



Angela's Ashes: A Memoir

By Frank McCourt

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A Pulitzer Prize-winning, #1 New York Times bestseller, *Angela's Ashes* is Frank McCourt's masterful memoir of his childhood in Ireland.

“When I look back on my childhood I wonder how I managed to survive at all. It was, of course, a miserable childhood: the happy childhood is hardly worth your while. Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood.”

So begins the luminous memoir of Frank McCourt, born in Depression-era Brooklyn to recent Irish immigrants and raised in the slums of Limerick, Ireland. Frank's mother, Angela, has no money to feed the children since Frank's father, Malachy, rarely works, and when he does he drinks his wages. Yet Malachy—exasperating, irresponsible, and beguiling—does nurture in Frank an appetite for the one thing he can provide: a story. Frank lives for his father's tales of Cuchulain, who saved Ireland, and of the Angel on the Seventh Step, who brings his mother babies.

Perhaps it is story that accounts for Frank's survival. Wearing rags for diapers, begging a pig's head for Christmas dinner and gathering coal from the roadside to light a fire, Frank endures poverty, near-starvation and the casual cruelty of relatives and neighbors—yet lives to tell his tale with eloquence, exuberance, and remarkable forgiveness.

Angela's Ashes, imbued on every page with Frank McCourt's astounding humor and compassion, is a glorious book that bears all the marks of a classic.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood," writes Frank McCourt in *Angela's Ashes*. "Worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood." Welcome, then, to the pinnacle of the miserable Irish Catholic childhood. Born in Brooklyn in 1930 to recent Irish immigrants Malachy and Angela McCourt, Frank grew up in Limerick after his parents returned to Ireland because of poor prospects in America. It turns out that prospects weren't so great back in the old country either--not with Malachy for a father. A chronically unemployed and nearly unemployable alcoholic, he appears to be the model on which many of our more insulting cliches about drunken Irish manhood are based. Mix in abject poverty and frequent death and illness and you have all the makings of a truly difficult early life. Fortunately, in McCourt's able hands it also has all the makings for a compelling memoir.

From School Library Journal

YA. Despite impoverishing his family because of his alcoholism, McCourt's father passed on to his son a gift for superb storytelling. He told him about the great Irish heroes, the old days in Ireland, the people in their Limerick neighborhood, and the world beyond their shores. McCourt writes in the voice of the child?with no self-pity or review of events?and just retells the tales. He recounts his desperately poor early years, living on public assistance and losing three siblings, but manages to make the book funny and uplifting. Stories of trying on his parents' false teeth and his adventures as a post-office delivery boy will have readers laughing out loud. Young people will recognize the truth in these compelling tales; the emotions expressed; the descriptions of teachers, relatives, neighbors; and the casual cruelty adults show toward children. Readers will enjoy the humor and the music in the language. A vivid, wonderfully readable memoir.?Patricia Noonan, Prince William Public Library, VA

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From Library Journal

McCourt is the eldest of eight children born to Angela Sheehan and Malachy McCourt in the 1920s. The McCourts began their family in poverty in Brooklyn, yet when Angela slipped into depression after the death of her only daughter (four of eight children survived), the family reversed the tide of emigration and returned to Ireland, living on public assistance in Limerick. McCourt's story is laced with the pain of extreme poverty, aggravated by an alcoholic father who abandoned the family during World War II. Given the burdens of grief and starvation, it's a tribute to his skill that he can serve the reader a tale of love, some sadness, but at least as much laughter as the McCourts' "Yankee" children knew growing up in the streets of Limerick. His story, almost impossible to put down, may well become a classic. A wonderful book; strongly recommended for readers of any age.

-?Robert Moore, DuPont Merck Pharmaceuticals, Framingham, Mass.

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