

NAME: _____



Activity One

Character Study

Choose a character from the book and write a paragraph about the greatest conflict this character faces. Describe the conflict and discuss the eventual outcome. Then, write another paragraph describing how your character changes over the course of the novel.

In your descriptions, make sure to answer the following questions about the character you chose:

- Name
- Age (span)
- Weight
- Hair
- Eye color
- Voice
- Smell
- Distinctive physical characteristics
- Appearance
- Health
- Occupation
- Nationality
- Style of dress
- Education
- Values
- Views on money
- Views on work
- Views on education
- Views on drinking
- Views on parenting
- Goals
- Obstacles
- Who does he or she live with?
- How do his or her friends see him or her?

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Activity Two

Catholic and Protestants

There is clearly a North/South divide, which exists in the book. Angela is berated by her family for marrying a man from the North, and there are numerous references to this throughout the novel.

When Frank dances with one shoe, Angela says he has the odd way about him like his father from the North and Mr. Clohessey replies "that would account for it. They'd think nothing of dancing with one shoe in the North." Malachy experienced prejudice against him because of his Northern accent and is unable to find work, yet he refuses to speak with a Limerick accent in order to feed his family.

In Chapter 7, Frank says he feels sorry for the Protestant girls because they're 'doomed'. The priests tell Frank that "outside the Catholic Church there is nothing but doom."

Frank attends a Catholic school where the masters constantly refer to religion. One teacher supports Frank and Malachy saying "you didn't see Jesus on the cross sporting shoes." They must also study the catechism at school, which has everything they need to know in order to pass their confirmation. The teacher — Mr. Benson — is always threatening them with the cane and eternal damnation if they don't learn all they must about Catholicism. We also learn of the "souters," who changed their religion to get fed in the famine. These people who gave up Catholicism for a bowl of soup have a specific place reserved in hell.

Malachy wants Frank to be an altar boy but despite learning the Latin mass by heart, he is given no chance. We are unsure if this is because Malachy is from the North or if it is based upon class.

Clearly there are a number of divisive factors in Irish society. Religion, the North/South divide and class are three examples.

Using evidence from the text and your own ideas, write about whether you feel Protestants and Catholics should have been made to go to school together.



Activity Three

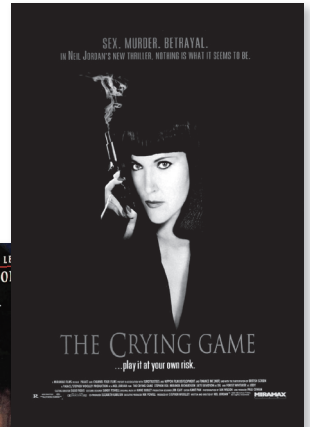
Write a Review

Movies and books about certain cultures are popular as they invoke the feeling of the place in question. They can also lead to us having a greater appreciation and understanding of that culture.

Your task is to write a one-paragraph review of one of the following Irish movies. You must describe the movie or book but do not give away too much information. Often when reviewers write about a movie or book, they will give it a mark out of ten or five using pictorial cues to show their opinion. Siskel and Ebert were well known for their two thumbs up or down and other writers use a star system to evaluate a movie or book.



Waking Ned Devine
In the Name of the Father



The Crying Game

The Snapper

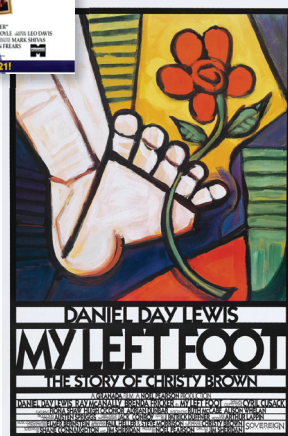
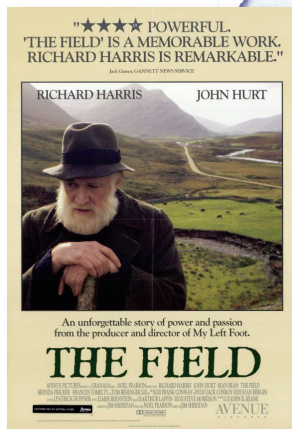
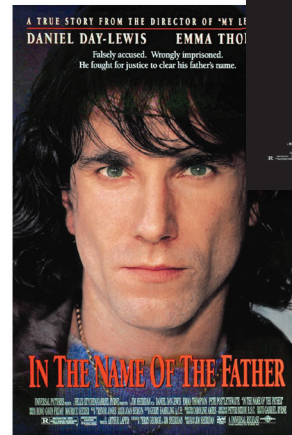
Intermission

The Field

My Left Foot

The Quiet Man

The Commitments



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Activity Four

The Great Potato Famine

Frank McCourt experiences great hardship and hunger in his years growing up in Ireland. In the novel, he salivates as one of his teachers peels an apple, and he robs a man of his fish and chips. At one point, he goes and steals food because his mother is too ill to look after them. Frank is far from alone in his hunger; many of the boys at school experience similar living conditions, some far worse than him.

Throughout the course of the novel, the famine is mentioned. The fear of that time returning is part of the Irish psyche. In the novel, a nurse talks about “children suffering and dying here while the English feasted on roast beef and guzzled the best of wine in their big houses.” She also talks about children “with their mouths all green from trying to eat grass.” The Great Potato Famine occurred in 1845 and did not end until 1851. Ireland was an agricultural nation and the native people of Ireland were mostly farmers. It was a very poor nation; the only people who had any wealth were the landowners. Most of the landowners were English Protestants or Anglo-Irish Protestants. The Irish Catholic tenants had no rights and the English landowners were known to evict the Irish peasants off the farms they had lived on for generations.

The Irish were very poor and survived largely on a diet of potatoes. The farms did raise chickens and beef and other livestock, but most ordinary working Irishmen could not afford such luxuries. The diet was poor and as a result, life expectancy was extremely low. Ireland had a life expectancy of only 40 in the 1800s, which was largely due to the poor living conditions. The farms they lived on had been divided and then divided again, so the only crop they could realistically grow on such a small space was the potato. The potato was literally a cash crop for the Irish. They would eat it, drink it in the form of whiskey, feed it to their animals and even pay their rent with it. The famine was caused by a fungus known as the blight. The fungus spread quickly and before the end of 1845, most of Ireland was infected. The English refused to get involved in Irish concerns, believing that self government was more appropriate than interfering with Irish problems. This is one of the main reasons that the English have been hated by the Irish for such a long time. The famine caused over 1 million deaths and led to at least a million others fleeing the country. Many moved to Liverpool and from there sought passage to the United States and Canada.

Research the famine in Ireland and write a one page story, which would reveal the manner in which the Irish peasants lived at the time.



Activity Five

Historical Friction Between England and Ireland

In the novel we hear about 800 years of English dominancy over the Irish. There is much prejudice and discrimination against the English. Paddy Clohessy says "the English wouldn't give you the steam off their piss" and his father curses them even from his deathbed. Ireland is comprised of the Republic of Ireland (Eire), which occupies almost 85% of the total landmass and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom. The partition of the island dates from 1920-22, before which the whole island was under British rule.

When the four religious areas of Ireland were created in 1152, both Gaelic and Danish elements helped form a united Church. This act and other reforms angered the English Pope, Adrian IV. In 1168 the English invaded the island and began forcing reforms upon the Irish, many of which dealt with the granting of land. These acts completely changed the political and social structure of Ireland.

Henry VIII tried to separate Ireland from the papacy, just like he had in England when he created the Church of England in order to divorce. Great resistance met this and Catholicism became part of the Irish identity, along with a hatred of the English. Henry VIII's daughter, Queen Elizabeth, then put down an attempted overthrow of the English by the Irish. She used this incident to impose even greater restraint upon Ireland, bringing many English people over to Ireland to make them landowners. This was followed by several hundreds of years of anti-Irish discrimination. The Catholic schools were closed and Catholics were not allowed to own land or have government jobs.



Henry VIII, King of England 1509–1547

After the famine, Catholic Ireland slowly increased in prosperity, but there became a growing awareness of the greater prosperity enjoyed by the industrialized Northern Ireland and British people. The people in the North tended to be Protestants and richer than those in the South. The Catholics of the South eventually fought for and won the right to self govern, while Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom.

All did not appreciate this division; the 20th Century was dominated by conflict between those who wanted a united Ireland and those who did not.

Research the role of the IRA on the British and Irish political scenery in the 20th Century. Write three separate paragraphs, each one explaining a different viewpoint. One from the vantage of a Southern Irish Catholic who is in the IRA; one from the viewpoint of a Northern Irish separatist, and one from the viewpoint of a Londoner who survives a bombing.



Activity Six

Chapter Covers

The cover of the book gives the reader an insight into what the book is going to be like. It transmits basic information such as the title and author, but also conveys a sense of tone. For example, the cover of *Angela's Ashes* tells us the story will be about a boy who is obviously impoverished.

Choose one of the sections in the book and design a cover, reflecting a key theme. Write a paragraph summarizing that section of the novel and describe any of the major themes that are focused upon. For example: hunger, religion, family relationships. When you have finished, the whole class will bring their individual pieces together to create a visual and literal storyboard of the whole novel.

