

10th Grade

English WEEK 1: Fall Semester

Before Reading

What do you know or think you know about Irish Immigrants to the U.S.—their situation back in Ireland as well as their lives once they arrived here? What questions do you have and/or what would you like to learn about these people and this time period? Write a thoughtful paragraph in response to these questions on your own paper.

Read

- Read “Irish Immigrants”
- Highlight the text as you read for main ideas and important details.

After Reading

Answer questions 1-10. Your answer to question #10 must be in ACE IT! format (see attached).

Read Some More

Read the Introductory page to “Writing in the First Person.” Frank McCourt was an Irish immigrant who wrote about his childhood experiences back in Ireland in his best-selling memoir *Angela’s Ashes*. Look for connections to the informational passage “Irish Immigrants” as you read an excerpt from his book. Follow these instructions:

- Read the excerpt once through without reading the notes in the margins
- Read it a second time with the notes
- Think about the specific details and descriptions that make this narrative passage strong and vivid.
- Review the 7 tips for writing under “Write Your Own First-Person Account”

Writing

Choose a vivid time from your childhood. You might think of the first time that you rode on a train, of a time when you got in trouble, earning money to buy something that you really wanted, and so on. Narrate the story of the childhood memory that you've chosen so that your readers will understand the event and why it was important and memorable.

Irish Immigrants

By Michael Stahl



Two very famous American comedians have something very interesting in common with two American presidents. Stephen Colbert and Conan O'Brien, who, as of 2013, are considered two of the funniest Americans, host their own late night talk shows and are among the funniest men in the country. They each also have ancestors who were Irish and both have publicly commented on their Irish pride. President John F. Kennedy was often recognized as the first Irish-Catholic man to be the president, and he remains the lone Catholic president in American history. President Barack Obama also has a family tree whose branches stretch to Ireland, which came as a surprise to many, even to President Obama. However, not only do all four men have Irish roots, but each of their respective families also left their homeland for America during one of the most devastating eras in the history of the small island country of Ireland: The Great Famine.

In the year 1845, the diets of one-third of the people of Ireland were entirely made up of potatoes. This illustrates the fact that Ireland was already a country that had greater than its fair share of poverty even before The Great Famine, which is often referred to as The Irish Potato Famine in countries outside of Ireland. When a disease often referred to as "potato blight" started to destroy potato crops, not only in Ireland, but also throughout Europe, the weight of worry quickly altered the Irish people's outlook. In 1845, roughly one-third of the potatoes grown in Ireland were lost and that was just the start. The next year, three-quarters of the crops were wiped out by the blight. The farming was so poor that year that in 1847 many pessimistic potato farmers did not even attempt to grow crops. 1848 saw one-third of the pre-famine average crop haul. And on-and-on it went.

The Great Famine lasted until 1853. Though the crops began to thrive in the countryside once again that year, the damage had been done. At the start of the famine, Ireland had a population of around 9 million people, but by its end, nearly twenty-five percent of the people were gone. It has been estimated that one million people or more died from starvation and diseases, while another million or so fled the country in that eight-year period. Half of the immigrant population that made its way into the borders of the United States was from Ireland in the 1840s.

One thing Ireland is known for is its bright green, hilly landscape. When the Irish left their homeland for what they thought would be greener pastures in America, they did so by boat. Conditions were so poor on those vessels and the travel time was so long that the term “coffin ship” was coined because a great number of Irish people died on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. Those that survived were so poor that they had little choice but to stay in whatever city the boat they traveled on docked at. The urban areas where they ended up settling were very different from Ireland, for reasons beyond the geography and color of the landscape.

Though the Irish would quickly make up large portions of the populations of major American cities, such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston, where almost half the people were new Irish immigrants, the locals treated them with much hostility. Citizens of these areas felt a sense of entitlement to resources because they had been there longer and were more “American” than the Irish. The Irish were easy to pick out of a crowd, too. They spoke with heavy accents and brought over a very different style of clothing than what most Americans wore in those days. These characteristics, and the fact that many of them were uneducated and untrained in any trade or business, made their new neighbors and countrymen scorn them.

Noticing the influx of people entering the cities, building owners reconfigured their spaces, making smaller apartments out of bigger ones so as to accommodate more tenants. The Irish had to pay for their housing out of wages from low-paying jobs that required back-breaking work. Most of the Irish men, if they were able to get work at all, performed physical labor. America was expanding and needed new roadways, railways, bridges, tunnels, and canals. Many of the Irish immigrants took jobs in those industries as well as in mining. Still, landlords overcharged Irish tenants for small living spaces that often lacked ventilation and plumbing. Because money and food were so scarce, while housing was so expensive, women also had to join in as a tremendous part of the Irish workforce, taking servants’ jobs as housekeepers, nannies, and maids.

To make matters worse, when hard economic times hit portions of the country, the Irish were the last to be employed. Many businesses that did need workers posted signs that said they were hiring, but added “Irish need not apply” if they did not feel too desperate for laborers. The sign became so widespread throughout the country that even when it was shortened to just “INNA,” readers understood exactly what it meant. Examples like these of pure hatred towards Irish immigrants have drawn comparisons to the American treatment of blacks at that time, which was still before the Civil War had been fought and the Emancipation Proclamation written. Though arguments about the origin of the term “Black Irish” vary, some historians believe it was used to describe a kind of pecking order within the Irish community. The Irish had been migrating to America before the Great Famine and those who had been in the U.S. longer had more ample opportunity to gain financial security. Those who fled Ireland and starvation due to the potato blight, on the other hand, were viewed as members of the lowest class of people. Thus, when someone was labeled Black Irish, it was a hint at a class association with African Americans and not an observation of a poor Irishman’s physical characteristics; regardless of wealth, the majority of Irish immigrants had light hair, eyes, and skin.

Many politicians sought to gain votes off of the newfound hatred of the Irish-Catholic immigrants. “Nativists” had campaigned decades prior, though mostly on anti-Native American platforms. When the Irish came and the subsequent prejudice against them became commonplace, Nativists were reenergized. After creating the “American Party,” they actually gave speeches promising that if they were elected into various offices, they would find a way to close up American borders to keep the Irish from entering. The incredible irony about Nativists is that none of them were really native at all; they had simply been in the U.S. a couple of generations longer than the Irish, and some even less than that. Nevertheless, they were so volatile that they held violent demonstrations from time to time and lead attacks on Catholic churches. Some Irish immigrant deaths have been attributed to such outbursts of violence against them.

For the Irish to gain favor in America, it would take violence—both sanctioned by the government, and not. The Civil War created a ripe opportunity for these political conflicts to come to a head. During the war, there were drafts that required men to fight. Draft riots erupted in New York City because Irish immigrants insisted that the rules of the draft would draw an unfair number of Irish into service. Still, incredibly, about 140,000 Irishmen enlisted in the Union Army. After the Union victory, some formerly prejudiced Americans began to view the Irish as assets to the country, for they had proven their loyalty on the battlefields.

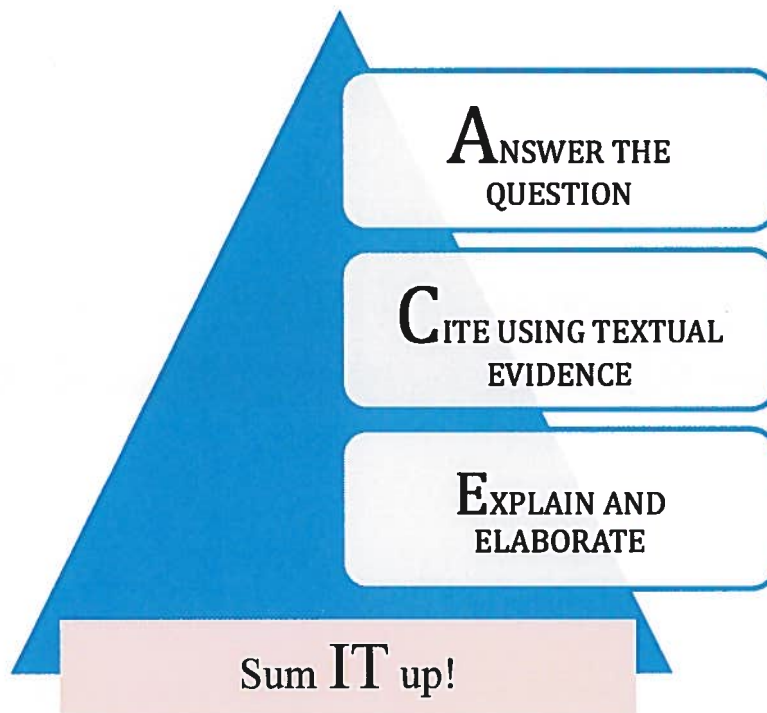
Slowly, but surely, the Irish began to fit into America a little more comfortably. They began many of the early trade unions, founded police departments, and fire departments, too.

By the twentieth century, Irish Catholics became a force to be reckoned with in politics. Boston elected an Irish mayor, James Michael Curley. In the 1920s, one of New York State’s governors, Al Smith, was Irish. Both he and Mr. Curley set the stage for the rise of John F. Kennedy to the White House.

History shows that, from the Great Famine to the coffin ships, from the prejudice to the Civil War draft, Irish-Americans have been a resilient bunch. It’s no wonder that the Notre Dame mascot is called The Fighting Irish.

Written Response Success!

ACE IT!



- **A**nswer the question, including name of text & author (or name of historical event & important player(s), or specific step of a science experiment, etc.) in the first half of the sentence.
- **C**ite a quote or reference from the text. First introduce the quote or evidence. Last, include page or paragraph number at the end in parentheses.
- **E**xplain, elaborate and comment on how the quote or information supports the topic sentence [2 sentences].
- **IT** is necessary to conclude/sum up your written response.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which event made one million Irish people leave Ireland in the mid-1800s?

- A the Black Death
- B World War I
- C the American Civil War
- D the Great Famine

2. Some Americans began to view the Irish as assets to the country. Which of the following cause created this effect?

- A 140,000 Irishmen enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War and proved their loyalty on the battlefields.
- B The Irish were overcharged for smaller apartments when they moved to American cities.
- C The Irish traveled to America in "coffin ships" and many died on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.
- D By the twentieth century, Irish Catholics became a force to be reckoned with in American politics.

3. Read the sentences: "Many businesses that did need workers posted signs that said they were hiring, but added 'Irish need not apply' if they did not feel as though they were too desperate for laborers... Examples like these of pure hatred towards Irish immigrants have drawn comparisons to the American treatment of blacks at the time, which was still before The Civil War had been fought and the Emancipation Proclamation written."

This evidence supports which of the following conclusions about how the Irish were viewed in America at this time?

- A The Irish were well-respected members of society.
- B The Irish were considered to be the part of the lower classes of society.
- C The Irish were hated more than the blacks in society.
- D The Irish were considered slaves.

4. What can be concluded about the effect of the Irish on American history?

- A The Irish had a very minimal effect on American history.
- B The Irish had a major effect on American history, from the Civil War to current politics.
- C The Irish had an effect only in American cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.
- D The Irish only had negative effects on American history.

5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A While Irish immigrants have faced many challenges in America, they have overcome these challenges and contributed much to American society.
- B The Great Famine is a warning that crop yields can determine your future.
- C Racism in the 1800s and 1900s was not limited to those that were identified as black or African-American.
- D The best politicians and comedians of American history have been Irish, despite unique difficulties in their lives.

6. Read the sentences: "By the twentieth century, Irish Catholics became **a force to be reckoned with** in politics. Boston elected an Irish mayor, James Michael Curley. In the 1920s, one of New York State's governors, Al Smith, was Irish. Both he and Mr. Curley set the stage for the rise of John F. Kennedy to the White House."

What does the author mean by the term "**a force to be reckoned with**"?

- A a negative force
- B a debate team
- C a powerful or influential force
- D a judgmental group

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The term "Irish need not apply" became very popular on store signs; _____, store owners shortened the term to "INNA" and readers still understood its meaning.

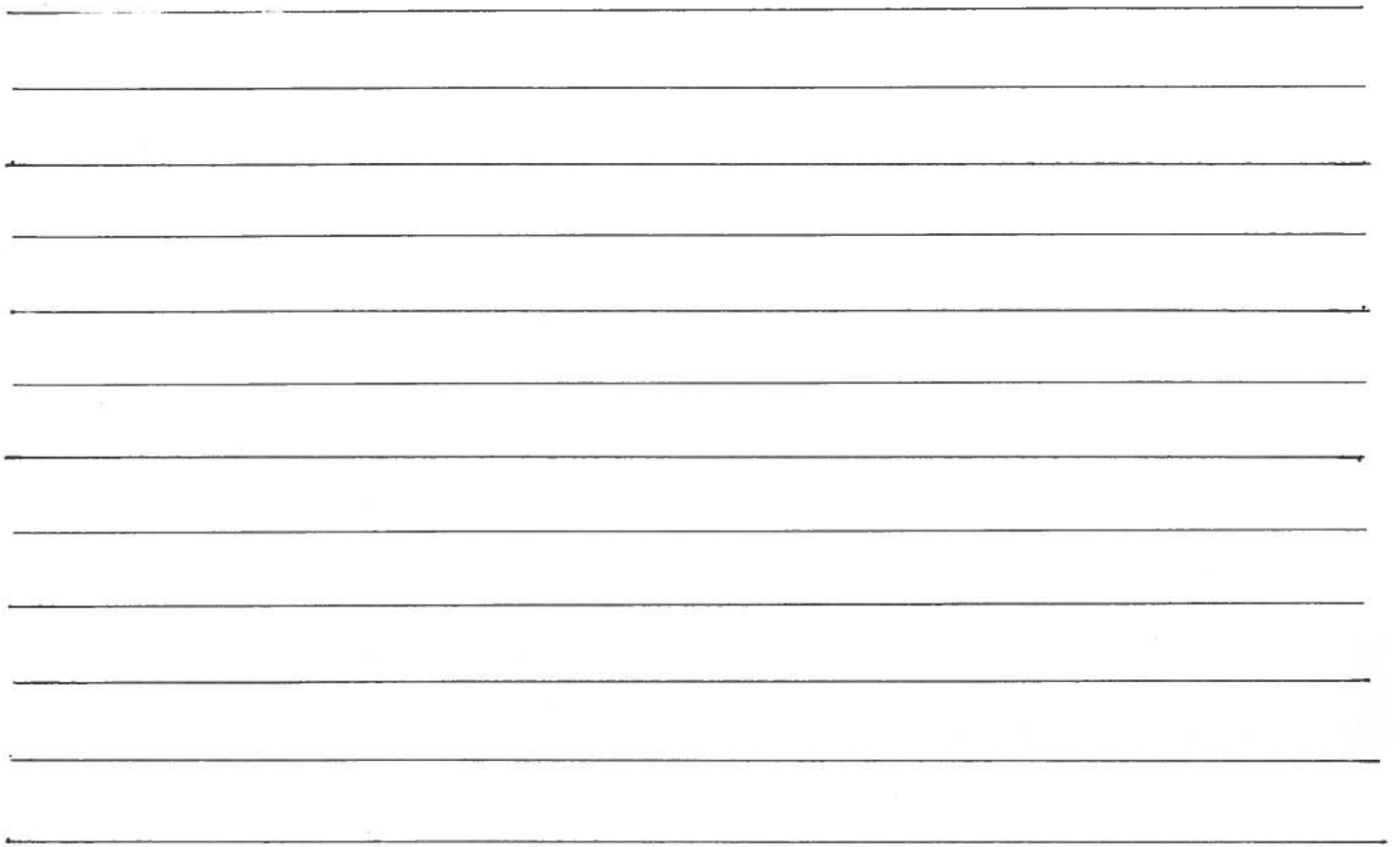
- A as a result
- B before
- C however
- D because

8. Describe at least two challenges the Irish faced when they moved to American cities. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

9. What benefits did the Irish enjoy when they began to fit into America a little more comfortably after the American Civil War?

10. The author notes that "Irish-Americans have been a resilient bunch." A person who is resilient is strong and able to recover from unpleasant or damaging events.

Using information from the passage, explain why Irish-Americans can be considered a "resilient bunch."



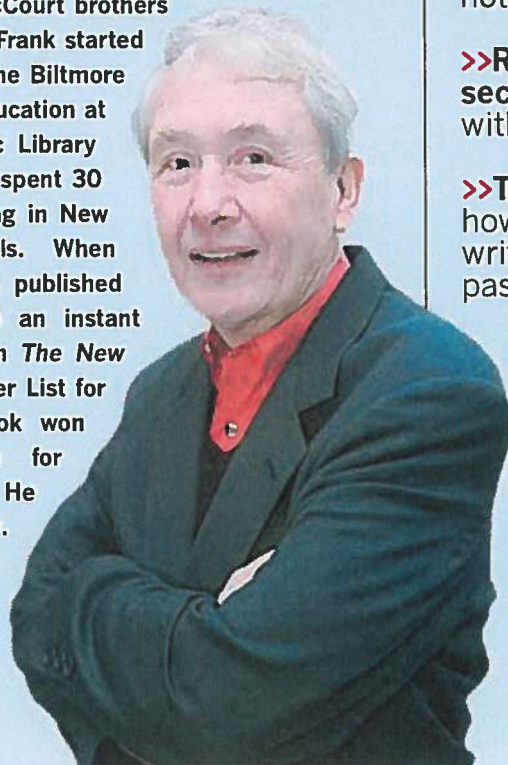
Writing in the First Person

IT'S EASY TO BE YOURSELF, BUT IT'S DIFFICULT TO SHOW YOUR READERS WHO YOU ARE. **FRANK McCOURT**, A CONTEMPORARY MASTER OF THE FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE, REVEALS HIMSELF THROUGH EVERY WORD IN HIS MEMOIR. **LC** SHOWS YOU HOW HE DOES IT SO YOU CAN DO IT TOO.

Who is Frank McCourt?

Frank McCourt was born in 1930 to Irish Catholic parents in Brooklyn, New York. The U.S. was in the Great Depression, and his father couldn't find work. When he was 4, the family moved back to his mother Angela's native Limerick in the south of Ireland. *Angela's Ashes* is a memoir of his impoverished childhood in Ireland.

Eventually, all the McCourt brothers moved to New York. Frank started out as a bellboy in the Biltmore Hotel, and got his education at the New York Public Library on 42nd Street. He spent 30 years teaching writing in New York public schools. When *Angela's Ashes* was published in 1996, it became an instant classic, remaining on *The New York Times* Best-seller List for 115 weeks. The book won the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1997. He still lives in New York.



How to write from models

>>Read the excerpt once through without reading the notes.

>>Read it a second time, with the notes.

>>Think about how you would write a similar passage.

>>Use the notes and writing prompts at the end to get started.

(excerpt from *Angela's Ashes*)

1. Here, McCourt lays the scene with a series of expository sentences in order to let the reader know what's going on. Once the context is in place, the action can unfold.

We don't laugh long, there is no more bread and we're hungry, the four of us. We can get no more credit at O'Connell's shop. We can't go near Grandma, either. She yells at us all the time because Dad is from the North and he never sends money home from England where he is working in a munitions factory. Grandma says we could starve to death for all he cares. That would teach Mam a lesson for marrying a man from the North with sallow skin, an odd manner and a look of the Presbyterian about him.

Still, I'll have to try Kathleen O'Connell once more. I'll tell her my mother is sick above in the bed, my brothers are starving and we'll all be dead for the want of bread.

I put on my shoes and run quickly through the streets of Limerick to keep myself warm against the February frost. You can look in people's windows and see how cozy it is in their kitchens with fires glowing or ranges black and hot everything bright in the electric light cups and saucers on the tables with plates of sliced bread pounds of butter jars of jam smells of fried eggs and rashers coming through the windows enough to make the water run in your mouth and families sitting there digging in all smiling the mother crisp and clean in her apron everyone washed and the Sacred Heart of Jesus looking down on them from the wall suffering and sad but still happy with all that food and light and good Catholics at their breakfast.

3. This run-on sentence is a breathless glimpse into the thoughts of a desperate, hungry boy. The lack of punctuation and the jumble of words related to food, warmth, and comfort give the reader a sense of the narrator's intense longing.

2. McCourt brings other characters' voices into the text without abandoning his own voice by using indirect dialogue, a device in which characters' speech is written without quotation marks. In this section, you can hear his grandmother's voice coming through to scold him.

FROM
ANGELA'S
ASHES BY
FRANK
MCCOURT.
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FRANK
MCCOURT.
PUBLISHED BY
SCRIBNER, A
DIVISION OF
SIMON &
SCHUSTER.

continued -

4. After the long sentence in the preceding paragraph, McCourt gives the reader a rest with one sentence that shifts into the voice of the older narrator looking back on his childhood.

I try to find music in my own head but all I can find is my mother moaning for lemonade.

Lemonade. There's a van pulling away from South's pub leaving crates of beer and lemonade outside and there isn't a soul on the street. In a second I have two bottles of lemonade up under my jersey and I saunter away trying to look innocent.

There's a bread van outside Kathleen O'Connell's shop. The back door is open on shelves of steaming newly baked bread. The van driver is inside the shop having tea and a bun with Kathleen and it's no trouble for me to help myself to a loaf of bread. It's wrong to steal from Kathleen with the way she's always good to us but if I go in and ask her for bread she'll be annoyed and tell me I'm ruining her morning cup of tea, which she'd like to have in peace ease and comfort thank you. It's easier to stick the bread up under my jersey with the lemonade and promise to tell everything in confession.

5. The word "lemonade" puts the reader back into the action of the story, and signals the moment when Frank spots the lemonade he's been looking for. When you read the word on the page, it's as though you see the bottle of lemonade with him.

6. This last paragraph combines several techniques to illustrate the narrator's thought process. McCourt uses exposition and indirect dialogue, and mixes the perspectives of the young boy with the older man to create a rich effect.

Write Your Own First-Person Account

USE A MEMORY FROM YOUR OWN CHILDHOOD AS A STARTING POINT FOR THIS EXERCISE

1 Re-read note #1. Don't forget that, even though you remember all the details, this scene is entirely new to your reader. Take the time to describe the physical scene and to give some context for your story.

2 Review note #2. Who are the other people in your scene? Try to remember their voices—the things that they said and the way that they said them. Incorporate their speech into your essay using either direct or indirect dialogue.

3 Note #3. Have you ever noticed how your thoughts run on and on without punctuation or even logic? Try to capture some of your own unique thought patterns in a sentence or two. You will likely discover connections to themes that go beyond the immediate scene.

4 Note #4. Don't forget to pace your scenes. If you have been racing through a lot of dense material, try to give your reader a break by interspersing shorter sentences or paragraphs. If your writing tends to be slow and expository, try to include some action periodically to keep your reader's interest.

5 Note #5. Although unconventional, one-word sentences are a great way to let your voice shine through, imply action, or portray thoughts. If your teacher doesn't mind the grammar, try using this device.

6 Note #6. The best writing mixes multiple devices in the service of story. Don't be afraid to combine techniques in order to capture your own voice and experience.

7 To finish your story, let memory be your guide . . .