

Directions for your Constructive Response to *Angela's Ashes*

- After you have read each of the constructed response questions below, select one to answer. The constructed response verbiage is listed below to assist you in this process.
- Responses are graded on quality not quantity, looking for thinking in your writing, and reflection on the article above.
- Use the film *Angela's Ashes* to explore the characters and storyline in order to provide support for your answers and to properly address the questions.
- You may compose your response in a *Microsoft Word document*.
- Make sure to include your name and hour attached to your work.
- Email your assignment as an attachment or within the email to:
docjseller@gmail.com, Subject line:
Angela's Ashes Assignment



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?
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 his years in Ireland?

Directions for Composition Writing Ideas

Below you will find six composition ideas. Select one option that appeals to you and compose a 500+ word composition. Your composition must be typed, using Times New Roman, size 12 font and double-spaced. Identify each of your compositions with a title that reflects what your essay is about.

Option One

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example the story has an ironic ending. This story is told from a child's point-of-view concerning an adult situation. After reading this story, compose an essay that shares a particular fond memory from your own childhood or that of a friend, using a child's point-of-view. If you can conclude with an ironic twist, more power to you.

"I'm nine years old and I have a pal, Mickey Spellacy, whose relations are dropping one by one of the galloping consumption. I envy Mickey because every time someone dies in his family he gets a week off from school and his mother stitches a black diamond patch on his sleeve so that he can wander from lane to lane and street to street and people will know he has the grief and pat his head and give him money and sweets for his sorrow.

But this summer Mickey is worried. His sister, Brenda, is wasting away with the consumption and it's only August and if she dies before September he won't get his week off from school because you can't get a week off from school when there's no school. He comes to Billy Campbell and me to ask if we'll go around the corner to St. Joseph's Church and pray for Brenda to hang on till September.

What's in it for us, to hang on till September.

Well, if Brenda hangs on and I get me week off ye can come to the wake and have ham and cheese and cake and sherry and lemonade and everything and ye can listen to the songs and stories all night.

Who could say no to that? There's nothing like a wake for having a good time."
-Sc, pg. 171

Option Two

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example he is asked by his teacher to write a composition on "What it would be like if Our Lord had grown up in Limerick." After reading this composition compose your own, "What would it have been like if Our Lord had grown up in Denver?"

“This is my composition. I don’t think Jesus Who is Our Lord would have liked the weather in Limerick because it’s always raining and the Shannon keeps the whole city damp. My father says the Shannon is a killer river because it killed my two brothers. When you look at pictures of Jesus He’s always wandering around ancient Israel in a sheet. It never rains there and you never hear of anyone coughing or getting consumption or anything like that and no one has a job there because all they do is stand around and eat manna and shake their fists and go to crucifixions. Anytime Jesus got hungry all He had to do was walk up the road to a fig tree or an orange tree and have His fill. If He wanted a pint He could wave His hand over a big glass and there was the pint. Or He could visit Mary Magdalene and her sister, Martha, and they’d give Him His dinner no questions asked and He’d get his feet washed and dried with Mary Magdalene’s hair while Martha washed the dishes, which I don’t think is fair. Why should she have to wash the dishes while her sister sits out there chatting away with Our Lord? It’s a good thing Jesus decided to be born Jewish in that warm place because if he was born in Limerick he’d catch the consumption and be dead in a month and there wouldn’t be any Catholic Church and there wouldn’t be any Communion or Confirmation and we wouldn’t have to learn the catechism and write compositions about Him. The End.”
Sc. Pg.206

Option Three

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example the story performs a comparison on one religious belief to another. As children we are often faced with looking at the world in concrete values, in other words, yes and no scenarios. After reading this example write an essay that takes a comparative look at two different items, beliefs, opinions, objects and/or fallacies and decide on your own point-of-view.

“On Sunday mornings in Limerick I watch them go to church, the Protestants, and I feel sorry for them, especially the girls, who are so lovely, they have such beautiful white teeth. I feel sorry for the beautiful Protestant girls, they’re doomed. That’s what the priests tell us. Outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation. Outside the Catholic Church there is nothing but doom. And I want to save them. Protestant girl, come with me to the True Church. You’ll be saved and you won’t have the doom. After Mass on Sunday I go with my friend Billy Campbell to watch them play croquet on the lovely lawn beside their church on Barrington Street. Croquet is a Protestant game. They hit the ball with the mallet, pock and pock again, and laugh. I wonder how they can laugh or don’t they know they’re doomed? I feel sorry for them and I say, Billy, what’s the use of playing croquet when you’re doomed?”

He says, Frankie, what’s the use of not playing croquet when you’re doomed?”
Sc. Pg. 172-173

Option Four

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example he talks about the different classes in Irish society. Compose a composition that reflects your

own personal experience in adjusting to a different class situation in America, or confronting your issues of wealth/poverty in your family?

“We go to school through lanes and back streets so that we won’t meet the respectable boys who go to the Christian Brother’s School or the rich ones who go to the Jesuit school, Crescent College. The Christian Brothers’ boys wear tweed jackets, warm woolen sweaters, shirts, ties and shiny new boots. We know they’re the ones who will get jobs in the civil service and help the people who run the world. The Crescent College boys wear blazers and school scarves tossed around their necks and over their shoulders to show they’re cock o’ the walk. They have long hair which falls across their foreheads and over their eyes so that they can toss their quaffs like Englishmen. We know they’re the ones who will go to university, take over the family business, run the government, run the world. We’ll be the messenger boys on bicycles who deliver their groceries or we’ll go to England to work on the building sites. Our sisters will mind their children and scrub their floors unless they go off to England, too. We know that. We’re ashamed of the way we look and if boys from the rich schools pass remarks we’ll get into a fight and wind up with bloody noses or torn clothes. Our masters will have no patience with us and our fights because their sons go to the rich schools and, Ye have no right to raise your hands to a better class of people so ye don’t.”

Sc, pg.273

Option Five

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example he shares the power of the human imagination, the ability to forget our current situation and/or situation in life. Write a composition about the power of your own imagination. Where has your imagination taken you to in a difficult or unpleasant time during your life, when you use your imagination what does your world look like?

“ When the play finishes she lets me fiddle with the knob on the radio and I roam the dial for distant sounds on the shortwave band, strange whispering and hissing, the whoosh of the ocean coming and going and the Morse Code dit dit dit dot. I hear mandolins, guitars, Spanish bagpipes, the drum of Africa, boatmen wailing on the Nile. I see sailors on watch sipping mugs of hot cocoa. I see cathedrals, skyscrapers, cottages. I see Bedouins in the Sahara and the French Foreign Legion, cowboys on the American prairie. I see goats skipping along the rocky coast of Greece where the shepherds are blind because they married their mothers by mistake. I see people chatting in cafes, sipping wine, strolling on boulevards and avenues. I see night women in doorways, monks chanting vespers, and here is the great boom of Big Ben, This is the BBC Overseas Service and here is the news.” Sc, pg. 273

Option Six

The following is an excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*, by Frank McCourt, in this example he shares his personal dreams about a bright future once he earns a decent living. Write a composition about your own personal dreams in life, what do you hope to accomplish,

where do you picture yourself in the future, is there any charitable deeds you hope to fulfill for your family and/or friends?

“ When I start that job at the post office I’ll buy him shoes so I will. I’ll give him an egg and take him to the Lyric Cinema for the film and the sweets and then we’ll go to Naughton’s and eat fish and chips till our bellies are sticking out a mile. I’ll get money some day for a house or a flat with electric light and a lavatory and beds with sheets blankets pillows like the rest of the world. We’ll have breakfast in a bright kitchen with flowers dancing in a garden beyond, delicate cups and saucers, eggcups, eggs soft in the yolk and ready to melt the rich creamery butter, a teapot with a cozy on it, toast with butter and marmalade galore. We’ll take our time and listen to music from the BBC or the American Armed Forces Network. I’ll buy popular clothes for the whole family so our arses won’t be hanging out of our pants and we won’t have the shame. The thought of the shame brings a pain in my heart and starts me sniffing.” Sc, pg. 298