

You Are Invited to Attend the English IV Honors

Memoir Book Club

Step 1: Choose a Book and Convince Your Friends to Join You!

- ***Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt**

"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.

- ***Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah**

Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of *The Daily Show* began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.

Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard time, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mother's unconventional, unconditional love.

- ***I Am Malala* by Malala Yousefzai**

"I come from a country that was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday."

When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday, October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school, and few expected her to survive.

Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she became a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest nominee ever for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I AM MALALA is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

I AM MALALA will make you believe in the power of one person's voice to inspire change in the world.

Step 2: Begin Reading Your Book

- You need to have your book by **Friday, April 13**.
- I will give you a few reading days in class (graded—participation), but most of the book will be read outside of class.
- We will have a **Book Club Planning Day on April 11**. On this day, you will work with your book club groups to set goals, select activities for your Book Club meetings. You will also set your checkpoints for the future Book Club meetings.
- As you read, make note of the unique writing style of the writer. One of your own memoir vignettes that you will write in this unit must specifically emulate some aspect of the writer's (McCourt's, Noah's, or Yousefzai's) style.

Step 3: Be Prepared for Each Book Club Meeting

- Book Club Planning Day: April 11
- Book Club Checkpoint #1: **April 18 (quiz grade)**
- Book Club Checkpoint #2: **April 27 (quiz grade)**
- **FINAL BOOK CLUB = AA GRADE**
 - *I Am Malala*: **May 2**
 - *Born a Crime*: **May 3**
 - *Angela's Ashes*: **May 4**

Other Things to Expect in Our Memoir Unit:

You will be writing your own memoir vignettes throughout this unit. You have already written three prior to this unit—I will give those back to you with feedback so that you can revise them.

Up to this point, you have been given specific prompts for the memoir vignettes. On future memoir vignettes, you will have more freedom to pick topics of interest to you. I will provide you with a list of options, but I am also happy to approve of ideas you have.

More information specifically related to your Memoir Scrapbook will come later.

I KNOW that the Senioritis struggle is real—but you need to push through and put forth your best effort in this final six weeks. The final product of this project is something you will be able to keep and cherish for many years to come!