APPENDICES
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Frank McCourt was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Irish immigrant parents. Unable to find work in the depths of the Depression, the McCourts returned to Ireland, where they sunk deeper into the poverty McCourt describes so movingly in his memoir, *Angela's Ashes*.

McCourt's father, an alcoholic, was often without work. He drank up what little money he earned and eventually abandoned the family altogether. Three of the seven children died of diseases aggravated by malnutrition and the squalor of their surroundings. Frank McCourt himself nearly died of typhoid fever when he was ten. McCourt's memoir describes an entire block of houses sharing a single outhouse, ground floor dwellings flooded by constant rain, a home infested with rats and vermin. Despite the horrors of McCourt's childhood, he told his story with humor, brilliant description, and deep compassion for his family, even for the shiftless father who instilled in him a love of language and storytelling.
After quitting school at 13, Frank McCourt alternated between odd jobs and petty crime in an effort to feed himself, his mother, and three surviving brothers. At 19, he returned to the United States and worked at odd jobs until he was drafted into the United States Army at the onset of the Korean War. McCourt spent the war stationed in Germany and on his return to civilian life was able to pursue a college education on the G.I. Bill. Although he had never attended high school, he was able to persuade the admissions office of New York University to accept him as a student. Although his childhood interest in language and storytelling were fed by creative writing classes and his own constant reading, he did not feel ready to pursue a career as a professional writer. On graduation, he went to work for the New York City Public School system, where he taught for the next 27 years.

"I taught what they call 'Creative Writing' though you and I know how hard it is to teach anyone anything," McCourt says. "Instead of teaching writing I 'conducted' writing classes. I tried to show my students the significance of their own lives which they sometimes thought insignificant. I hoped they'd realize the value of their own lives, that they were good enough to write about. So they took the plunge and they wrote and some were willing to read to the class and I think they were glad they did. Then they'd say to me, 'Why don't you write something and read it to the class?' And I did -- more and more."

Although McCourt spent his summers working on a novel drawing on his youth in Ireland, he was unable to find his own voice until he retired from teaching. After years of teaching creative writing to young people, McCourt
determined to write his own life story. *Angela's Ashes* sold over 4 million copies, has been published in 27 countries and has been translated into 17 languages. It won McCourt the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Award, the ABBY Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Biography.

His second book, *'Tis*, picked up the story of his life where *Angela's Ashes* left off, with his arrival in America at age 19. It shot to the top of the best-seller lists as soon as it was published. His 2005 memoir, *Teacher Man*, chronicled his 27-year career in the New York City school system. Like its predecessor, it was an instant bestseller. Frank McCourt died in New York City at the age of 78.