

Summer 2014 Assignment
Honors British Literature 12
Ms. Surat

To prepare for the Honors British Literature course, you will be required to engage in a close reading of the selected text, Frank McCourt's memoir, *Angela's Ashes*. Your probing analysis should reveal thematic and universal connections to other works read in your years at the Maggie Walker Governor's School.

Close reading will be used to generate ideas for your assignment. Close reading of a text involves an analytic exploration recorded through personal annotation. For those unfamiliar with the process, annotating involves metacognition, or consciously *thinking about thinking*. An initial reading of the book may be pleasurable. In subsequent scholarly study, you will be reading contemplatively and purposefully with a pen in hand, marking passages or making notations about whatever you feel is striking or important. For example, you may consider theme, style, and characterization. Most importantly, annotation facilitates understanding, and it is also a practical referencing tool. When you return in the fall and need to refresh your memory to write an essay, your notations will prove invaluable.

REMINDER ABOUT SOCRATIC SEMINAR STYLE AND PURPOSE

Based on Socrates' theory that it is more important to enable students to think for themselves than to merely fill their heads with the "right" answers, students will engage in dialogues by responding to their questions with questions, instead of answers. Engaging in dialogue allows students to think critically, to analyze meanings in the text, and to express ideas with clarity and confidence.

THE ASSIGNMENT

1. Complete a close reading and annotation of *Angela's Ashes*.
2. Adequately prepare for a successful Socratic seminar by creating a list of open-ended and close-ended questions. Write one question in each of the following categories listed below these directions.

QUESTIONS TO CREATE

WORLD CONNECTION:

Compose a question connecting the text to the real world.

You must draw parallelisms between *Angela's Ashes* and other historical topics/events, past or present.

CLOSE-ENDED:

Compose a question about the text that will help everyone in the class come to an agreement about events or characters in the text. This question usually has a "right" answer.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION:

Compose an insightful question about the text that will require proof and will generate group discussion. This question should involve the "construction of logic" to discover or explore the answer to the question.

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UNIVERSAL THEME/CORE QUESTION:

Compose a question dealing with a theme(s) of the text that will encourage group discussion about the universality of the text.

LITERARY ANALYSIS QUESTION:

Create a question that explores Frank McCourt's choice of style. How does McCourt utilize point of view, characterization, and authentic diction, for example? Do you find him to be manipulative in any way?

FURTHER NOTES:

On a class day following the seminar, you will be writing a timed essay about the memoir. This essay will be the initial assessment of your close reading and composing skills and will be added to your writing folder for the year.

Your senior English teacher encourages you to be self-directed, but, of course, you are welcome to email Ms. Surat or the English Department Chair, Ms. Williams if you have further questions. Please remember that the use of *Cliff's Notes* or other "student short-cut" publications is considered an honor code offense. Your original work with the text is required. A few questions that you may have are anticipated below:

Question: How much should I mark in each book?

Answer: Use your own judgment. Don't mark so much that you cannot tell what is important, and, if you have only marked one or two passages for an entire chapter, that may not be adequate.

Question: What if what I mark isn't what the teacher later points out as important in class?

Answer: That is okay, as long as you are able to justify your idea. You may find that you have similar assertions about the theme or character, but you cited different passages to support them.

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