

From Book

Angela's Ashes, by Frank McCourt, was published in 1996 and was an immediate success. It has sold over four million copies and has been translated into 17 languages. When director Alan Parker read the book, he knew it would make a great film. In 1998, the filming of *Angela's Ashes* began.

The director

The film follows McCourt's book very closely. 'Frank's book is at the heart of this film,' Alan Parker said. 'I often told the actors to look back at the book, when they had questions. The film is very special –



Alan Parker with Frank McCourt

it is seen through the eyes of a child, but with the cleverness of a 65-year-old man.'

The actors

Angela is played by **Emily Watson**. When Frank McCourt saw her for the first time, he said, 'That is my mother!' Before filming started, Emily stayed in Limerick for a few months to study the Irish accent. She also started smoking. When the filming was over, she found it difficult to stop.

Emily always has children around

her in the film. She wanted Angela to be as real as possible. She carried real babies – never dolls.

Malachy McCourt, the children's father, is played by **Robert Carlyle**. He was already famous for his parts in the top British films *The Full*



Monty and Trainspotting. But the part in Alan Parker's film was different. 'We wanted to show the different sides of Malachy,'

Robert said. 'When I met Frank McCourt, he told me that he loved his father. I wanted to show this part of the man. He disappeared whenever things got difficult, but he wasn't a bad person.'

The children

Over 15,000 children auditioned for the part of Frankie. Alan Parker needed to find three actors – a

to Film 1



The three Frankies

young Frankie, a young teenage Frankie and teenage Frankie.

Joe Breen (5) played young Frankie. He had never acted before. His parents were farmers. Sometimes he had to milk the cows before he came to work! In the film, Joe has to eat a lot of porridge. He hated it!

Ciaran Owens (13) played Frank as a young teenager. We see Ciaran the most in the film.

Michael Legge (19) played Frank as an older teenager. 'I loved

working on *Angela's Ashes*,' he said, 'but some things were hard. In one scene, I have to hit Emily (Angela). I found that very difficult.' Everyone agreed that the children were the true stars of the film.

'They're so natural,' said Robert Carlyle, 'They did everything right first time!'

Alan Parker said, 'Children have to enjoy themselves when they're filming.

They work better this way.

I'm a friend first, and a school teacher second.'

Work in pairs. Think of other books that have become films. Which ones have you seen? Which ones have you read? Compare the film with the book.

What do these words mean?

part publish translate doll audition scene