his mother died c) all weekend/from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning d) when he's fourteen/in August e) every few weeks f) tonight

Chapters 12–14

- 1 a) Frank's clothes b) Roche's Stores c) consumption d) money (57 pounds), her book of names and the bottle of wine

Vocabulary builder

- 1 1. porridge 2. pray 3. heaven 4. hell 5. sore 6. consumption 7. telegrams 8. a sin 9. fleas 10. coal

Casual language

1. c 2. e 3. d 4. a 5. b
- Don't use any of these expressions yourself except no.3!