

"The trouble with being poor is that it takes up all your time."
Willem de Kooning

Focus The texts are taken from two autobiographical books, both of which describe conditions of extreme poverty. One author writes about Ireland in the 1930s and 40s, and the other writes about Paris in the 1930s.

Discuss

- Can you imagine what extreme poverty was like in the 1930s? Have you read any books or seen any films that would give you an idea of this?
- What images of extreme poverty do you have? Are they based on circumstances in your country?

LISTENING

14

1 BEFORE YOU LISTEN

Read the synopsis of the story on the right.

Word Bank Turn to page 120.

2 NOW LISTEN

Listen and answer the following questions:

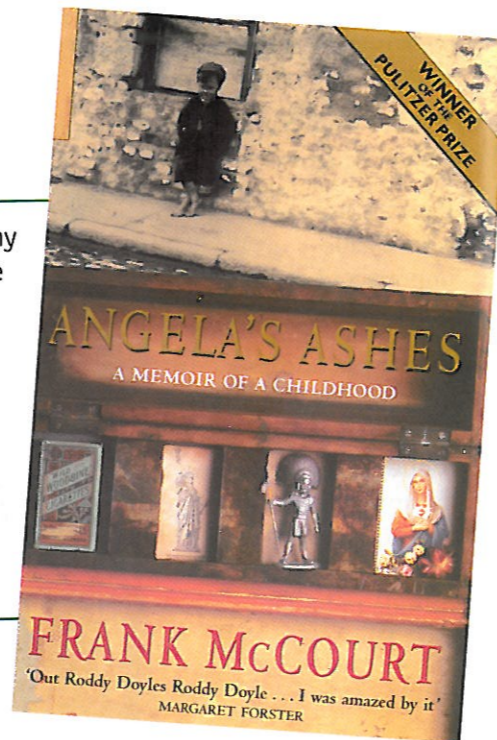
- Who is the person referred to as *he* at the beginning of the extract?
- What was he trying to do?
- How did the people around him feel about what he was doing?
- What was the reaction of other boys at school the next day?
- What did the teacher do about this reaction?

3 FIRST IMPRESSION

- Which of the following emotions do you think the boy feels in this extract? Where in the narrative does he feel them (beginning, middle or end)?
 - amusement
 - shame
 - embarrassment
 - relief
 - anger
 - gratitude
- Which words and phrases tell you how he's feeling?

Angela's Ashes is a sad but funny autobiographical account of the extreme poverty of life in Ireland in the 1930s.

The McCourts lived in a house which flooded easily. At times like this, they lived upstairs, which was comparatively warm and dry. As a result, they called the downstairs *Ireland* and the upstairs *Italy*.



4 LISTEN AGAIN

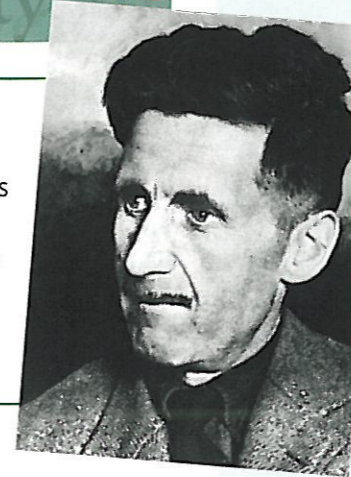
- Explain in your own words what Frank McCourt's father did to try to repair his children's shoes.
- Look at the words underlined below. Using mime, try to show what the words describe.
 - He takes Mam's sharp knife and he hacks at the tire ...
 - He pounds away with the hammer, driving the nails through the rubber pieces and into the shoes ...
 - The soles and heels are covered with squares of rubber tire which stick out on each side of the shoe and flip before and behind ...
 - The tire pieces are so lumpy we stumble when we walk ...
 - There is sneering here. There is jeering at the misfortunes of others ...

READING

14

DOWN AND OUT IN PARIS AND LONDON

Down and Out in Paris and London, by George Orwell, is an account of the times when he was poor and living in each of the two capital cities.



It is altogether curious, your first contact with poverty. You have thought so much about poverty – it is the thing you have feared all your life, the thing you knew would happen to you sooner or later; and it is all so utterly and prosaically different. You thought it would be quite simple; it is extraordinarily complicated. You thought it would be terrible; it is merely squalid and boring. It is the peculiar *lowness* of poverty that you discover first; the shifts that it puts you to, the complicated meanness, the crust-wiping.

1 BEFORE YOU READ

Read the first three sentences of the text. Predict why Orwell describes being poor as *extraordinarily complicated*.

Word Bank Turn to page 120.

2 FIRST IMPRESSION

Read the complete text and think about the following:

- Do Orwell's problems seem like the problems of a poor person today? Why? Why not?
- Are Orwell's experiences similar to Frank McCourt's? If not, how are they different?

3 READ AGAIN

Explain the following references:

- it is all so utterly and prosaically different*. What is?
- of course you dare not admit it*. Admit what?
- the laundress catches you in the street and asks you why*. What exactly does she ask?
- This wastes you a franc a day*. What does?
- with such fearful results*. Results of what?

You discover, for instance, the secrecy attached to poverty. At a sudden stroke you have been reduced to an income of six francs a day. But of course you dare not admit it – you have got to pretend that you are living quite as usual. From the start it tangles you in a net of lies, and even with the lies you can hardly manage it. You stop sending clothes to the laundry, and the laundress catches you in the street and asks you why; you mumble something, and she, thinking you are sending the clothes elsewhere, is your enemy for life. The tobacconist keeps asking why you have cut down your smoking. There are letters you want to answer, and cannot, because stamps are too expensive. And then there are your meals – meals are the worst difficulty of all. Every day at meal-times you go out, ostensibly to a restaurant, and loaf an hour in the Luxembourg Gardens, watching the pigeons. Afterwards you smuggle your food home in your pockets. Your food is bread and margarine, or bread and wine, and even the nature of the food is governed by lies. You have to buy rye bread instead of household bread, because the rye loaves, though dearer, are round and can be smuggled in your pockets. This wastes you a franc a day. Sometimes, to keep up appearances, you have to spend sixty centimes on a drink, and go correspondingly short of food. Your linen gets filthy, and you run out of soap and razor blades. Your hair wants cutting, and you try to cut it yourself, with such fearful results that you have to go to the barber after all, and spend the equivalent of a day's food. All day you are telling lies, and expensive lies. () You discover what it is like to be hungry. With bread and margarine in your belly, you go out and look into the shop windows. Everywhere there is food insulting you in huge, wasteful piles; whole dead pigs, baskets of hot loaves, great yellow blocks of butter, strings of sausages, mountains of potatoes, vast Gruyère cheeses like grindstones. A snivelling self-pity comes over you at the sight of so much food.

Language Check Reported speech 2

Using reporting verbs makes your writing more interesting.

Exercise 1

Look at the box below and choose a suitable reporting verb for each sentence. Use a dictionary to help you if you need to.

For example:

'Clear your room up, it's a disgrace!'
(told)

He told his son to tidy up his room.

- 'How old is she? I've no idea!'
- 'I'm sorry. I stole your money. Please forgive me.'
- 'Would you like me to carry your bags?'
- 'This food is cold.'
- 'Can I sit down here, please?'
- 'Do your homework immediately!'

asked	complained
confessed	offered
wondered	told

(For more information, turn to page 92.)

Exercise 2

We use an infinitive to express purpose, and a clause to express fact.

For example:

He told me to go home. (infinitive)

He told me his name was George. (clause)

Put in a verb from Exercise 1 and put the verb in brackets into the correct tense.

- He _____ how old the lady _____ (be).
- The robber _____ he _____ (steal) the money.
- Jeff _____ (carry) his sister's bags.
- The man _____ that his food _____ (be) cold.
- She _____ if she _____ (sit) next to him.

LET'S TALK

- Both the texts are written in the present tense. Why did the authors choose to write their stories this way?
- What comparisons and contrasts can you make between the poverty described by the two different writers?
- Why did Orwell make such elaborate attempts to stop people knowing that he had no money?
- Orwell uses the word *you* throughout the extract. Why does he do this? Would the piece have been as effective if he had used *I* instead of *you*?
- Poverty is still a worldwide problem, even in the 21st century. Divide into groups and discuss one of the following questions:
 - What are the causes of poverty in the world?
 - What are the solutions to this problem?
 - Why have governments and international organisations failed to solve the problems of poverty?

ROLE-PLAY

You are members of the St Vincent de Paul Society and the following people come to you for help, but you only have the funds to assist one family. Read their stories and discuss which family to help. One of the families is the McCourts.

Family 1

A woman is living with her four sons. Three of her other children have died of consumption (tuberculosis). Her husband is working in England, but never sends any money back. She doesn't work. She needs furniture and winter clothes for the children.

Family 2

The family consists of mother, father and two sons. The father is a heavy smoker and is very ill, and rarely leaves his bed. His two sons are notorious for stealing, but they usually steal only food. The mother works three hours a day as a cleaner. She is hoping that the society will find them accommodation which is less damp.

Family 3

There are seven children in this family. One of them is handicapped but extremely intelligent. The father works but the mother has to stay home to look after the handicapped child and the other young ones. The family would like some money so they can send their handicapped child to a fee-paying school.

WRITING

- Look at the picture of Limerick in the 1930s. Describe the scene.
- Read this extract from *Angela's Ashes*:

I sit on a bench in the schoolyard and take off my shoes and stockings but when I go into the class the master wants to know where my shoes are. He knows I'm not one of the barefoot boys and he makes me go back to the yard, bring in the shoes and put them on.

Rewrite this extract in the past tense beginning: *I sat on a bench*. Then continue the story in your own words for another paragraph. Describe what happened next (you can change the original story, if you like) and how you felt.

- Write a composition suggesting reasons why the McCourts and families like them lived in such poverty in Ireland in the 1930s.
- You are an inspector from the St Vincent de Paul Society, and you have been sent to inspect the house where the McCourts live. Using all the information you have, write a report about your findings. Refer to the following:

- the house itself (read the information on page 54 again)
- the state of the children's clothes
- your recommendations about what should be done.



Limerick in the 1930s (right)
Limerick today (below)



PROJECT

Find out more about Limerick. When you have some information, produce a leaflet about the city. Here are some places where you can find information:

- atlases and encyclopaedias
- the City Hall in Limerick
- the Internet: you can find information on www.irishtouristboard.com

If you write to the tourist board or the City Hall, tell them that you have read an extract from *Angela's Ashes*, and you are interested to know how the city has changed.

roughage /'rʌfɪdʒ/ (*n*) coarse food, such as bran
cement /sɪ'ment/ (*n*) a material used to hold stones and bricks together when building bridges, walls etc.
calcium /'kælsɪəm/ (*n*) an element which is good for strengthening bones and teeth
tender /'tendər/ (*adj*) soft, sweet

Reading
 (General American)

The Man who Listens to Horses Page 51

pen /pen/ (*n*) an enclosed area where animals are exercised
to keep an eye on (someone) /,ki:p ən 'aɪ ,ɑ:n/ (*v*) to look after someone, make sure they are not in danger, e.g. a child
merely /'mɪrli/ (*adv*) simply
to cajole /kə'dʒoʊl/ (*v*) to try to persuade gently
gelding /'geldɪŋ/ (*n*) a young male horse which has had its testicles removed
to stand on tiptoes /,stænd ə:n 'tɪptəʊz/ (*v*) to stand on the ends of your toes to try to make yourself taller
no rhyme or reason /,nəʊ raɪm ɔ:r 'ri:zən/ no explanation
to accomplish (something) /ə'kɒmplɪʃ/ (*v*) to manage to do something, to succeed in doing something
to mess around /,mes ə'raʊnd/ (*v*) to behave in a silly way
reluctance /rɪ'lʌktəns/ (*n*) not wanting to do something
to raise /reɪz/ (*v*) to bring up (children)
stall-chain /'stɔ:l tʃeɪn/ (*n*) a chain used for restraining horses
to burst into /,bɜ:rst 'ɪntu:/ (*v*) to come in quickly and suddenly
buttocks /'bʌtəks/ (*npl*) the parts of the human body that you sit on
to wield /wi:ld/ (*v*) (here) to swing
to writhe /raɪð/ (*v*) to move backwards and forwards, usually because of pain, to wriggle
submission /səb'mɪʃən/ (*n*) acceptance of someone's authority
resentment /rɪ'zentmənt/ (*n*) unhappiness and bad feeling due to someone's actions
allegiance /ə'li:dʒəns/ (*n*) loyalty
to instil /ɪn'stɪl/ (*v*) to teach something over a long period of time
obedience /ou'bi:driəns/ (*n*) doing what one is told to do

13 Poverty Page 54

Listening
 (Standard British English)

Angela's Ashes Page 54

last /lɑ:st/ (*n*) something you put a shoe on to repair it
to hack /hæk/ (*v*) to cut powerfully (usually with an axe, saw or knife)
sole /səʊl/ (*n*) the bottom part of a shoe, where it touches the ground (the same word is used for feet)
heel /hi:l/ (*n*) the back part of the bottom of a shoe (the same word is used for feet)
to pound away /,paʊnd ə'weɪ/ (*v*) to hit hard, repeatedly
The St Vincent de Paul Society /ðə sɛnt ,vɪnsənt dɪ 'pɔ:l sə,ʃaɪətɪ/ a charitable institution that provides support for poor people
to stick out /,stɪk 'aʊt/ (*v*) to be visible because it is too big or long
to trip /trɪp/ (*v*) to fall over something
lumpy /'lʌmpɪ/ (*adj*) uneven
to stumble /'stʌmbəl/ (*v*) to nearly fall down
The Leamy's National School /ðə ,li:mɪz ,nəʃnəl 'sku:l/ the school attended by Frank McCourt and his brother
barefoot /'beəfʊt/ (*adj*) wearing no shoes
to fight your own battles /,faɪt jər əʊn 'bætəlz/ (*v*) to stand up for yourself, defend yourself
to sneer /sniə/ (*v*) to make fun of with an unkind smile or remark
to jeer /dʒɪə/ (*v*) to make fun of someone in an unpleasant way
money galore /,mʌni gə'lɔ:/ (*nph*) lots of money

Reading
 (Standard British English)

Down and Out in Paris and London Page 55

curious /'kjʊəriəs/ (*adj*) (here) strange, bizarre
poverty /'pɒvərtɪ/ (*n*) the state of being poor, having little or no money
utterly /'ʌtəli/ (*adv*) completely, totally
prosaic /prəʊ'zeɪk/ (*adj*) uninteresting
squalid /'skwɒlɪd/ (*adj*) dirty and unpleasant
at a stroke /,æt ə 'strəʊk/ (*adv*) immediately
to tangle /'tæŋɡəl/ (*v*) (here) to get (someone) into a complicated situation

laundry /'ləʊndrɪ/ (*n*) a place where you take your clothes to be washed

laundress /'ləʊndres/ (*n*) a woman who works in a laundry

to mumble /'mʌmbəl/ (*v*) to speak quietly and indistinctly

ostensibly /v'stensəbəl/ (*adv*) apparently for one reason, but really for another

to loaf /ləʊf/ (*v*) to do nothing

to smuggle /'smʌɡəl/ (*v*) to take something, hiding it so people can't see what you're doing

correspondingly /,kɒrɪ'spɒndɪŋli/ (*adv*) for that reason

linen /'lɪnɪn/ (*n*) (here) underwear

filthy /'fɪlθi/ (*adj*) very dirty

snivelling /'snɪvəlɪŋ/ (*adj*) pathetic

self-pity /,self 'pɪtɪ/ (*n*) feeling sorry for oneself and one's situation

14 Relationships Page 58

Listening
 (General American)

Runaways Page 58

ancestor /'ænsɛstər/ (*n*) a predecessor, someone in your family who lived before you
physician /fɪ'zɪʃən/ (*n*) a doctor
good blood /,ɡʊd 'blʌd/ (*nph*) (coll) nice, good people in the family going back a long way
old man /,əʊld 'mæn/ (*n*) (coll) father
burned up /,bɜ:rnd 'ʌp/ (*adj*) angry
to bottle up /,bɔ:təl 'ʌp/ (*v*) to control feelings, keep them inside
to take chances /,teɪk 'tʃænsɪz/ (*v*) to take risks
motto /'mɔ:təʊ/ (*n*) a saying that guides people's behaviour
to figure out /,fɪɡjər 'aʊt/ (*v*) to work out, to understand
to eat into /,i:t 'ɪntu:/ (*v*) to annoy more and more
to go through the roof /,ɡəʊ θru: ðə 'ru:f/ (*v*) (coll) to get angry and lose control
to kill something (in me) /'kɪl səmθɪŋ/ (*v*) to destroy (part of my character)
fervently /'fɜ:vəntli/ (*adv*) with great feeling
right for each other /'raɪt fər i:tʃ ,ʌðər/ (*adj*) perfectly suited to one another

Reading
 (General American)

The Shipping News Page 59

by rights /baɪ 'raɪts/ if things had happened as planned
orphanage /'ɔ:rfənɪdʒ/ (*n*) a home for children with no parents

orchard /'ɔ:rtʃərd/ (*n*) a field where fruit trees grow

tin /tɪn/ (*adj*) metal

trunk /trʌŋk/ (*n*) a large box or case in which people packed their belongings when travelling a long distance

to sign on /,saɪn 'ɑ:n/ (*v*) to agree to do something by writing your name

waif /weɪf/ (*n*) a small, vulnerable child

rural /'rʊərəl/ (*adj*) relating to the countryside

to keep in touch /,ki:p ɪn 'tʌtʃ/ (*v*) to stay in contact by letter or telephone etc.

shipwreck /'ʃɪprek/ (*n*) the remains of a ship destroyed by accident or in a war

bitter /'bɪtər/ (*adj*) (here) very cold

offshore /ɔ:f'ʃɔ:ɪ/ (*adj*) in the sea, near a port

to work (someone) to the bone /,wɜ:rk tə ðə 'bəʊn/ (*v*) to work someone extremely hard

to treat (someone) like dirt /,tri:t laɪk 'dɜ:rt/ (*v*) (coll) to treat someone very badly

starved /stɑ:rvd/ (*adj*) extremely hungry

loneliness /'lʌnsəməns/ (*n*) loneliness

wretched /'retʃɪd/ (*adj*) poor, unhappy

to cast (them) off /,kæst 'ɒ:f/ (*v*) to send (them) away without a thought

harsh /hɑ:ɪʃ/ (*adj*) hard, difficult

15 School Page 62

Listening
 (General American)

Anne of Green Gables Page 62

whitewashed /'waɪtwɑ:ʃt/ (*adj*) painted white

substantial /səb'stænʃəl/ (*adj*) (here) large and well made

dusky /'dʌskɪ/ (*adj*) dark

eaves /i:vz/ (*npl*) the edge of a roof that projects beyond a wall

hieroglyphics /haɪərə'glɪfɪks/ (*npl*) an ancient form of pictorial writing used by the Egyptians

to carve /kɑ:rv/ (*v*) (here) to cut letters or figures on a surface with a knife

13 Poverty Page 54

Reported speech 2

1 Traditionally, reported speech is taught with a formula of tense changes, pronoun and time expressions: present becomes past, *will* becomes *would*, *can* becomes *could*, *yesterday* becomes *the day before* etc.

I'm Italian. He said he was Italian.

What will you do tomorrow? She asked me what I would do the next day.

I went to the cinema last night. He said he'd been to the cinema the previous night.

2 Both writers of the extracts in this unit have avoided the traditional formulae of reported speech, partly by telling their stories in the present tense:

*Mam tells him he's going to destroy the shoes altogether ...
Then he says to the class, there is sneering here ...
The tobacconist keeps asking why you have cut down your smoking.*

3 Reported speech formulae are commonly used to express thoughts rather than spoken words:

*... the thing you knew would happen to you sooner or later ...
... you thought it would be terrible ...*

Exercise

Read these extracts and report what was said, using simpler language, if necessary.

- Mrs Hannon says, God above, what's up with your shoes?
- Is there anyone in this class that thinks he's perfect?
- You stop sending clothes to the laundry, and the laundress catches you in the street and asks you why.
- The tobacconist keeps asking why you have cut down your smoking.
- Mam says God above, if you left the shoes alone they'd last till Easter.

Turn to page 56 Language Check for more exercises.

14 Relationships Page 58

could and was able to

1 *Could* is the past tense of *can*, and indicates general ability in the past. *Was/were able to* sounds more formal, but is also possible in these sentences from the texts:

- I could (was able to) talk to Dr Siebolt about love – I could talk to him about anything.*
- I used to cry all the time, and my parents never could (were never able to) figure out why.*
- He could do no wrong, and I never could do anything right.*
- A place where they put children if the parents couldn't (weren't able to) keep them.*
- It was because he was a printer's son that he could (was able to) read and write very well.*

2 Use *was able to*, not *could*, to indicate the ability to do something *once* in the past:

We were able to (NOT could) reach the top of the mountain before it got dark.

In the negative, *could* can also be used:

We weren't able to (OR couldn't) see all the paintings in the museum because it was closed.

Was able to is not appropriate in idiomatic expressions with *could*:

That really ate into him. He couldn't (NOT wasn't able to) stand that.

Exercise

Are these examples correct? Are there other ways of saying the same thing?

- My sister and her husband were able to speak to the Prime Minister at the meeting.
- We couldn't find a hotel room so we had to drive home.
- I went to that second-hand shop and I could buy a second-hand dress for £5.
- I couldn't see the other boat even when I used the binoculars.
- My French teacher was able to speak Spanish as well.

Turn to page 60 Language Check for more exercises.