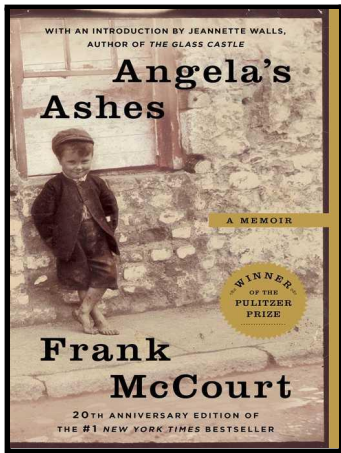




## Angela's Ashes Reader's Guide

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**Angela's Ashes**  
By Frank McCourt  
Scribner  
An Imprint of Simon & Schuster

[A Simon & Schuster Reading Group Guide](#)

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### Reading Group Discussion Points

1. Countless memoirs have been published recently, yet *Angela's Ashes* stands out. What makes this memoir so unique and compelling?
2. Discuss the originality and immediacy of Frank McCourt's voice and the style he employs—i.e., his sparing use of commas, the absence of quotation marks. How, through a child's voice and perspective, does McCourt establish and maintain credibility?
3. Ever present in *Angela's Ashes* is the Catholic Church. In what ways does the Catholic Church of McCourt's Ireland hurt its members and limit their experience? How does the Church protect and nurture its followers? What is Frank's attitude toward the Church?
4. McCourt writes: "I think my father is like the Holy Trinity with three people in him, the one in the morning with the paper, the one at night with the stories and prayers, and then the one who does the bad thing and comes home with the smell of whiskey and wants us to die for Ireland." Was this your impression of Frank McCourt's father? How can Frank write about his father without bitterness? What part did Malachy play in creating the person that Frank eventually became?



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5. Women—in particular mothers—play a significant role in *Angela's Ashes*. Recall the scenes between Angela and her children; the MacNamara sisters (Delia and Philomena) and Malachy; Aunt Aggie and young Frank; Angela and her own mother. In what ways do these interactions reflect the roles of women within their families? Discuss the ways in which Angela struggles to keep her family together in the most desperate of circumstances.
6. McCourt titles his memoir *Angela's Ashes*, after his mother. What significance does the phrase "Angela's Ashes" acquire by the end of the book?
7. Despite the McCourts' horrid poverty, mind-numbing starvation, and devastating losses, *Angela's Ashes* is not a tragic memoir. In fact, it is uplifting, triumphant even. How does McCourt accomplish this?
8. Irish songs and lyrics are prominently featured in *Angela's Ashes*. How do these lyrics contribute to the unique voice of this memoir? How does music affect Frank's experiences? How do you think it continues to influence his memories of his childhood?
9. Frank spent the first four years of his life in the United States. How do his experiences in America affect Frank's years in Ireland?

### Recommended Readings

*The Horse's Mouth*, Joyce Cary  
*Stop-Time*, Frank Conroy  
*The Barrytown Trilogy*, Roddy Doyle  
*Dubliners*, James Joyce  
*The Liars' Club*, Mary Karr  
*Ironweed*, William Kennedy  
*Up in the Old Hotel and Other Stories*, Joseph Mitchell  
*Mother of Pearl*, Mary Morrissey  
*A Fanatic Heart: Selected Stories of Edna O'Brien*, Edna O'Brien  
*Later the Same Day*, Grace Paley  
*Family Sins*, William Trevor  
*Carry On Jeeves*, P. G. Wodehouse  
*Look Homeward, Angel*, Thomas Wolfe  
*This Boy's Life*, Tobias Wolff



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