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SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1: Frank McCourt's parents bring their four sons back to Ireland, the homeland from which the adults emigrated. Malachy, Frank's father, departed from his native Antrim via Galway with a price on his head. Angela Sheehan, Frank's mother, grew up in Limerick's slums. Before her father deserted the family and fled to Australia, he dropped her brother Patrick on his head. A lame newspaper seller, he earned the name Ab "The Abbot" Sheehan. Angela arrived in New York City during the Great Depression's first Thanksgiving. She met Malachy McCourt after his release from three months in jail for truck hijacking. Frank was conceived the first time they had sex.

Angela's cousins, Delia and Philomena, force Malachy to marry Angela in March 1930, five months before the child is due. A year later, Frank is born. The father is perennially out of work and entertains the boys with stories of Cuchulain, the Irish folk hero. Angela takes the babies on her nightly hunt of Malachy in bars. The birth of Margaret when Frank is three reforms Malachy. Mrs. Leibowitz, a Jewish neighbor, recognizes that the infant is severely ill and feeds the boys after Margaret dies. Angela takes to her bed in despair. After Cousin Philomena writes to Grandmother Margaret Sheehan, she sends passage for her family to return to Ireland.

Chap. 2: A week later, the McCourts arrive in Antrim and find the economy worse than in the United States. Malachy fails to arrange a pension based on his service in the Irish Republican Army during "the Troubles" with the English. The police take up a collection to pay train fare to Limerick, where Grandma Sheehan lives. The McCourts move into a flea-infested furnished room that Grandma rents.

While Angela gives birth to twins, Malachy applies for welfare at the Labour Exchange. Angela begs for help from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The grocer, Mrs. McGrath, skimps on weighing out flour. The children scavenge coal from Dock Road. Baby Oliver dies of pneumonia. The family settles on Hartsonge Street; Frank enters Leamy's National School. Six months later, Ollie's twin Eugene also dies of pneumonia. Malachy carries the coffin to a pub and rests pints of ale on top.

Chap. 3: The family moves to Roden Lane and lives in a row of six houses alongside the neighborhood outhouse. Locals refuse to hire Malachy because he speaks with a north Irish accent. When the downstairs floods, the family lives on the upper floor, which they dub "Italy." At Christmas, they have only a pig's head for food. Because Malachy is too proud to gather coal, the boys look for enough fuel to cook their dinner. Pa Keating, the boys' uncle, takes them to a kindly barkeep who allows them to take coal from his basement. After Michael is born, agents from the St. Vincent de Paul Society observe the family at home and discover that they truly live in squalor. Malachy works briefly at the cement factory.

Chap. 4: Frank prepares for first confession and first communion. He disgraces himself by vomiting his communion breakfast along with the host. He and Mikey slip into the movie to see James Cagney.

Chap. 5: While delivering lunch to Bill Galvin, Grandma Sheehan's boarder, Frank eats the whole meal. A doctor insists on removing Frank's tonsils and adenoids. In 1939, Frank attends a Catholic sodality. His mother begs Stephen Carey, a sacristan, to allow Frank to be an altar boy, but Carey shuts the door in their faces.

Chap. 6: Mr. O'Neill teaches the boys about Euclid and geometry. Frank skips school. He helps Paddy Clohessy deliver coal. Clohessy takes pity on the family because he remembers Angela when she was a girl.

Chap. 7: At age nine, Frank reads to Mr. Timoney and enjoys the writings of Jonathan Swift. The job ends after Mr. Timoney goes to the City Home. Frank helps Uncle Pat "Ab" Sheehan with his newspaper route. After Angela gives birth to Alphie, Malachy drinks up the money for the baptismal celebration.

Chap. 8: At age ten, the day before Frank is confirmed, he gets into trouble. When he joins other boys at Quasimodo Doolley's window to watch his sisters undress, Mikey falls and breaks his shoulder and bites his tongue. In June, Frank gets a nosebleed, a symptom of typhoid fever. At the Fever Hospital, he receives last rites. He meets Patricia Madigan, who shares books through Seamus, the janitor. Frank reads his first Shakespeare and is enamored of Alfred Noyes's poem "The Highwayman." Patricia dies of diphtheria.

After six weeks in bed, Frank must learn to walk again. He gets more books from Seamus. At the end of 14 weeks, Frank returns home. In November, he re-enters school, where Mr. O'Halloran puts him back to fifth grade, which Frank shares with his brother Malachy. Frank's composition on Jesus and the weather is so good that he is moved up to sixth grade. Frank returns to the hospital to eat Christmas dinner, which he receives in an empty room.

Chap. 9: When Angela refuses intercourse to halt the birth of more children, in 1941, Malachy goes to Coventry, England, to work in the munitions factories. Frank suffers from conjunctivitis. At the orders of Dr. Troy, he goes to the hospital for treatment. Seamus recites the end of "The Highwayman" and "The Owl and the Pussycat." After a month, Frank is well enough to go home. The McCourts learn that Malachy has gone mad with drink and sleeps in parks. Angela, in desperation, begs money at the Dispensary.

Chap. 10: In February 1942, Angela weakens and asks for lemonade, which Frank steals in the streets along with bread. The children huddle in bed. Guard Dennehy, the truant officer, investigates and finds the McCourts in desperate straits. The doctor takes Angela to the hospital. The boys live with Aunt Aggie, who degrades them because their father is an alcoholic from northern Ireland. Uncle Pa Keating slips them part of his ham and tomatoes.

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Aggie scolds Frank for lighting a fire with the damper closed. She makes him write to Malachy about Angela's illness. Frank wishes Uncle Pa were his father. Aggie hits young Malachy, who runs away from home. Malachy arrives from England; Angela returns home two weeks later. Two weeks after Malachy goes back to Coventry, he sends a telegram and three pounds. When the money stops coming, Angela begs at the priests' house for table scraps.

Chap. 11: Frank starts a football team. He finds in the family's personal papers that his parents married on March 28, 1930. Mikey explains that Frank was born a bastard. Frank begins helping Mr. Hannon deliver coal, but the dust worsens the conjunctivitis. He presents his pay to Angela, who weeps. The job ends after Hannon goes to the hospital for treatment of diseased legs. Mrs. Hannon urges Frank to complete his education.

Chap. 12: The family awaits Malachy two days before Christmas. He arrives one day late without his top teeth and carrying a partial box of chocolates. On Christmas Day, he returns to his job in England. Angela takes in the poor to sit by the fire. Michael rescues stray dogs. They cease welcoming the homeless when the house is infested with lice.

Frank goes to Mrs. Purcell's house to listen to Radio Eireann, which broadcasts Irish and Shakespearean drama and the music of Billie Holiday. After the rent man evicts the family, they harvest firewood from the wall dividing the upstairs rooms. They move into the cluttered quarters of Cousin Laman. Frank, who is 12, uses Laman's library card. Grandma Sheehan dies of pneumonia. Malachy goes to Dublin to join the army.

Chap. 13: Laman promises Frank the use of his bicycle if Frank will empty his chamber pot. Frank pedals to the library to read about saints' lives. The librarian encourages him to become a priest. In June, he leaves school. Angela takes up with Laman. Frank resents their relationship. Laman refuses to lend his bike. Frank leaves home and moves into Grandma's house with Uncle Ab.

Chap. 14: Frank enjoys summer and permanent freedom from school. He fights sexual desire while he reads about saints' lives at the library. When he moves from saintly books to Lin Yutang, the librarian bans him from the library.

Chap. 15: At age 14, Frank begins his telegram delivery job wearing clothes that Aggie buys so he won't disgrace the family. He treats Michael to fish and chips and a movie, but intends to save for passage to America. In November, Frank has a brief affair with Theresa Carmody, who dies of tuberculosis.

Chap. 16: At the Harrington house, the deranged owner sets Frank near the corpse of his wife. Frank flees through the window. After Harrington lodges a complaint, Frank loses his delivery job. He begins composing threatening letters to Mrs. Brigid Finucane's customers to make them pay their bills. He works for Mr. McCaffrey at Easons Ltd. transporting *The Irish Times*, a Protestant paper, from the depot to the office.

Chap. 17: Uncle Pa treats Frank to his first pint on his 16th birthday. He fights with his mother and slaps her because of her liaison with Laman. After confessing to Father Gregory, Frank feels relieved of his affair with Theresa. Both young Malachy and Angela find jobs. Frank enjoys reading newspapers at Easons. Malachy works in the gas works shoveling coal.

Chap. 18: Before his 19th birthday, Frank finds Mrs. Finucane dead in her chair. He empties her purse and trunk of money and tosses her ledger in the river to free others of their debts to her. After booking passage on the *Irish Oak*, in September, he leaves from Cork and arrives in North America by

way of Montreal, Albany, and Poughkeepsie. Following a fling with Betty at a party en route, he glows at the promise of his new country.

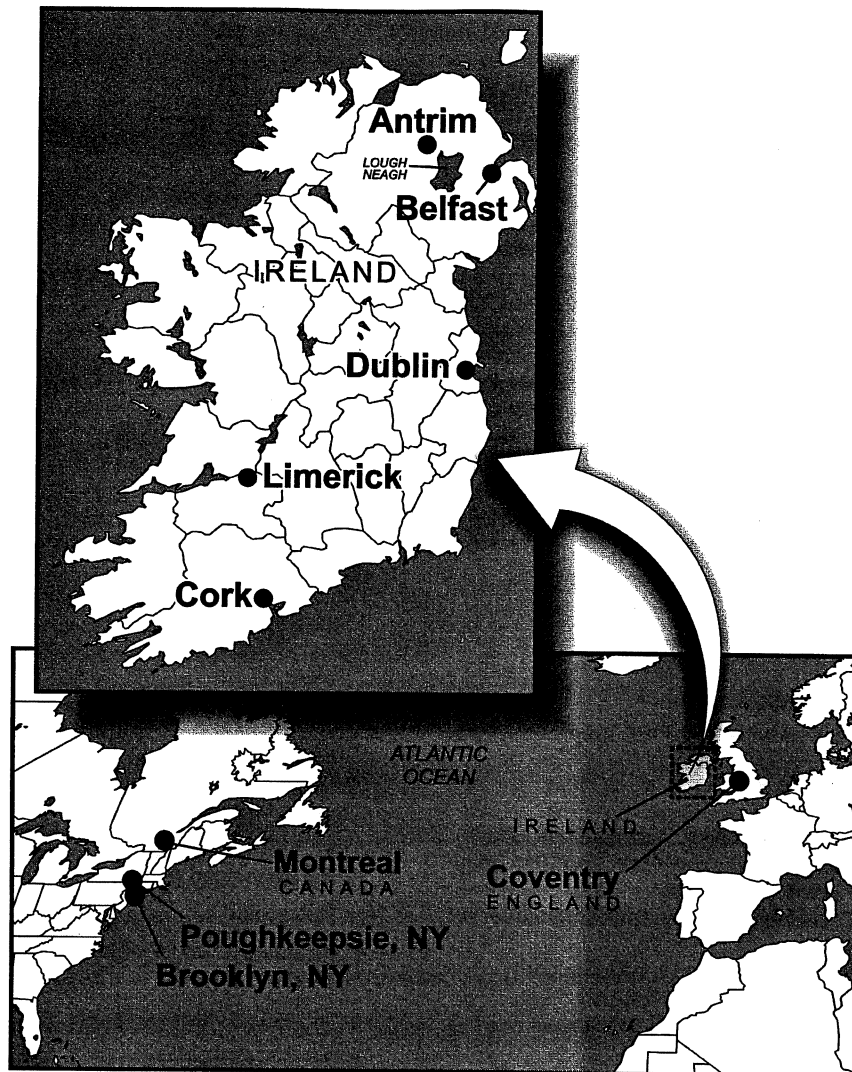
TIME LINE

- mid-1840s** Ireland suffers the Great Potato Famine, generating a great wave of emigration to America.
- 1867** The Fenian movement is crushed before it can launch an uprising against British oppressors.
- 1912** The Orange Society resists the Irish Home Rule Bill.
- 1916** Eamon de Valera leads the anti-British Easter Uprising in Dublin.
- 1918** Valera heads Sinn Féin, a revolutionary movement.
- 1922** The Irish Free State is established. Benito Mussolini comes to power in Italy.
- 1923** Irish opposition to the Free State ends.
- 1929** **October** The Great Depression begins. **November** Angela Sheehan meets Malachy McCourt.
- 1930** **March 28** Angela's marries Malachy McCourt. **August** Frank McCourt is born.
- 1932-1948** Eamon de Valera is prime minister of Ireland.
- 1933** Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany.
- 1933-45** Franklin Delano Roosevelt is president of the United States.
- 1934** The McCourt family returns to Ireland.
- 1935** The Irish Free State bans the sale and import of contraceptives.
- 1936** **Jan. 20** King George V dies; Edward VIII becomes king. **Dec. 11** Edward VIII abdicates; George VI becomes king.
- 1936-39** The Spanish Civil War: Irish volunteers fight on both the Republican and Nationalist sides.
- 1937** Ireland becomes officially independent of Britain.
- 1939** **Sept. 1** World War II begins after Germany invades Poland. Ireland remains neutral. **May 31** German planes accidentally bomb Dublin; 34 people are killed. **Dec. 7** The U.S. enters World War II. **April 30** Adolf Hitler commits suicide. **May 2** Eamon de Valera pays a condolence call to the German embassy in Dublin after learning of Hitler's death. **May 8** Germany surrenders to the Allies. **Aug. 14** A U.S. plane drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. **Aug. 27** Japan surrenders to the Allies.
- 1949** Ireland becomes a republic. **October** Frank arrives in North America.

AUTHOR SKETCH

Frank McCourt's early life surfaces in witheringly grim detail in *Angela's Ashes* and *'Tis*, the sequel. Born in Brooklyn on August 19, 1930, he was the son of Irish immigrants Angela Sheehan and Malachy McCourt. His father, an alcoholic ne'er-do-well, failed to hold a series of menial jobs. In 1934, the family returned to Ireland, where Malachy had less success at supporting a growing family. In Limerick, his few jobs as a day laborer left Frank and his siblings hungry, poorly housed, and ragged and Angela McCourt depressed and hopeless from having to beg for handouts. Adding to Frank's low self-esteem was an inadequate education at Leamy's National School,

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where he was taught by pompous men who cared little for children or their ambitions.

The parents' pitiful attempts at stable family life resulted in the deaths of his sister Margaret and, in 1935, twin brothers Oliver and Eugene. Angela suffered from pneumonia; Frank spent weeks in a hospital recovering from typhoid, the result of abysmal sanitation standards in city slums where the neighborhood outhouse overflowed into the family living quarters. In 1941, McCourt emigrated to Coventry, England, to work in factories, but drank up most of his earnings, leaving the family even less hopeful than before.

During his convalescence, Frank McCourt, a gifted language student, encountered poetry and Shakespeare, which sparked hope and joy in his existence. Reading on his own extended the delights he experienced in early boyhood from mornings with his father by the fire listening to folk tales and readings from the daily news. When he was old enough to work, he began delivering telegrams, his passports to a more intimate knowledge of Limerick and its multi-structured class system. At age nineteen, he returned to New York City with his brother Malachy, worked at the Biltmore Hotel and in the original vaudeville skit "A Couple of Blaguards," and joined the army. Educated at New York University on the G. I. Bill, he taught English and composition at McKee Vocational and

Technical School and for 18 years at the prestigious Peter Stuyvesant High School, where adoring students called him "Fra."

Retired from the New York public schools in 1987, McCourt returned to his autobiographical account of growing up in Ireland, which he had begun years earlier. For an appropriate voice, he studied the present-tense commentary of his granddaughter Chiara, child of his daughter Maggie, and developed the approach to his childhood that allowed him wonder and humor in the face of accumulated tragedies. The popular work preceded his return to Ireland for a book-signing in Limerick and a stint as writer-in-residence at the University of Limerick. He settled in New York with his third wife, publicist Ellen Frey.

CRITIC'S CORNER

An immediate smash-hit in 1996, *Angela's Ashes* edged into the slot of adult Cinderella favorite as the American bookseller's number one title. Critics categorized McCourt's work as autobiography and memoir; McCourt referred to it as an epic of misery. His notoriety brought him numerous honors, including an invitation to emcee a Kennedy Center tribute to Celtic arts. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani singled out the Irish immigrant tradition that the McCourts lived as the root of American success.

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The book won National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize as well as the Los Angeles *Times* Book Award for Biography, *New York Times* Editor's Choice, PEN/Faulkner award, and Boston Book Review Rea Nonfiction Prize. The outpouring of honoraria earned McCourt a seven-figure advance on *'Tis*, the next installment of his memoirs. In 1997, he appeared on the *Today* show and the soap opera *One Life to Live*, began a two-year book tour, and audiotaped a 15-hour reading of the work for Recorded Books. Producers Scott Rudin and David Brown bought the film rights and released the R-rated, \$25 million movie version in 1999, starring Robert Carlyle and Emily Watson as the parents and Joe Breen, Ciaran Owens, and Michael Legge as Frank in successive stages of childhood.

In 2000, McCourt hosted a seven-day cruise of the luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth II* as a model of the Great Authors of the Century. *Esquire* hired him at the rate of \$1,000 for one sentence to introduce a round-robin story to be fleshed out by other writers a sentence at a time. His success encouraged brothers Alphie and Malachy to express their own memories and spawned a McCourt Tour of Limerick.

OTHER WORKS BY FRANK MCCOURT

A Couple of Blaguards (1984)

The Irish . . . And How They Got That Way (1998)

'Tis: A Memoir (1999)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the decline of a family
2. To account for regret and disillusion
3. To interpret social, religious, and family pressures on the poor
4. To contrast the point of view of parent and child
5. To discuss the themes of deception and failure
6. To explain background events from history
7. To account for the intensity of need, loss, and illness
8. To describe attitudes toward women, marriage, work, learning, and religion
9. To particularize atmosphere and tone
10. To analyze the role of rescuer
11. To differentiate between hope and reality
12. To account for changes in character attitudes

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain how puberty complicates Frank's first confession
2. To analyze the symbolism of living upstairs in "Italy"
3. To account for the wealth of jobs in England during World War II
4. To summarize Malachy's background and reputation
5. To justify Frank's annoyance with Angela for her relationship with Laman
6. To predict how the McCourts will survive without Frank
7. To summarize Frank's disappointment with his home on Roden Lane

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8. To discuss the implications of Angela's emotional collapse
9. To describe traditions connected with burial, baptism, first communion, and coming of age
10. To list Frank's emergency methods of locating food, fuel, and clothing
11. To survey educational methods at Leamy's National School
12. To characterize Malachy's gradual departure from the family's lives

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Frank McCourt's memoir, present the following terms and applications:

atmosphere the prevailing aura or ambience triggered by a work's mood and tone and by incidental text clues that predispose the audience to a particular mindset or expectation of outcome, as in the squalid home on Roden Lane where the McCourts live adjacent to the neighborhood privy. The dismal surroundings force the family to huddle near the fireplace upstairs, which they jokingly call "Italy." As conditions reach their worst, the family pulls apart a board wall and burns the planks in the fireplace before being evicted and left homeless.

literary foil a character who serves as an opposite or as a standard by which another character is measured, as with Frank's depictions of Angela and Malachy. Frank exhibits the love/hate ambivalence common to complex home scenarios. He adores his mother and steals bread and lemonade to rouse her from illness, yet he repeatedly remembers her sitting dejectedly by the fireside smoking and drinking tea as though she has abdicated her role as parent and guardian of the boys. Malachy, the jolly storyteller and drunk, regularly disappoints Frank and young Malachy, particularly after the receipt of money honoring Alphie's baptism. The older boys know without investigating their father's whereabouts that he has wasted the money at a pub and will return home penniless, reeling and singing.

theme the main idea of a work, as summed up in such abstract terms as patriotism, grace, isolation, motherhood, forgiveness, or loss. The themes of failed lives and regret permeate the memoir. From the introduction of Uncle Pat, later called the Abbot, who was dropped on his head in infancy, Frank McCourt dwells on examples of ill fate that rob the family of hope. A pattern of failure kills off three of the McCourt children, overwhelming the mother with grief and filling Malachy with tormented thoughts and self-recrimination. The power of the negative themes becomes the impetus driving Frank to steal money from his dead employer and to buy passage to America.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* pictures the depths of poverty and denigration of the Irish underclass. In the depression that grips the nation in the years preceding World War II, Angela and Malachy McCourt choose to leave the United States to return to Ireland. In a marriage that yokes northern with southern Irish natives, the couple face prejudice against Malachy's accent and too many closed doors to their need. Rejection by family and society drives them from Antrim to Limerick. Among the Sheehans, Angela fares little better than she had in Antrim, where the family huddles in a police station and accepts handouts that pay their train fare south.

The focus of want and squalor is the wretched tenement in Roden Lane. The foul stench of the community privy, flooding in the ground floor, and meager suppers of fried bread and tea around the upstairs fireplace fail to quell Frank's love of his

parents and siblings. A bright, need-driven boy, he stares in the windows of comfortable homes where people enjoy a leisurely breakfast. He looks to the community for what benefits are available, ranging from small pieces of coal dropped on Dock Road to a horse in the stable, space for a football team to practice with their makeshift ball, nights of reading to his brothers under the streetlight, and friendships with children and families who share the McCourts' poverty.

Intense scenes present the class division that forces Angela and her surviving four boys to humble themselves and beg for clothing and food. At the doorway of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, she adopts whatever posture pleases the agents and grovels even more pathetically at the Dispensary, where the sick gather in the hallway until the officials have finished their tea. At the depot on December 23, a kind railway agent welcomes the family with part of his sandwich while they gaze down the tracks and await Malachy on the train. At Laman's cluttered home, the surroundings are no less grim, but having a free roof over the family relieves Angela of the worry over rent money. These scenarios stress the perpetual waiting and watching for opportunities and handouts that get the McCourts through a series of dismal days.

The setting shifts gradually to a more hopeful horizon as Frank nears manhood. At age 16, he flees Laman's tainted charity and becomes a customer in a pub for the first time, with Uncle Pa Keating treating him to his first pint. Frank seeks the dark comfort of the confessional to unburden himself to Father Gregory and makes the most of a newspaper distribution office, where he can devour printed material in his free time. From Mrs. Finucane's cold corpse, he grabs for money and ledger and hurries to the river, symbol of escape from Ireland and its perpetual poverty. After jettisoning her records of debts owed for purchases of clothing, he moves directly to a ticket agency and the *Irish Oak*, the ship that carries Frank to a more promising manhood on the twinkly-lighted shores of America.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

Novels

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Betty King, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

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Angela's Ashes

Da

The Dead

The Grapes of Wrath

THEMES AND MOTIFS

Themes

- poverty
- irresponsibility
- alcoholism
- disillusion
- religiosity
- choices
- social class
- ambition
- parenthood
- regret
- escape

Motifs

- coping with the consequences of dissolute behavior
- earning a living during a depression
- assuming the role of rescuer
- avoiding unpleasant jobs
- drinking to escape reality
- envying the middle-class lifestyle
- coping with charities

MEANING STUDY

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the stories. Explain each in context. Title and page numbers pinpoint each entry so you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. Next day she tells Dad to mind the twins and takes Malachy and me with her to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. (Chap. 2, p. 63)
(*St. Vincent de Paul founded the Vincentians, a Catholic mission to the poor. Born in Pouy, France, in 1581, he ministered to the needy of Clichy and formed laywomen into a visiting nurse corps. After establishing an orphanage and several hospitals, he and St. Louise de Marillac formed the Daughters of Charity, who devoted their outreach to the social betterment.*)
2. One master will hit you if you don't know that Eamon de Valera is the greatest man that ever lived. Another master will hit you if you don't know that Michael Collins was the greatest man that ever lived. (Chap. 2, p. 80)
(*Frank's teachers vary in their hero worship. Irish politician and patriot Eamon de Valera was president of the rebellious political party Sinn Féin, a grassroots Irish nationalist movement promoting an end to English control and the creation of a free Irish state. He became prime minister when the Irish Free State left the British Commonwealth. Collins was a leader of the Irish Republican Army during the fighting in 1919. He served as a member of the Free State government but was killed by political opponents in 1922.*)
3. Dad says he was a Pope, Leo the Thirteenth, a great friend of the workingman. (Chap. 3, p. 93)
(*Leo XIII, who held power from 1878-1903, brought a conciliatory spirit to the papacy by supporting scientific advancements and the need for pastoral care and social betterment for the poor.*)
4. The first day of school in September he writes on the blackboard three words which are to stay there the rest of the year, Euclid, geometry, idiot. (Chap. 6, p. 151)
(*O'Neill, a teacher at Leamy's National School, is obsessed with Euclidean geometry, the mathematical system introduced by the Alexandrian teacher Euclid in his text Elements (ca. 325 B. C.), which he compiled from the writings of Hippocrates of Chios and other classic theoreticians.*)
5. Without Euclid the Messerschmitt could never have taken to the sky. (Chap. 6, p. 153)
(*The Messerschmitt was the jewel of the German Luftwaffe, which relied on it heavily during World War II. Introduced in 1935 by its originator, Bavarian industrialist Wilhelm "Willy" Messerschmidt, the two-seater racing monoplane was manufactured at Augsburg, Germany, and served on all fronts during the entire war. Armed with machine guns and fitted with a liquid-cooled engine built by Daimler-Benz, the plane's combat performance was legendary.*)
6. My child, I sit here. I hear the sins of the poor. I assign the penance. I bestow absolution. I should be on my knees washing their feet. Do you understand me, child? (Chap. 7, p. 185)
(*The humble Dominican priest responds with humanity toward Frank, who confesses that he stole fish and chips while scouring the pubs for Malachy. The priest pictures himself in Christ's stead soothing the tired feet of sinners. Frank is too young to understand the bemusement of a priest who is deeply moved by the sufferings of the poor.*)
7. Mam runs after him and he tells her I have typhoid fever. (Chap. 8, p. 191)
(*Typhoid fever, an acute infectious disease caused by microbes entering the mouth from contaminated food or water, spreads from the intestines into the bloodstream. The disease causes headache, aches and weariness, fever, and restlessness as well as nosebleed, cough, rash, delirium, and intestinal hemorrhaging. If typhoid advances enough to inflame major organs, debility can kill in 25% of sufferers. In 1861, it killed Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria.*)
8. I know it's Extreme Unction and that means I'm going to die and I don't care. (Chap. 8, p. 192)
(*Typhoid carries Frank to the extremes of sickness and requires a special deathbed blessing from the priest. The anointing and prayers prepare the spirit for death and judgment of the soul.*)
9. And the highwayman came riding
Riding, riding
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door. (Chap. 8, p. 196)
(*A popular romantic ballad written by English poet and epicist Alfred Noyes, "The Highwayman" (1904) incorporates violence, beauty, and daring along with death at an early age. These actions and themes suit the level of maturity of*

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Patricia and Frank. Ironically, her gift of literature saves Frank from despair, but precedes her ignoble death on the bathroom floor from diphtheria.)

10. He tells me I'll have to be the man of the house, and he signs up with an agent to work in a factory in Coventry which, everyone says, is the most bombed city in England. (Chap. 9, p. 218)

(Malachy travels to Coventry in the West Midlands, an industrial center producing rayon, radioelectronics, and weaponry during World War II. Because of the area's value to the war effort, German bombers led repeated raids in November 1940 and April 1941 that devastated the city. Most moving of the loss was Coventry Cathedral, which remains in a skeleton of twisted steel girders beside the new cathedral that replaced it.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the memoir.

Motivation

1. What causes Frank to long to live in America again?

(Frank, the eldest of the McCourt children, suffers disillusionment in his parents and home life, which is always short on food, warmth, clothing, and furnishings. In young childhood, he tells his mother, "I'll be a man soon and I'll get a job in the place with the big gate and I'll come home every Friday night with money for eggs and toast and jam and she can sing again. Anyone can see why I wanted your kiss." When he enters school, classes fail to engage his active mind, leaving him longing for printed material, even the soiled wrappers from fish and chips, which he licks clean before reading. By his teens, he has seen enough Hollywood movies, listened to black singers from the U. S., and heard enough about America from his parents and others to want to return there.)

The incidents that force Frank out on his own begin at Cousin Laman's house, where Angela begins spending nights in Laman's bed. Frank dislikes Laman and regrets his mother's choice of bedding down with him to repay his gift of a home for her family. When school ends, Frank is able to earn his own way delivering telegrams, writing letters for Mrs. Finucane, and working at Easons Ltd. hustling newspapers. He delights in giving money to Angela and in treating his brother Michael to fish and chips and lemonade. The ache to leave Ireland and live in America encourages him to save part of his earnings to pay the fare for a return voyage.)

Setting

2. Describe Roden Lane.

(In Limerick, Ireland, the McCourt family shifts from place to place seeking rooms they can afford. At Roden Lane on Barrack Hill, they rent the end apartment in a row of six houses near a stable and lavatory shed. Their quarters are a two-story dwelling heated by fireplaces. At first, they fail to understand that the location of the neighborhood privy puts them in constant danger of the odor, overflow, and contamination from sewage. Heavy rain causes the outhouse to flood their ground floor, forcing them to live upstairs in "Italy" and to fear disease from the filth inundating their ground floor and soaking into the walls.)

In spite of its squalor, Roden Lane provides a few amenities. In the mornings, the family uses a bucket latrine and runs cold water for tea from a wobbly tap held

to the wall by twine tied to a nail. The boys have other slum lads for playmates, who form a football team. Angela makes friends with other wives, who bolster her during hard times with their understanding and compassion. Frank visits Mrs. Purcell, a neighbor who owns a radio and listens to Irish and Shakespearian dramas and the songs of Billie Holiday.)

Before the family is evicted, conditions worsen because of the damp caused by rainy weather. Each school day, the children have to dry their worn socks in front of the wan fire. The family battles infestations of fleas, lice, and rats. On their last days before homelessness, the boys strip boards from the upstairs wall to burn in the fireplace. When the landlord's agent checks the condition of the apartment, instead of the standard two-up and two-down residence, he finds only one room upstairs and the former divider missing.)

Character Development

3. How does Malachy change after leaving Ireland?

(Malachy is a pathetic alcoholic and ne'er-do-well long before World War II. When the English begin hiring Irish factory workers in Coventry, he signs on for a job and crosses the Irish Sea to England. After his arrival, he writes that he is well and sends some of his first pay to Angela and the boys. She takes hope that he has at last overcome the power of drink and will support the family. Each weekend, she awaits the telegram with money from Coventry, but Malachy sends no more.)

Rumors from England explain Malachy's madness for drink and his sleeping in parks after he wastes his money in pubs. He returns for several weeks to assist Angela through illness, then returns to the war plant. His final return on Christmas Eve reveals a battered face and the missing upper dental plate, but no explanation of the circumstances. His gift of a box of chocolates is marred by his having eaten half of them. When he departs on Christmas Day for Coventry, he ceases to correspond with his family.)

Historical Milieu

4. How does Irish political fervor color Frank's childhood?

(Malachy's service in an IRA flying column during "the Troubles" with the English fills him with nostalgia. On nights that he returns reeling with drink from the pub, he sings "Roddy McCorley," "Kevin Barry," or other sad songs and calls out, "Where are my troops? Where are my four warriors?" He awakens Frank, Malachy, and the twins, Oliver and Eugene, who are still toddlers. He calls, "Up, boys, up. . . . The Red Branch Knights, the Fenian Men, the IRA. Up, up.")

While Angela shakes with cold and damp, Malachy forces the two elder boys to stand at attention and pledge to give their lives for "poor mother" Ireland. He exhorts, "I want them up. . . . I want them ready for the day Ireland will be free from the center to the sea." The image of dying for the homeland colors Frank's thinking. When the catechist urges him to promise to die for Catholicism, the boy is confused about the competing loyalties he faces and about choosing a cause for which he must die.)

Theme

5. How does Angela tolerate poverty and loss?

(Angela's coping skills enable her to survive a failed marriage to a drunkard who has no interest in reforming or in supporting his wife and children. As the family grows, Angela sends the boys out to play in a Brooklyn park and

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to tend the pram, which holds Margaret, the youngest child. After the child expires from an unnamed ailment and the twin boys die, Angela tries to turn her face to the wall and retreat from mounting responsibility for the children. The love of her cousins Philomena and Delia and the aid of neighbors like Mrs. Leibowitz help Angela to hang on long enough to return home on money sent by Grandma Margaret Sheehan.

In Ireland, the McCourts' situation worsens rapidly. In inadequate rooms equipped with a few sticks of furniture, Angela copes with fleas in the mattress and Malachy's continual drunken sprees that rob the family of his occasional pay checks. Even Grandma's gift of a month's rent and housewares is not enough to keep the family going. Angela learns to stand in line at the St. Vincent de Paul Society, to beg medical care for Frank's sore eyes at the Dispensary, to watch out for Mrs. McGrath's faulty weighing of flour, even to plead for table scraps from priests. To get through days without food, Angela hovers near the fire, smokes, drinks tea, and talks with friends as a bolster against despair. After Malachy abandons her, she takes refuge with relatives and moves in with Cousin Laman, whose bed she shares to assure her family his good will.)

Interpretation

6. What do the ashes signify?

(Much of Angela's hope for the future goes up the chimney along with the smoke of a meager fire and her familiar Woodbine cigarettes. The insubstantial family life that marriage to Malachy brings never stabilizes into a workable arrangement. The death of Margaret followed by the fatal pneumonia of Ollie and Eugene pushes Angela to the limit. Her ability to cope with loss and regret wavers at times, especially after she falls ill with pneumonia and must be taken to the hospital for several weeks. For Frank, the ash that falls from Angela's cigarette characterizes the worth of a marriage that produces children, but no sense of responsibility or loyalty to home. In lieu of a cure for Malachy's drunken sprees, Angela has little to do with her empty days beyond tending the young ones, sipping tea, and staring into the fireplace as the ash grows cold.)

Conflict

7. Why is school a disappointment?

(Frank's attendance at Leamy's National School does little to relieve him of poverty or to infuse him with hope of a worthy education to lift him from the underclass to a better life. On his first day at school, Frank enrolls with the headmaster, Mr. Scallan, who lists requirements and ridicules the children's accents. In consternation, he says, "Good Lord, what's this? Are they Yanks or what?" When Frank protects himself from similar taunts in the schoolyard, he provokes a fight. Mr. Benson yanks his ear and whacks his legs, muttering, "You little hooligan . . . Is that the kind of behavior you brought from America?"

Frank's teachers are pompous, small-minded pedants who exhort the boys to repeat truisms and to belittle themselves for their pathetic lives. Among the seven masters, cruelty and public humiliation are the hallmarks of the job. Frank notes, "They all have leather straps, canes, blackthorn sticks. They hit you with the sticks on the shoulders, the back, the legs, and, especially, the hands. If they hit you on the hands it's called a slap. They hit you if you're late, if you have a leaky nib on your pen, if you laugh, if you talk, and if you don't know things." The number of possible infractions weighs heavily on the beginner—not

understanding why God made the earth, not knowing Limerick's patron saint, inability to recite the Apostles' Creed, failure at naming Irish towns and products, and inability to perform addition and subtraction or to locate Bulgaria on the world map. Even worse is the failure to answer in Irish or to parrot the particular bias of Mr. Benson or Mr. O'Dea.)

Atmosphere

8. How does Frank's final confrontation with Angela presage his departure from home?

(After Uncle Pa Keating treats Frank to alcohol on his 16th birthday, the ritual coming-of-age rite in the pub ends in disgrace. Frank is turned away from the Jesuits' doors and comes reeling home to Angela. Clutching at railings and walls to hold him erect, he finds her smoking Woodbines by the fire and rebuking him for intoxication. After he explains that he had no father to treat him to a first pint, she sneers, "Just like your father."

After weeks of discontent with the new home situation, Frank is unable to contain his anger and disappointment with his mother. The insult to his manhood triggers a nasty retort: "I'd rather be like my father than Laman Griffin." The statement airs Frank's grudge against Angela for entering another man's bed. Man to woman, he exchanges tit for tat, an indication that he can no longer be a mere boy in the house of his mother. The argument moves from front room to the loft, where he taunts her for adultery and slaps her on the cheek.

Guilt mounts in Frank that he struck his mother. Sick in the night from his first drinking bout, he vomits and sinks into disgrace in the eyes of his younger brothers. As his mother weeps, he longs to apologize, but is unable to compromise in the matter of her disloyalty to Malachy. Turning his back on home and mother, he leaves home, works hard, and continues to save for the trip to America. Ending his dedication to St. Francis, his patron saint, he rids his soul of sin in confession. By age 19, he is ready to move on.)

Author Purpose

9. Why does Frank McCourt write about Ireland?

(Just as he taught his English students, Frank McCourt writes about what he knows. His reminiscence creates an intriguing tension through the ambivalence of hateful poverty and the humorous remarks that belie a love of Ireland and its people and culture. His depiction of himself in childhood suggests a need to atone for blaming his father for alcoholism and for a failure to take the adult role of man of the household, the task Malachy assigned him when he left for Coventry. The fondness with which Frank infuses scenes characterizes the lighter moments of life in a Limerick slum with harum-scarum pals who make destitution more bearable. In his mid-to-late teens, his embrace of carnality and the exquisite torment of "the excitement" attest to a healthy libido and a gift for life. The drive keeps him going and fuels his yearning for a promising future, reflected in the twinkling lights of America.)

Structure

10. How does McCourt alter the voice that delivers the memoir?

(To express his memories of Ireland's people and his own family's hardships, McCourt resorts to a common autobiographical technique. In the beginning, he tells the story from the point of view of a pre-school boy. He fills the text with the misconceptions about reproduction and religious

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superstitions that suit his age. At home, he admits, "Dad frightens me with his och, och, och, and Mam frightens me with her small bird sounds and I don't know what to do though I wonder if anyone will light the fire in the grate so that we can have tea and bread because it's a long time since we had the porridge."

As Frank matures, the voice deepens in tone and scope, filling in his growing understanding of the dysfunctional parents who are incapable of providing a decent home. By the end of the memoir, Frank McCourt-the-voice appears to equate with Frank McCourt-the-author. Nearly a man in maturity and responsibility, the immigrant to America accepts his growing sophistication by jettisoning old-world superstition on patron saints and accepting casual sex as the mark of manhood and freedom from Catholic prudery. It is significant that the last exchange occurs at the ship's rail between Frank and the wireless officer. His own tethers to Ireland severed on departure from Cork, Frank is himself "wireless" and free to make his own way in the New World.)

HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

Frank McCourt delineates character through the unique and identifiable style of individual comments:

1. The caustic nosiness of Delia and Philomena, Angela's martinet cousins, emerges in their opportunistic slights on Angela's husband, "him with his odd manner." Philomena's warning is freighted with disrespect for the marital relationship and for Angela and Malachy's physical and emotional needs: "I'd make sure there's no more children. He don't have a job, so he don't, an' never will the way he drinks. So . . . no more children, Angela. Are you listenin' to me?"
2. Early in her marriage, Angela must take the tone of the enforcer with Malachy, although her scolding does no good. She exhorts, "I'm asking you, Are you coming home so that we can have a bit of supper or will it be midnight with no money in your pocket and you singing Kevin Barry and the rest of the sad songs?"
3. Aunt Aggie's pursiness pops out at every opportunity to carp and degrade Angela's family: "And I suppose they'll be wanting sugar and milk on top of everything or they might be banging on my door looking for an egg if you don't mind. I don't know why we have to pay for Angela's mistakes."
4. Mr. O'Halloran, for all his hard ways with students, keeps education at the fore of his daily work: "You have to study and learn so that you can make up your own mind about history and everything else but you can't make up an empty mind. Stock your mind, stock your mind. It is your house of treasure and no one in the world can interfere with it."
5. Father Gregory, the gentle and forgiving dispenser of consolation and absolution, reassures Frank that he didn't kill Theresa Carmody or send her to hell with their youthful fornication: "She is surely in heaven. She suffered like the martyrs in olden times and god knows that's penance enough."
6. Frank divulges his tender regard for Ireland in a spurt of stream-of-consciousness as the *Irish Oak* moves out to sea from Cork harbor: "I'm on the ship and there goes Ireland into the night and it's foolish to be standing on this deck looking back and thinking of my family and Limerick and Malachy and my father in England and even more

foolish that songs are going through my head Roddy McCorley goes to die and Mam gasping Oh the days of the Kerry dancing with poor Mr. Clohesy hacking away in the bed and now I want Ireland back at least I had Mam and my brothers and Aunt Aggie bad as she was and Uncle Pa, standing me my first pint, and my bladder is near my eye and here's a priest standing by me on the deck and you can see he's curious."

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Make an illustrated notebook of important words and phrases from the book such as Orangeman, Munster, dole, Little Flower, Cuchulain, and St. Francis of Assisi.
2. Sketch several poses of Frank at work.

Cinema

1. View films with Irish settings, characters, and situations. Compare the movies' settings, themes, and dialogue to those of *Angela's Ashes*. Comment on the interplay of people of different ethnic, social, educational, and religious backgrounds.
2. Critique the film version of *The Dead*. Discuss with a panel how a visual representation of the party increases its spirit, anticipation of fun, and conviviality from the written version. How does the holiday celebration of middle-class Irish contrast with Angela's attempt to buy a pig's head to cook for Christmas and with Malachy's arrival from Coventry bearing a partial box of chocolates?

Drama

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of a scene from the novel.
2. Create a storyboard account of Frank's enjoyment of tea, bread, and stories about Cuchulain. Introduce details of his father's love of storytelling and Frank's love-hate relationship with the man who comes home singing in the wee hours to awaken the boys and make them swear to die for Ireland. Make a parallel storyboard about Malachy's last visits home from Coventry. Explain how he gradually withdraws from the family's lives and abandons Angela to cope alone with hunger, cold, and want.
3. Compose a chart summarizing each character's opinions on Malachy McCourt's inability to hold a job. Explain how Malachy's north Irish accent increases the tension every time he applies for work.
4. Discuss additional dramatic details that the memoir omits, for example, why Angela refuses to have any more children and why the family has an easier time locating jobs after World War II.
5. Role-play the part of a Limerick barkeep. Comment on the human dramas of wives looking for drunken husbands, people out of work, children needing food and fuel, men discussing Irish politics and mourning the nation's losses, the theft of beverages and bread from deliveries, babies crying in their prams, and people honoring significant occasions, such as births, marriages, confirmation and first communion, and coming of age.

Education

Propose ways of improving Frank's education, particularly the creation of stimulating classes that do more than parrot the teacher's point of view and free use of the library without censorship of the books he reads.

History and Social Studies

1. Discuss with a small group how the McCourts' poverty

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influences funerals for dead infants, success at school, saving for passage to America, Angela's refusal to have more children, Malachy's Christmas Day departure from his job in Coventry, the mistreatment and discounting of the poor who beg from the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Dispensary, formation of a slum football team, flea removal from a mattress, selecting fuel for the fireplace, and a chance at a job delivering telegrams or bags of coal.

2. Report orally on the cultural, religious, physical, and psychological effects of poverty on Malachy. Explain why he is too proud to gather coal on Dock Road, why he dislikes Angela's relatives, how he copes with Margaret's death, what he envisions for his sons, and why he resents Angela's appearance at his employer's gate.
3. Divide the class into small groups to brainstorm ways to improve marriage and family life for Angela and Malachy, Aggie and Pa Keating, and the Hannons. Discuss the hardships of separations during wartime that take Irish men to English factories to find work.
4. Create a mural or web site on Limerick and Ireland.
5. Make a web site or bulletin board characterizing attitudes toward mates and relatives.
6. Explain the history of the British pub. Account for its name and its reputation as a gathering place for drinking, singing, conversation, politics, escapism, and welcoming conviviality.
7. Based on your understanding of the stories, lead a panel discussion of the effects of family dependence on women like Angela and the other wives of men working in England during World War II. Explain how Angela could make better use of her energies by educating herself, working for a living wage, and managing her finances by saving for hard times to keep her children better clothed and fed and the house warmer and cleaner.

Language Arts

1. Contrast news releases for radio, television, or print announcing the departure of emigrants from Ireland aboard the *Irish Oak*. Comment on the fare for an Atlantic crossing. List passengers' need for warm clothing and passports and outline the ports of call, beginning with departure from Cork.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing the hospital scene in which Seamus recites "The Highwayman," "The Owl and the Pussycat," and other poems. Comment on the light entertainment from the point of view of patients in the fever ward as well as nurses, Dr. Troy, Sister Rita, and visiting parents.
3. Compose several letters, notes, or emails from characters explaining events. For example, from Malachy on a visit to Coventry Cathedral, from Frank to Angela and Alphie on arrival in Poughkeepsie, from Grandma McCourt asking about the family after they reach Limerick, from young Malachy on army life in Dublin, and from Mrs. Leibowitz concerning Angela's health.
4. Lead a debate about the weaknesses of Uncle Pa Keating, Uncle Pat, Aunt Aggie, Grandma Sheehan, Eugene, Peter Dooley, Angela, Mikey Malloy, Finton Slattery, Theresa Carmody, and Laman Griffin. Explain how the strengths of each make them interesting characters.
5. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, essays, and stories that reflect themes similar to those of Frank McCourt's memoir. Include Maya Angelou's *I Know Why*

the Caged Bird Sings, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party," James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* and *Dubliners*, Kaye Gibbons's *Ellen Foster*, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, Toni Cade Bambara's "Blues Ain't No Mockin' Bird," Hugh Leonard's *Da*, and Frank O'Connor's "First Confession."

6. Explain in a theme the significance of the evocative title. Discuss why McCourt moves directly from the last line into his sequel, *'Tis*.
7. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character.
8. Make a web site or bulletin board that identifies these terms: memoir, sodality, catechism, seven sacraments, seven deadly sins, seven virtues, hedge school, and creed.

Law and Logic

1. Read aloud laws governing the responsibilities of parents to children like Frank. Explain Guard Dennehy's job and his duty to the school, children, parents, and community.
2. Make a chart of legal advice to women like Angela, whose profligate husband drinks up his pay before he brings it home. Comment on the inability of the law to force men to live clean and sober lives while earning enough to keep the family housed, warm, clothed, and fed. Suggest garnisheeing as a compromise to save more of Malachy's earnings for his family's upkeep.
3. Act out examples of immature logic, for example, Frank's fear that being born in March makes him a bastard, concern that vomiting rids his body of the blessed host and constitutes a sin against God, belief that the Cuchulain story belongs to him alone, wishing to get sick to return to the hospital and escape his sour Aunt Aggie, and a misunderstanding of sitting on the seventh step while Angela gives birth.

Psychology

1. Describe aloud Frank's relationships with girls. Contrast his doomed friendship with Patricia Madigan and with Theresa Carmody and the one-night fling with Betty in Poughkeepsie. Comment on the absence of sex education in Ireland.
2. Using incidents from the memoir, comment on gradual changes in young Malachy, Michael, Angela, Aunt Aggie, Frank, Laman, Uncle Pa Keating, and Malachy. Discuss Frank's inability to count on most family members to help when Angela collapses with pneumonia, leaving the children to cope with hunger and cold.
4. Characterize the character, strength, and influence of Uncle Pa Keating. Explain why he allows Aggie to order him around and why he risks her displeasure to stick up for Frank and young Malachy when they are hungry.
5. Write an encyclopedia entry on child neglect. Add details that explain how current laws would protect Frank, young Malachy, Michael, Margaret, Eugene and Oliver, and Alphie, for example, by placing them in foster homes or orphanages.

Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the causes and symptoms of tuberculosis, a common disease in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Explain why living along the river in damp slum housing increases mortality from lung disease.

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2. Make an illustrated drawing of the tongue. Explain why Mikey's injuries to the tongue cause pain, swelling, and disfigurement.
3. Outline historic immunization campaigns against typhoid and diphtheria as well as improvement of city sanitation and water supply. Explain why the hospital has a separate fever ward for such diseases.

Speech

1. Organize a discussion of classism and exclusion. Answer these basic questions: What makes people belittle identifiable groups, especially women who marry outside their region, handicapped war veterans trapped in unsatisfying marriages, ne'er-do-wells, men who leave their families and spend their wages on alcohol, and contented priests who sneer at the poor and slam the door in the faces of the lowly? What do young children like Frank and young Malachy learn from heated discussions of religion, politics, the economy, and family morals? How do hangers-on cadge drinks while engaging in spirited conversation?
2. Compose a print or audio travel guide and tourist's diagram of Limerick.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Account for upheaval in the lives of Angela Sheehan, Uncle Pa Keating, Ab, and Malachy McCourt.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate welcome or compassion.
3. Compose a scene in which Frank expresses to his father his frustration with Angela's sufferings, Alphie begins school at Leamy's, young Malachy enters the army, Aunt Aggie refuses to aid the McCourts any more, Mr. Timoney gives Frank books by Swift and Shakespeare, and Angela gives up cigarettes.
4. Make a character list and explain the personal flaws of each.
5. Account for the recurring motifs of failure, loss, disappointment, and regret in the memoir.

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. tinker | 6. henchmen | 11. fortnight |
| 2. docket | 7. kiln | 12. queue |
| 3. omadhaun | 8. font | 13. Limbo |
| 4. blaguarding | 9. Lough | 14. novenas |
| 5. catechism | 10. entrails | 15. jackdaw |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. A |
| 2. A | 7. A |
| 3. D | 8. D |
| 4. C | 9. C |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part II: Matching (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. K | 6. I | 11. H |
| 2. B | 7. J | 12. A |
| 3. G | 8. N | 13. F |
| 4. D | 9. L | 14. O |
| 5. C | 10. M | 15. E |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. fleas | 6. soupers |
| 2. Philomena | 7. bakes |
| 3. pig's head | 8. Fintan Slattery |
| 4. nosebleed | 9. confraternity |
| 5. Euclid | 10. hedge schools |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 6. K | 11. B |
| 2. H | 7. I | 12. M |
| 3. J | 8. E | 13. G |
| 4. N | 9. O | 14. L |
| 5. B | 10. F | 15. C |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Cuchulain | 6. peel |
| 2. first communion | 7. birth control |
| 3. Flying | 8. angel |
| 4. rose | 9. Christmas |
| 5. wall | 10. Swift |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Complete each of the following sentences with an appropriate word from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

adenoids	challah	fortnight	Limbo	Orangemen
blaguarding	charwoman	henchmen	lorry	queue
bogtrotter	docket	IRA	Lough	Sinn Féin
boxty	entrails	jackdaw	nappies	state of grace
brawn	Erin	Jesuit	novenas	tinker
catechism	font	kiln	omadhaun	

1. Dad says he's glad to see the spirit of Christ alive in Limerick and they tell him they don't need the likes of him with his northern accent to be telling them about Christ and he should be ashamed of himself dragging a child around like that like a common begger, a _____, a knacker.
2. The man says he'll give us a _____ for a table, two chairs, and two beds.
3. It's the Irish, Clohessy, your native tongue, Clohessy. An _____ is a fool, Clohessy.
4. Uncle Pa says, Come on now, Malachy, stop the _____. You have to go home to Angela.
5. The _____ has all the questions and answers we have to know by heart before we can receive First communion.
6. It's off to the cinemas, our First Communion boys run to wallow in the filth spewed across the world by the devil's _____ in Hollywood.
7. Go home and tell your grandmother you ate me whole dinner and I'm falling down with the hunger here in this lime _____.
8. Angela, new mother, agitated, forgot she was holding the child and let him slip into the baptismal _____, a total immersion of the Protestant type.
9. He tells her he'll take her to Ireland and they'll walk the Glens of Antrim and swim in _____ Neagh.
10. I can feel that cough stirring in me solar plexus an' workin' its way up through me _____ till the next thing it takes off the top o' me head.
11. What are we to do when we have to pay rent in a _____?
12. We stand in a _____ with women wearing black shawls.
13. It's a heart scald to think Margaret might be in _____ forever with no hope of her ever seeing the rest of us whether we're in heaven or hell, or Purgatory itself.
14. I'll have me own someday if I have to do a hundred _____ to the Virgin Mary and her mother, St. Ann, or if I have to crawl from here to Lourdes on me two bended knees.
15. Mam lets out a long cry, Oh, Jesus, Jesus, and a _____ croaks in a tree.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Young Malachy wearies of
 - A. Mr. O'Halloran's class.
 - B. the army.
 - C. Coventry.
 - D. Seamus's recitations.
- _____ 2. Laman insists that
 - A. Frank empty his chamber pot.
 - B. Angela choose between him and homelessness.
 - C. the children sleep in the loft.
 - D. the family grow their own vegetables in the plot out back.
- _____ 3. Frank returns to
 - A. the stable to help remove the dead horse.
 - B. the St. Vincent de Paul Society to beg for boots.
 - C. the grocery store for an onion to cure his little brother.
 - D. school in November after recuperating from typhoid.
- _____ 4. Pa Keating suffers
 - A. from conjunctivitis at the lime kiln.
 - B. embarrassment that Aunt Aggie sends his lunch in a bucket.
 - C. after exposure to gas during World War I.
 - D. guilt because he is not in a state of grace before communion.
- _____ 5. Frank stands at the spigot in the cold
 - A. and rinses coal dust from Malachy's eyes.
 - B. to conceal immoral behavior from Ab.
 - C. so he will get sick and return to the hospital.
 - D. awaiting Malachy's return from the pubs.
- _____ 6. Angela arrived
 - A. in America on the first Thanksgiving of the Great Depression.
 - B. at Antrim to meet the McCourts and find an apartment to rent.
 - C. at the hospital too late to save Alphie.
 - D. outside the gate to the Limerick Gas Works in search of Frank.
- _____ 7. Long walks in the country
 - A. occupy Malachy while he is out of work.
 - B. take Frank to the home of Theresa Carmody.
 - C. return Frank and Malachy to the decaying home of Cousin Laman.
 - D. with the pram take the McCourt boys out of the Brooklyn apartment.
- _____ 8. The hearts
 - A. represent St. Francis of Assisi, Frank's patron saint.
 - B. hang in the windows of diphtheria patients in the fever ward.
 - C. are the only decoration on the McCourts' walls.
 - D. identify football players.
- _____ 9. Malachy maintains respect for
 - A. the Jesuits.
 - B. altar boys.
 - C. Pope Leo XIII.
 - D. the men of the Flying Column who die during World War II.
- _____ 10. Frank conceals the fact that he
 - A. has been exposed to typhoid fever.
 - B. witnesses Angela begging at the priests' door.
 - C. doesn't intend to remain on the *Irish Oak* in Montreal.
 - D. is ashamed of having a father who works in England.

ANGELA'S ASHES

Part II: Matching (30 points)

Match the following actions with names of places from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| _____ 1. Seamus carries messages from Patricia. | A. River Shannon |
| _____ 2. The family flees an inundation of sewage. | B. "Italy" |
| _____ 3. Malachy dishonors his child's casket. | C. Ab's place |
| _____ 4. Frank learns how to distribute <i>The Irish Times</i> . | D. Easons |
| _____ 5. Frank puts on Grandmother Sheehan's black dress. | F. railway depot |
| _____ 6. Frank observes Albany. | G. pub |
| _____ 7. Malachy reputedly sleeps in the park. | E. drainpipe |
| _____ 8. Angela receives a collection to pay train fare. | H. Brooklyn |
| _____ 9. Father Gregory listens to the story about Theresa's death. | I. Irish Oak |
| _____ 10. "Euclid" and "geometry" appear alongside "idiot." | J. Coventry |
| _____ 11. Frank shares the seesaw with Malachy. | K. fever ward |
| _____ 12. Evidence of debt owed to Mrs. Finucane disappears. | L. confessional |
| _____ 13. Angela and her children wait on December 23. | M. Leamy's National School |
| _____ 14. Frank leaps out a window. | N. police station |
| _____ 15. Boys maneuver toward a view of naked girls. | O. Harrington's house |

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided.

- _____ 1. What infests the new apartment?
- _____ 2. Who writes to Margaret McCourt?
- _____ 3. What lowly meat serves as a makeshift Christmas feast?
- _____ 4. What symptom precedes the diagnosis of typhoid?
- _____ 5. What Greek does Mr. O'Neill revere?
- _____ 6. What derogative term refers to the poor who get soup from Protestants?
- _____ 7. What does Nora Molloy do to stay sane?
- _____ 8. Who invites the boys to his house for lunch, but gives them no food?
- _____ 9. What meeting does Frank miss while reading to Mr. Timoney?
- _____ 10. Where did Catholic children meet to learn language when the English closed Irish schools?

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe characters who assist Frank in getting jobs.
2. Contrast the behaviors of Mikey Molloy, Patricia Madigan, Quasimodo, and Theresa Carmody.
3. Describe events at Frank's first communion.
4. Summarize the entertainments that slum children enjoy.
5. Describe the changes in Frank as he nears his sixteenth birthday.

ANGELA'S ASHES

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match each of the following descriptions from the collection with corresponding characters. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. Some of the answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| _____ 1. listens to radio broadcasts of drama with Frank. | A. Mrs. Purcell |
| _____ 2. resents the removal of a trusted dog. | B. Michael |
| _____ 3. helps Angela take her place in line at the St. Vincent de Paul Society | C. Bill Galvin |
| _____ 4. sends boat fare from New York to Ireland. | D. Ab |
| _____ 5. brings stray dogs home. | E. Guard Dennehy |
| _____ 6. calls Frank "scabby eyes." | F. Malachy |
| _____ 7. recognizes conjunctivitis. | G. Eugene |
| _____ 8. investigates truancies. | H. Mr. Timoney |
| _____ 9. is a heroic figure from Irish lore. | I. Dr. Troy |
| _____ 10. makes the boys vow to die for Ireland. | J. Nora Molloy |
| _____ 11. agrees to lend a bicycle. | K. Aunt Aggie |
| _____ 12. listens to Frank's guilty story about Theresa. | L. Seamus |
| _____ 13. calls for Ollie. | M. Father Gregory |
| _____ 14. recites "The Highwayman." | N. Margaret McCourt |
| _____ 15. finds evidence that Frank ate his lunch. | O. Cuchulain |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Frank saves enough money from his job at Easons Ltd. to buy a ticket on the *Irish Oak*.
- _____ 2. Betty wins Frank's love and devotion.
- _____ 3. The Dominicans reject Frank as altar boy because his father is an Orangeman from the north.
- _____ 4. "Jesus and the Weather" earns Frank a place in a higher grade.
- _____ 5. Philomena and Delia insist that Malachy marry their cousin.
- _____ 6. The family enjoys a Christmas made lavish by a full box of chocolates and Malachy's return from Coventry.
- _____ 7. On the hill overlooking Limerick, Frank commits a mortal sin of the flesh.
- _____ 8. Frank pretends to learn Irish dancing after he stops taking lessons.
- _____ 9. The ambulance takes Angela away to give birth to Alphie in a ward at the Dispensary.
- _____ 10. Frank takes pride in returning home with his pay as a gift for Angela.

ANGELA'S ASHES

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in the blanks below with a word or phrase that completes the sentence. Place your answer in the space provided at left.

1. Frank believes that the story of _____ belongs to him.
2. Frank vomits up the host along with his _____ breakfast.
3. Although Malachy served with the _____ Column, he earns no pay from the military.
4. After leaping from the window, Frank lands in a _____ bush.
5. The McCourts burn planks from the _____ for fuel.
6. The teacher rewards Frank with an apple _____.
7. The news agents hurry to remove a page from the newspapers on _____.
8. Frank gives up his belief in the _____ of the seventh stair.
9. The _____ dinner at the hospital is lonely and disappointing.
10. Jonathan _____ is one of Mr. Timoney's favorite authors.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe life in Ireland for the lowest class.
2. Explain why Frank slaps his mother.
3. Discuss the influence of camaraderie, reminiscing, and drinking.
4. Account for Frank's loss of the job delivering telegrams.
5. Summarize events that cause the deaths of the twins.



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