

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt

- Many autobiographies and memoirs have been published recently, why did this one make the best seller list in two weeks?
- The narration seems to have a balance between the sad events and humorous events – did you sense this? Was the balance maintained?
- Was a sense of dignity maintained throughout the book?
- Many reviewers commented on the rhythm of the language of the book, do you agree? Did anyone listen to it on audio?
- Women, in particular mothers, play a significant role in the book. How do these episodes reflect the role of women?
- Would Angela have become a stronger person if Margaret lived?
- How do you feel about ways Angela struggled to keep the family together?
- What about the relationship of Angela with her mother?
- Frank's father was inadequate as father and husband, but still Angela stays with him, why? Does Frank express any bitterness toward the father? Could you be so forgiving?
- Ever present is the Catholic Church, how does the Church impact the family and specifically Frank's family?
- Frank spent the first four years of his early life in the US, how does this affect his years in Ireland?
- Why after the misery the family endured in the US did they continue to see the US as land of milk and honey?
- What part did the father play in creating the person that Frank eventually became?
- What was your impression of Frank's father? And Frank's mother?
- Why were the grandparents so indifferent to the welfare of their grandchildren?
- Many critics praised the author for his ability to draw a detailed character in just a few sentences. Do you agree?
- What were some of your favorite characters? Why?
- This book is full of contradictions. The McCourts were part of a community with commonality of poverty and church, yet they were still loners (father from North, Frank a Yankee). What were some of the other contradictions?
- Why and how did literature become such a positive force in the author's life?
- How do you feel about Frank stealing food for his starving family?
- How do you feel about his stealing passage money from the dead woman?
- Frank titles his memoir Angela's Ashes, what significance does this phrase acquire by the end of the book?
- The father was the central character in the book, why wasn't it named after him?
- Which single episode in the book is most memorable for you and why?
- Will this book become a classic – will people be reading it 50 years from now?



Skokie Public Library

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