AP Language and Composition Summer Reading Guide

Over the summer students will read one of two memoirs, Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* or William Finnegan's *Barbarian Days*. As students read, they should focus on not just the plot of the memoirs, but how the writers use style and technique to heighten or focus their narratives.

Students should prepare to talk about **at least three** of the guiding questions for their chosen text, **along with related passages** to examine in class in the first week. **A working knowledge of the text will be assessed in the first week of the quarter which will include basic plot and character understanding.**

Guiding Questions:

Angela's Ashes

Structure/Style

-McCourt does not use quotation marks in his writing, how does this style heighten the "storytelling" feel of his writing? And what purpose does that style have?
-How does McCourt's use of the present tense to talk about his childhood challenge our understanding of the accuracy of his memory? Is he *re*living his childhood in this text?

Plot

-What are two places where we see Frank make a connection to literature and storytelling? What do those moments represent to him?
-What are the promises and failures of Frank's father?

Ideas/Concepts

-What does America and England represent to Frank as he grows up between ideas of Ireland, England and an America his parents left?
-How does hunger shape this memoir? How is it a memoir about hunger and what hunger-- physical, spiritual, and emotional—does to a child?

Barbarian Days

Structure/Style

-What can the different "eras" of *Barbarian Days* represent in Finnegan's growth as a person? How do these structural "chapters" hold together? Where do we see him moving backwards or forwards in time, and how does that movement effect his narrative?
-What does Finnegan choose to focus on in his scenes? What does he leave out? What are two or three "in depth" scenes, and how can we examine *why* he chose those particular scenes?

Plot

-How does Will understand his relationship to Bryan Di Salvatore? What constitutes this friendship? And what does it mean to Will?
- How does Finnegan represent himself as an interloper in the places he visits? What are three times where he feels both "at home" or "out of place"?

Ideas/Concepts

-What is a wave to Finnegan? How does the community around the waves relate to the waves themselves?
-What does it mean for Finnegan to pursue something? What is the memoirs idea of an "ends" to all of this pursuit of waves, or freedom, of life?