

#NPS LITERACY
 STRATEGIC.
 AUTHENTIC.
 ENGAGED.

NPS English Office
 Learning in Place 2020
 English High School



Daily Reading	READ 14.2: Each day read for 15 minutes, something of choice, and complete the reading log including the title of the book/text, the number of pages read, and a hashtag summary of what was read. The reading log is on the back of this sheet. A sample entry is included.
Daily Writing	Write two or more pages per day capturing your thoughts, questions, comments, and concerns about the events unfolding in our world presently. Here are some ideas to get you started: respond to or analyze tweets, Instagram posts, Tik-Tok videos, articles, pictures, cartoons that you see related to the current situation, discuss how this virus has disrupted your life or altered your plans or the effects on friends and family. You could simply journal your thoughts about this unprecedented time in our world. (adapted from kellygallagher.org)

For the texts assigned below, you are expected to annotate thoroughly either on a printed version or on a separate sheet of paper by writing a hashtag summary of each paragraph and responding to the margin questions. In addition, there are extended writing tasks. **All assignments are due to your English teacher on the first day you return to school.**

Week 1

Weekly Reading	Extended Writing Task
"Canceled Foreign Trips and Anxiety: U.S. Schools Prepare for Coronavirus" (Newsela Article)	Ensure that you are maintaining your Daily Writing Log. You should have a minimum of 15 entries by the end of the three week period.

Week 2

Weekly Reading	Extended Writing Task
Read and complete pp. 328-835 "Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy" (ELA Textbook)	Considering this week's reading and your own experience, write an essay in which you argue whether or not fear is an enemy or a friend. Be sure to use reasons, examples, and elaboration.

Week 3

Weekly Reading	Extended Writing Task
Read and complete pp. 926-935. From "Angela's Ashes" (ELA Textbook)	Sister Rita is in charge of patient care, while Seamus takes care of the building. Write an essay in which you argue/persuade your reader who is the more caring person between the two. Be sure to use reasons, examples, and elaboration.

Canceled foreign trips and anxiety: U.S. schools prepare for coronavirus

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.06.20

Word Count **876**

Level **1020L**



A school janitor walks up the stairs inside Bothell High School, which was closed for the day on February 27, 2020. The suburban Seattle, Washington, school was closed after a staffer's family member was placed in quarantine for showing symptoms of possibly contracting the new coronavirus. The school was to be cleaned and disinfected on February 27 while students stayed home. Photo: Elaine Thompson/AP Photo

Canceled international trips. Extra hand-washing and squirts of disinfectant between classes. Lengthy emails sent to parents to reassure them.

"A new disease is circulating," Northern Virginia school officials wrote of the coronavirus in a recent message to Fairfax County parents and staff. "It's natural for people to be concerned."

Hasty preparations are taking place in schools throughout the nation as Americans watch for the arrival of the coronavirus. The flulike illness, which first arose in China, had infected more than 93,000 people. As of March 4, it had killed 3,199 people worldwide.

At the end of February, officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urged the public to prepare for the virus' spread inside the United States. Schools need to be ready too, they said.

Parents should ask their schools about plans for school closings and for online classes, said Nancy Messonnier, one of the CDC's directors. "I contacted my local school superintendent this morning with exactly those questions."

Anxiety In Washington, D.C.-Area Schools

Messonnier's comments caused anxiety in Washington, D.C.-area schools. Fairfax County school officials have been flooded with concerned messages from parents, according to spokeswoman Lucy Caldwell.

The Fairfax County school system is one of the largest in the nation. It has stuck to the same message since the coronavirus surfaced.

"Our key messages remain: wash your hands frequently and stay home when ill to prevent contagion," Caldwell said.

The school system is also reviewing "emergency preparedness and response plans," Caldwell said — including the possibility of online classes. Several other school systems in the Washington region said they are doing the same thing.

Class closures are unlikely in the near future, experts said, because relatively few coronavirus cases have been diagnosed in the United States. As of March 4, there were only 135 people with the virus in the United States. Of those, 42 had been aboard a cruise ship traveling in Asia.

School officials developed plans for remote learning after weathering pandemics including SARS and the H1N1 swine flu, said Bob Farrace. He is the spokesman for the National Association of Secondary School Principals. SARS is a contagious and sometimes fatal respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus. It appeared in China in 2002. H1N1 swine flu is a respiratory illness that started in pigs in 2009.

"It could be webcam classes, it could be work students are submitting online, it could even be chat rooms that replicate a class," Farrace said.

Hardship For Lower-Income Families

Lower-income families will have a harder time adjusting if schools suddenly close, said Harvard University global health expert Jesse Bump. Harvard is in Massachusetts. School closings would end such services as free or reduced-price meals. What's more, if classes go online, households without WiFi will be at a severe disadvantage.

Authorities must be ready to step in if schools close, Bump said. Among other things, people are used to turning to schools for information.

Administrators in Maryland's largest school district have certainly been reminded of that in recent weeks. Hundreds of parents have phoned or emailed to ask questions about the virus, Montgomery County Public Schools spokesman Derek Turner said.

Some parents wanted to know whether officials would quarantine, or isolate, students whose families recently visited Asia. One parent wondered whether a scheduled spring trip to South Korea could lead to quarantine.

Another asked if school officials are spraying classroom surfaces with disinfectant or scrubbing down laptops.

"We don't have the capacity to wipe down everything that everyone touches every day," Turner said.

Sending Parents CDC Guidelines

Parents in Montgomery County are very worried, Turner said. The school system there is working to prevent panic by sending families the guidelines provided by the CDC.

Virginia's Loudoun County public school system is taking the same approach. A February 13 email to parents provided links to four government websites, and repeated the email and phone number for the Loudoun County Health Department three times.

However, none of the emails prepared Rein Alyn for what happened to her daughter in February.

One day in mid-February, the Loudoun County third-grader — whose mother is from the Philippines — arrived home and told her mother the bus ride to school had been "really frustrating." A boy she knew had called her "an Asian immigrant," even though she was born in the United States.

That meant she "had the coronavirus" and must be avoided, the boy said.

It was the first time the child had come across this kind of racism, her mother said.

Bump said that throughout U.S. history, people have manipulated fears of disease to discriminate against minority groups.

"This is part of a long and ugly tradition," Bump said.

Rein emigrated from the Philippines at age 3 and served in the U.S. military. She hopes the next email from Loudoun County will condemn coronavirus-related bullying.

Rein also hopes the incident did not reduce her daughter's patriotism. She explained to her daughter that some Americans may treat her differently because "her mom is from another country" — but that the United States is worth loving anyway.

Rein warned her daughter she might hear more comments if the coronavirus becomes widespread. The girl said nothing in response.

Instead, Rein said, her daughter just shook her head.

Quiz

1 Read the following claim.

The coronavirus is unlikely to force school closures in the United States in the near future.

Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support for the statement above?

- (A) Hasty preparations are taking place in schools throughout the nation as Americans watch for the arrival of the coronavirus.
- (B) Fairfax County school officials have been flooded with concerned messages from parents, according to spokeswoman Lucy Caldwell.
- (C) As of March 4, there were only 135 people with the virus in the United States.
- (D) "We don't have the capacity to wipe down everything that everyone touches every day," Turner said.

2 Which piece of evidence explains the cause of U.S. schools' recent epidemic preparations?

- (A) The flulike illness, which first arose in China, had infected more than 93,000 people. As of March 4, it had killed 3,199 people worldwide.
- (B) School officials developed plans for remote learning after weathering pandemics including SARS and the H1N1 swine flu, said Bob Farrace.
- (C) Some parents wanted to know whether officials would quarantine, or isolate, students whose families recently visited Asia.
- (D) Rein warned her daughter she might hear more comments if the coronavirus becomes widespread. The girl said nothing in response.

3 How could schools' plans for the coronavirus affect low-income students?

- (A) The plans could make them more likely to be infected by the coronavirus.
- (B) The plans could prevent them from accessing school-sponsored meals and online classes.
- (C) The plans could make them less likely to be infected by the coronavirus.
- (D) The plans could prevent them from seeing their families for as long as the outbreak lasts.

4 Why was Rein Alyn's daughter singled out by a classmate?

- (A) She was sneezing on the bus and a classmate accused her of having the coronavirus.
- (B) Her classmate disagreed with her that the school should close in case of a coronavirus outbreak.
- (C) She argued against her school's decision to move classes online in case of a coronavirus outbreak.
- (D) Her classmate assumed that she had the coronavirus because she is Asian American.



Angela's Ashes

Frank McCourt

Mam comes with Dr. Troy. He feels my forehead, rolls up my eyelids, turns me over to see my back, picks me up and runs to his motor car. Mam runs after him and he tells her I have typhoid fever. Mam cries, . . . am I to lose the whole family? Will it ever end? She gets into the car, holds me in her lap and moans all the way to the Fever Hospital at the City Home.¹

The bed has cool white sheets. The nurses have clean white uniforms and the nun, Sister Rita, is all in white. Dr. Humphrey and Dr. Campbell have white coats and things hanging from their necks which they stick against my chest and all over. I sleep and sleep but I'm awake when they bring in jars of
10 bright red stuff that hang from tall poles above my bed and they stick tubes into my ankles and the back of my right hand. Sister Rita says, You're getting blood, Francis. Soldier's blood from the Sarsfield Barracks.

Mam is sitting by the bed and the nurse is saying, You know, missus, this is very unusual. No one is ever allowed into the Fever Hospital for fear they'd catch something but they made an exception for you with his crisis coming. If he gets over this he'll surely recover. 🗣️

I fall asleep. Mam is gone when I wake but there's movement in the room and it's the priest, Father Gorey, from the Confraternity² saying Mass at a table in the corner. I drift off again and now they're waking me and pulling down the
20 bedclothes. Father Gorey is touching me with oil and praying in Latin. I know it's Extreme Unction³ and that means I'm going to die and I don't care. They wake me again to receive Communion. I don't want it, I'm afraid I might get sick. I keep the wafer on my tongue and fall asleep and when I wake up again it's gone.

It's dark and Dr. Campbell is sitting by my bed. He's holding my wrist and looking at his watch. He has red hair and glasses and he always smiles when he talks to me. He sits now and hums and looks out the window. His eyes close and he snores a little. . . .

Analyze Visuals ▶

What does this class photograph tell you about the time period and subject of this memoir?

MEMOIR

Reread lines 1–16.

What **inferences** can you make about economic conditions in Ireland at this time?

Frank McCourt (right front) in the playground of Leamy's school in Limerick, Ireland, about 1938.

1. **Mam** cries, . . . **City Home**: The Fever Hospital was a special section of the Limerick City Home Hospital where patients who had fever-related illnesses like typhoid were treated. The McCourt family had already lost a baby daughter and twin boys to childhood disease.
2. **Confraternity** (kŏn'frə-tŭr'nĭ-tē): a religious society or association.
3. **Extreme Unction** (ŭngk'shan): a Roman Catholic sacrament given to a person thought to be near death.



30 **S**ister Rita's white habit is bright in the sun that comes in the window. She's holding my wrist, looking at her watch, smiling. Oh, she says, we're awake, are we? Well, Francis, I think we've come through the worst. Our prayers are answered and all the prayers of those hundreds of little boys at the Confraternity. Can you imagine that? Hundreds of boys saying the rosary⁴ for you and offering up their communion. ☹️

My ankles and the back of my hand are throbbing from the tubes bringing in the blood and I don't care about boys praying for me. I can hear the swish of Sister Rita's habit and the click of her rosary beads when she leaves the room. I fall asleep and when I wake it's dark and Dad is sitting by the bed with his hand on mine.

40 Son, are you awake?

I try to talk but I'm dry, nothing will come out and I point to my mouth. He holds a glass of water to my lips and it's sweet and cool. He presses my hand and says I'm a great old soldier and why wouldn't I? Don't I have the soldier's blood in me?

The tubes are not in me anymore and the glass jars are gone.

Sister Rita comes in and tells Dad he has to go. I don't want him to go because he looks sad. When he looks sad it's the worst thing in the world and I start crying. Now what's this? says Sister Rita. Crying with all that soldier blood in you? There's a big surprise for you tomorrow, Francis. You'll never
50 guess. Well, I'll tell you, we're bringing you a nice biscuit⁵ with your tea in the morning. Isn't that a treat? And your father will be back in a day or two, won't you, Mr. McCourt?

Dad nods and puts his hand on mine again. He looks at me, steps away, stops, comes back, kisses me on the forehead for the first time in my life and I'm so happy I feel like floating out of the bed. ☺️

The other two beds in my room are empty. The nurse says I'm the only typhoid patient and I'm a miracle for getting over the crisis.

The room next to me is empty till one morning a girl's voice says, Yoo hoo, who's there?

60 I'm not sure if she's talking to me or someone in the room beyond.

Yoo hoo, boy with the typhoid, are you awake?

I am.

Are you better?

I am.

Well, why are you here?

I don't know. I'm still in the bed. They stick needles in me and give me medicine.

What do you look like?

I wonder, What kind of a question is that? I don't know what to tell her.

MEMOIR

Reread lines 28–34.

What do you learn about the Catholic Church's influence over Irish children and their education at this time?

DRAW CONCLUSIONS

How would you describe Frank's relationship with his father? Cite details to support your answer.

4. **rosary** (rô'zô-rê): a series of prayers repeated by Roman Catholics as a form of devotion to the Virgin Mary—usually counted off on a string of beads as they are said.

5. **biscuit**: cookie.



70 Yoo hoo, are you there, typhoid boy?
 I am.
 What's your name?
 Frank.
 That's a good name. My name is Patricia Madigan. How old are you?
 Ten.
 Oh. She sounds disappointed.
 But I'll be eleven in August, next month.
 Well, that's better than ten. I'll be fourteen in September. Do you want to know why I'm in the Fever Hospital?

80 I do.
 I have diphtheria⁶ and something else.
 What's something else?
 They don't know. They think I have a disease from foreign parts because my father used to be in Africa. I nearly died. Are you going to tell me what you look like?
 I have black hair.
 You and millions.
 I have brown eyes with bits of green that's called hazel.
 You and thousands.

90 I have stitches on the back of my right hand and my two feet where they put in the soldier's blood.
 Oh, . . . did they?
 They did.
 You won't be able to stop marching and saluting.
 There's a swish of habit and click of beads and then Sister Rira's voice. Now, now, what's this? There's to be no talking between two rooms especially when it's a boy and a girl. Do you hear me, Patricia?
 I do, Sister.
 Do you hear me, Francis?

100 I do, Sister.
 You could be giving thanks for your two remarkable recoveries. You could be saying the rosary. You could be reading *The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*⁷ that's beside your beds. Don't let me come back and find you talking. She comes into my room and wags her finger at me. Especially you, Francis, after thousands of boys prayed for you at the Confraternity. Give thanks, Francis, give thanks. She leaves and there's silence for awhile. Then Patricia whispers. Give thanks, Francis, give thanks, and say your rosary, Francis, and I laugh so hard a nurse runs in to see if I'm all right. She's a very stern nurse from the County Kerry⁸ and she frightens me. What's this, Francis? Laughing? What is

110 there to laugh about? Are you and that Madigan girl talking? I'll report you to

6. *diphtheria* (dĭf-thĭr'ē-ə): a highly infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. It is spread by infected secretions from the nose and throat and can create toxins that destroy the heart and nervous system.

7. *The Little . . . Heart*: a Roman Catholic magazine.

8. *County Kerry*: a largely rural county to the west of Limerick.



9.4k

Language Coach

Word Definitions The use of a word whose sound echoes its meaning (such as *buzz*, *hiss*, or *whisper*) is called **onomatopoeia**. Which words in line 95 are examples of onomatopoeia?



A Limerick hospital in the early part of the 20th century

Sister Rira. There's to be no laughing for you could be doing serious damage to your internal apparatus.⁹

She plods out and Patricia whispers again in a heavy Kerry accent, No laughing, Francis, you could be doin' serious damage to your internal apparatus. Say your rosary, Francis, and pray for your internal apparatus.

Mam visits me on Thursdays, I'd like to see my father, too, but I'm out of danger, crisis time is over, and I'm allowed only one visitor. Besides, she says, he's back at work at Rank's Flour Mills and please God this job will last a while with the war on and the English desperate for flour. She brings me a chocolate
120 bar and that proves Dad is working. She could never afford it on the dole.¹⁰ He sends me notes. He tells me my brothers are all praying for me, that I should be a good boy, obey the doctors, the nuns, the nurses, and don't forget to say my prayers. He's sure St. Jude pulled me through the crisis because he's the patron saint of desperate cases and I was indeed a desperate case. 🎧

Patricia says she has two books by her bed. One is a poetry book and that's the one she loves. The other is a short history of England and do I want it? She gives it to Seamus,¹¹ the man who mops the floors every day, and he brings it to me. He says, I'm not supposed to be bringing anything from a diphtheria room to a typhoid room with all the germs flying around and hiding between
130 the pages and if you ever catch diphtheria on top of the typhoid they'll know and I'll lose my good job and be out on the street singing patriotic songs with a tin cup in my hand, which I could easily do because there isn't a song ever written about Ireland's sufferings I don't know. . . .

Oh, yes, he knows Roddy McCorley.¹² He'll sing it for me right enough but he's barely into the first verse when the Kerry nurse rushes in. What's this,

9. **internal apparatus:** the internal organs of the body.

10. **on the dole:** living on government unemployment payments.

11. **Seamus** (shā'mes).

12. **Roddy McCorley:** a song about Roddy McCorley, a local leader during an Irish uprising. McCorley was hanged by the English in 1798.

MEMOIR

Reread lines 116–124.

What details describe Frank's family and the role of religion in their lives?

Seamus? Singing? Of all the people in this hospital you should know the rules against singing, I have a good mind to report you to Sister Rita.

Ah, . . . don't do that, nurse.

Very well, Seamus. I'll let it go this one time. You know the singing could
140 lead to a **relapse** in these patients.

When she leaves he whispers he'll teach me a few songs because singing is good for passing the time when you're by yourself in a typhoid room. He says Patricia is a lovely girl the way she often gives him sweets from the parcel her mother sends every fortnight.¹³ He stops mopping the floor and calls to Patricia in the next room, I was telling Frankie you're a lovely girl, Patricia, and she says, You're a lovely man, Seamus. He smiles because he's an old man of forty and he never had children but the ones he can talk to here in the Fever Hospital. He says, Here's the book, Frankie. Isn't it a great pity you have to be reading all about England after all they did to us, that there isn't a history of
150 Ireland to be had in this hospital.

The book tells me all about King Alfred and William the Conqueror and all the kings and queens down to Edward, who had to wait forever for his mother, Victoria, to die before he could be king. The book has the first bit of Shakespeare I ever read.

*I do believe, **induced** by potent circumstances
That thou art mine enemy.*

The history writer says this is what Catherine, who is a wife of Henry the Eighth, says to Cardinal Wolsey, who is trying to have her head cut off. I don't know what it means and I don't care because it's Shakespeare and it's like
160 having jewels in my mouth when I say the words. If I had a whole book of Shakespeare they could keep me in the hospital for a year.

Patricia says she doesn't know what induced means or potent circumstances and she doesn't care about Shakespeare, she has her poetry book and she reads to me from beyond the wall a poem about an owl and a pussycat that went to sea in a green boat with honey and money¹⁴ and it makes no sense and when I say that Patricia gets huffy and says that's the last poem she'll ever read to me. She says I'm always reciting the lines from Shakespeare and they make no sense either. Seamus stops mopping again and tells us we shouldn't be fighting over poetry because we'll have enough to fight about when we grow up and
170 get married. Patricia says she's sorry and I'm sorry too so she reads me part of another poem which I have to remember so I can say it back to her early in the morning or late at night when there are no nuns or nurses about,

*The wind was a **torrent** of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,*

13. **fortnight**: two weeks.

14. **a poem . . . money**: "The Owl and the Pussycat," a humorous poem by the 19th-century British poet and artist Edward Lear.

relapse (rē'lāps) *n.* a worsening of an illness after a partial recovery

GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 139–142. Notice McCourt's use of the **gerund** *singing*. A gerund is a verb form that ends in *-ing* and is used as a noun.

ALLUSIONS

Here Seamus refers to the troubled relationship between England and Ireland. What does this reveal about him? about Irish culture?

induced (in-dōōst') *adj.* led on; persuaded
Induce *v.*

MEMOIR

What does this first encounter with Shakespeare reveal about Frank?

torrent (tōr'ent) *n.* a heavy, uncontrolled outpouring



*And the highwayman came riding
 Riding riding
 The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.
 He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead,
 180 a bunch of lace at his chin,
 A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin,
 They fitted with never a wrinkle, his boots were up to the thigh.
 And he rode with a jeweled twinkle,
 His pistol butts a-twinkle,
 His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jeweled sky.¹⁵*

Every day I can't wait for the doctors and nurses to leave me alone so I can learn a new verse from Patricia and find out what's happening to the highwayman and the landlord's red-lipped daughter. I love the poem because it's exciting and almost as good as my two lines of Shakespeare. The redcoats
 190 are after the highwayman because they know he told her, I'll come to thee by moonlight. . . .

I'd love to do that myself, come by moonlight for Patricia in the next room. . . . She's ready to read the last few verses when in comes the nurse from Kerry shouting at her, shouting at me, I told ye there was to be no talking between rooms. Diphtheria is never allowed to talk to typhoid and visa versa. I warned ye. And she calls out, Seamus, take this one. Take the by.¹⁶ Sister Rita said one more word out of him and upstairs with him. We gave ye a warning to stop the blathering but ye wouldn't. Take the by, Seamus, take him.

Ah, now, nurse, sure isn't he harmless. 'Tis only a bit o' poetry.
 200 Take that by, Seamus, take him at once.

He bends over me and whispers, Ah, . . . I'm sorry, Frankie. Here's your English history book. He slips the book under my shirt and lifts me from the bed. He whispers that I'm a feather. I try to see Patricia when we pass through her room but all I can make out is a blur of dark head on a pillow.

Sister Rita stops us in the hall to tell me I'm a great disappointment to her, that she expected me to be a good boy after what God had done for me, after all the prayers said by hundreds of boys at the Confraternity, after all the care from the nuns and nurses of the Fever Hospital, after the way they let my mother and father in to see me, a thing rarely allowed, and this is how I
 210 repaid them lying in the bed reciting silly poetry back and forth with Patricia Madigan knowing very well there was a ban on all talk between typhoid and diphtheria. She says I'll have plenty of time to reflect on my sins in the big ward upstairs and I should beg forgiveness for my disobedience reciting a pagan English poem about a thief on a horse and a maiden with red lips who commits a terrible sin when I could have been praying or reading the life of a saint. She made it her business to read that poem so she did and I'd be well advised to tell the priest in confession.

15. The wind . . . jeweled sky: the opening lines of "The Highwayman," a romantic, action-packed narrative poem by the 20th-century British writer Alfred Noyes.

16. by: boy (spelled to indicate the nurse's dialectal pronunciation).

MEMOIR

In what ways is Frank and Patricia's situation like that of the characters in "The Highwayman"?

MEMOIR

Reread lines 193–200. McCourt uses dialect to provide a realistic portrayal of the nurse. How does this influence your reaction to her?



A children's ward typical of British and Irish hospitals in the 1940s

The Kerry nurse follows us upstairs gasping and holding on to the banister. She tells me I better not get the notion she'll be running up to this part of the
220 world every time I have a little pain or a twinge.

There are twenty beds in the ward, all white, all empty. The nurse tells Seamus put me at the far end of the ward against the wall to make sure I don't talk to anyone who might be passing the door, which is very unlikely since there isn't another soul on this whole floor. She tells Seamus this was the fever ward during the Great Famine¹⁷ long ago and only God knows how many died here brought in too late for anything but a wash before they were buried and there are stories of cries and moans in the far reaches of the night. She says 'twould break your heart to think of what the English did to us, that if they didn't put the blight¹⁸ on the potato they didn't do much to take it off.
230 No pity. No feeling at all for the people that died in this very ward, children suffering and dying here while the English feasted on roast beef and guzzled the best of wine in their big houses, little children with their mouths all green from trying to eat the grass in the fields beyond, God bless us and save us and guard us from future famines. ☹️

Seamus says 'twas a terrible thing indeed and he wouldn't want to be walking these halls in the dark with all the little green mouths gaping at him. The nurse takes my temperature, 'Tis up a bit, have a good sleep for yourself now that you're away from the chatter with Patricia Madigan below who will never know a gray hair.¹⁹

240 She shakes her head at Seamus and he gives her a sad shake back.

17. **Great Famine** (fām'īn): a devastating food shortage in Ireland in the late 1840s, caused by a failure of the potato crop. Over a million Irish people died of starvation during the famine, and about 1.5 million emigrated, mainly to the United States.

18. **blight**: a plant disease—in this case, the one that destroyed the Irish potato crop.

19. **never know a gray hair**: won't live to be old.

MEMOIR

Reread lines 221–234.

What insights do you get about the sufferings the Irish endured during the famine and its lasting effect on their culture?



Nurses and nuns never think you know what they're talking about. If you're ten going on eleven you're supposed to be simple like my uncle Pat Sheehan who was dropped on his head. You can't ask questions. You can't show you understand what the nurse said about Patricia Madigan, that she's going to die, and you can't show you want to cry over this girl who taught you a lovely poem which the nun says is bad.

The nurse tells Seamus she has to go and he's to sweep the lint from under my bed and mop up a bit around the ward. Seamus tells me . . . that you can't catch a disease from a poem. . . . He never heard the likes of it, a little
 250 fella shifted upstairs for saying a poem and he has a good mind to go to the *Limerick Leader*²⁰ and tell them print the whole thing except he has this job and he'd lose it if ever Sister Rita found out. Anyway, Frankie, you'll be outa here one of these fine days and you can read all the poetry you want though I don't know about Patricia below, I don't know about Patricia. . . .

He knows about Patricia in two days because she got out of the bed to go to the lavatory when she was supposed to use a bedpan and collapsed and died in the lavatory. Seamus is mopping the floor and there are tears on his cheeks and he's saying, 'Tis a dirty rotten thing to die in a lavatory when you're lovely in
 260 yourself. She told me she was sorry she had you reciting that poem and getting you shifted from the room, Frankie. She said 'twas all her fault.

It wasn't, Seamus.

I know and didn't I tell her that.

Patricia is gone and I'll never know what happened to the highwayman and Bess, the landlord's daughter. I ask Seamus but he doesn't know any poetry at all especially English poetry. He knew an Irish poem once but it was about fairies and had no sign of a highwayman in it. Still he'll ask the men in his local pub where there's always someone reciting something and he'll bring
 it back to me. Won't I be busy meanwhile reading my short history of England
 270 and finding out all about their **perfidy**. That's what Seamus says, perfidy, and I don't know what it means and he doesn't know what it means but if it's something the English do it must be terrible.

He comes three times a week to mop the floor and the nurse is there every morning to take my temperature and pulse. The doctor listens to my chest with the thing hanging from his neck. They all say, And how's our little soldier today? A girl with a blue dress brings meals three times a day and never talks to me. Seamus says she's not right in the head so don't say a word to her.

The July days are long and I fear the dark. There are only two ceiling lights in the ward and they're switched off when the tea tray is taken away
 280 and the nurse gives me pills. The nurse tells me go to sleep but I can't because I see people in the nineteen beds in the ward all dying and green around their mouths where they tried to eat grass and moaning for soup



9.4k

Language Coach

Informal Language

This kind of language differs from the formal tone of school writing. In lines 249–252, the expressions *the likes of* (“anything like”) and *fella* (“fellow”) re-create the sound of Seamus’s informal, Irish-accented speech. Find examples of informal language in lines 252–254 and 258–260.

perfidy (pûr'fî-dê) *n.*
 treachery; betrayal of trust

20. *Limerick Leader*: a newspaper published in Limerick.

Protestant soup²¹ any soup and I cover my face with the pillow hoping they won't come and stand around the bed clawing at me and howling for bits of the chocolate bar my mother brought last week. ()

No, she didn't bring it. She had to send it in because I can't have any more visitors. Sister Rita tells me a visit to the Fever Hospital is a privilege and after my bad behavior with Patricia Madigan and that poem I can't have the privilege anymore. She says I'll be going home in a few weeks and my job is
290 to concentrate on getting better and learn to walk again after being in bed for six weeks and I can get out of bed tomorrow after breakfast. I don't know why she says I have to learn how to walk when I've been walking since I was a baby but when the nurse stands me by the side of the bed I fall to the floor and the nurse laughs. See, you're a baby again.

I practice walking from bed to bed back and forth back and forth. I don't want to be a baby. I don't want to be in this empty ward with no Patricia and no highwayman and no red-lipped landlord's daughter. I don't want the ghosts of children with green mouths pointing bony fingers at me and clamoring for bits of my chocolate bar.

300 Seamus says a man in his pub knew all the verses of the highwayman poem and it has a very sad end. Would I like him to say it because he never learned how to read and he had to carry the poem in his head? He stands in the middle of the ward leaning on his mop and recites,

*Flot-flot, in the frosty silence! Flot-flot in the echoing night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment, she drew one last deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.*

310 He hears the shot and escapes but when he learns at dawn how Bess died he goes into a rage and returns for revenge only to be shot down by the redcoats.

*Blood-red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,
When they shot him down on the highway,
Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.*

Seamus wipes his sleeve across his face and snuffles. He says, There was no call at all to shift you up here away from Patricia when you didn't even know what happened to the highwayman and Bess. 'Tis a very sad story and when I said it to my wife she wouldn't stop crying the whole night till we went to bed.

320 She said there was no call for them redcoats to shoot that highwayman, they are responsible for half the troubles of the world and they never had any pity on the Irish, either. Now if you want to know any more poems, Frankie, tell me and I'll get them from the pub and bring 'em back in my head. ()

ALLUSIONS

Reread lines 280–285 and identify the allusions McCourt makes to tragic events that occurred during the Great Famine. Why do you think McCourt includes these references?

21. **Protestant soup:** soup provided by the English to the starving Irish during the famine, often in return for renouncing Catholicism and joining the Protestant faith.



Where Have You Gone, Charming Billy?

Tim O'Brien

The platoon of twenty-six soldiers moved slowly in the dark, single file, not talking.

One by one, like sheep in a dream, they passed through the hedgerow, crossed quietly over a meadow and came down to the rice paddy.¹ There they stopped. Their leader knelt down, motioning with his hand, and one by one the other soldiers squatted in the shadows, vanishing in the primitive **stealth** of warfare. For a long time they did not move. Except for the sounds of their breathing, . . . the twenty-six men were very quiet: some of them excited by the adventure, some of them afraid, some of them exhausted from the long night
10 march, some of them looking forward to reaching the sea where they would be safe. At the rear of the column, Private First Class Paul Berlin lay quietly with his forehead resting on the black plastic stock of his rifle, his eyes closed. He was pretending he was not in the war, pretending he had not watched Billy Boy Watkins die of a heart attack that afternoon. He was pretending he was a boy again, camping with his father in the midnight summer along the Des Moines River. In the dark, with his eyes pinched shut, he pretended. He pretended that when he opened his eyes, his father would be there by the campfire and they would talk softly about whatever came to mind and then roll into their sleeping
20 bags, and that later they'd wake up and it would be morning and there would not be a war, and that Billy Boy Watkins had not died of a heart attack that afternoon. He pretended he was not a soldier. 🗣️

Analyze Visuals ▶

Would you describe this painting as realistic or abstract? Cite details about the painting's subject, setting, and mood, as well as the artist's use of light and color.

stealth (stēlth) *n.* cautious or secret action or movement

🗣️ REALISM

Reread lines 11–21, and consider O'Brien's use of both long and short sentences to convey Paul Berlin's thoughts. What effect does this stylistic choice create?

1. **hedgerow . . . rice paddy:** A hedgerow is a thick hedge separating fields or farms; a rice paddy is a flooded field in which rice is grown.



In the morning, when they reached the sea, it would be better. The hot afternoon would be over, he would bathe in the sea and he would forget how frightened he had been on his first day at the war. The second day would not be so bad. He would learn.

There was a sound beside him, a movement and then a breathed: "Hey!"


He opened his eyes, shivering as if emerging from a deep nightmare.

"Hey!" a shadow whispered. "We're *moving*. . . . Get up."

"Okay."

30 "You sleepin', or something?"

"No." He could not make out the soldier's face. With clumsy, concrete hands he clawed for his rifle, found it, found his helmet.

The soldier-shadow grunted. "You got a lot to learn, buddy. I'd shoot you if I thought you was sleepin'. Let's go." 

Private First Class Paul Berlin blinked.

Ahead of him, silhouetted against the sky, he saw the string of soldiers wading into the flat paddy, the black outline of their shoulders and packs and weapons. He was comfortable. He did not want to move. But he was afraid, for it was his first night at the war, so he hurried to catch up, stumbling once,

40 scraping his knee, groping as though blind; his boots sank into the thick paddy water and he smelled it all around him. He would tell his mother how it smelled: mud and algae and cattle manure and chlorophyll, decay, breeding mosquitoes and leeches as big as mice, the **fecund** warmth of the paddy waters rising up to his cut knee. But he would not tell how frightened he had been.

Once they reached the sea, things would be better. They would have their rear guarded by three thousand miles of ocean, and they would swim and dive into the breakers and hunt crayfish and smell the salt, and they would be safe.

He followed the shadow of the man in front of him. It was a clear night.

Already the Southern Cross² was out. And other stars he could not yet name—

50 soon, he thought, he would learn their names. And puffy night clouds. There was not yet a moon. Wading through the paddy, his boots made sleepy, sloshing sounds, like a lullaby, and he tried not to think. Though he was afraid, he now knew that fear came in many degrees and types and peculiar categories, and he knew that his fear now was not so bad as it had been in the hot afternoon, when poor Billy Boy Watkins got killed by a heart attack. His fear now was **diffuse** and unformed: ghosts in the tree line, nighttime fears of a child, a boogiemán in the closet that his father would open to show empty, saying "See? Nothing there, champ. Now you can sleep." In the afternoon it had been worse: the fear had been bundled and tight and he'd been on his hands and knees, crawling like an insect,

60 an ant escaping a giant's footsteps and thinking nothing, brain flopping like wet cement in a mixer, not thinking at all, watching while Billy Boy Watkins died.

Now as he stepped out of the paddy onto a narrow dirt path, now the fear was mostly the fear of being so terribly afraid again.

He tried not to think.

 **REALISM**

Reread lines 26–34. What specific features of the characters' speech make this **dialogue** sound realistic? Explain, citing evidence to support your answer.

fecund (fé'kənd) *adj.*
producing much growth; fertile

diffuse (dī-fyūōs') *adj.*
unfocused

2. Southern Cross: a cross-shaped group of stars visible in the Southern Hemisphere.

There were tricks he'd learned to keep from thinking. Counting: He counted his steps, concentrating on the numbers, pretending that the steps were dollar bills and that each step through the night made him richer and richer, so that soon he would become a wealthy man, and he kept counting and considered the ways he might spend the money after the war and what he would do. He
 70 would look his father in the eye and shrug and say, "It was pretty bad at first, but I learned a lot and I got used to it." Then he would tell his father the story of Billy Boy Watkins. But he would never let on how frightened he had been. "Not so bad," he would say instead, making his father feel proud. □

Songs, another trick to stop from thinking: *Where have you gone, Billy Boy, Billy Boy, Oh, where have you gone, charming Billy? I have gone to seek a wife, she's the joy of my life, but she's a young thing and cannot leave her mother,* and other songs that he sang in his thoughts as he walked toward the sea. And when he reached the sea he would dig a deep hole in the sand and he would sleep like the high clouds, and he would not be afraid any more.

80 The moon came out. Pale and shrunken to the size of a dime.

The helmet was heavy on his head. In the morning he would adjust the leather binding. He would clean his rifle, too. Even though he had been frightened to shoot it during the hot afternoon, he would carefully clean the breech and the muzzle and the ammunition so that next time he would be ready and not so afraid. In the morning, when they reached the sea, he would begin to make friends with some of the other soldiers. He would learn their names and laugh at their jokes. Then when the war was over he would have war buddies, and he would write to them once in a while and exchange memories. ◇

Walking, sleeping in his walking, he felt better. He watched the moon
 90 come higher.

Once they skirted a sleeping village. The smells again—straw, cattle, mildew. The men were quiet. On the far side of the village, buried in the dark smells, a dog barked. The column stopped until the barking died away; then they marched fast away from the village, through a graveyard filled with conical-shaped burial mounds and tiny altars made of clay and stone. The graveyard had a perfumy smell. A nice place to spend the night, he thought. The mounds would make fine battlements, and the smell was nice and the place was quiet. But they went on, passing through a hedgerow and across another paddy and east toward the sea. ○

He walked carefully. He remembered what he'd been taught: Stay off the
 100 center of the path, for that was where the land mines and booby traps were planted, where stupid and lazy soldiers like to walk. Stay alert, he'd been taught. Better alert than inert. Ag-ile, mo-bile, hos-tile.³ He wished he'd paid better attention to the training. He could not remember what they'd said about how to stop being afraid; they hadn't given any lessons in courage—not that he could remember—and they hadn't mentioned how Billy Boy Watkins would die of a heart attack, his face turning pale and the veins popping out.

□ SEQUENCE

Summarize the story's events up to this point. Which events take place in Vietnam? Which are scenes the narrator imagines will happen in the future or remembers from his past?

◇ GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 81–88. Notice O'Brien's repetition of "he would," which reflects Paul's way of coping with his current situation.

○ REALISM

Reread lines 91–98. Identify the **sensory details**—details that appeal to the five senses—O'Brien includes. How do these details contribute to the vivid, realistic style of this story?

3. **Better alert** . . . **hos-tile**: sayings and chants reminding soldiers to pay attention rather than be lifeless (*inert*), and to be light on their feet (*agile*), ready to move (*mobile*), and aggressive (*hostile*).

Private First Class Paul Berlin walked carefully.

Stretching ahead of him like dark beads on an invisible chain, the string of shadow-soldiers whose names he did not yet know moved with the silence and
110 slow grace of smoke. Now and again moonlight was reflected off a machine gun or a wrist watch. But mostly the soldiers were quiet and hidden and far-away-seeming in a peaceful night, strangers on a long street, and he felt quite separate from them, as if trailing behind like the caboose on a night train, pulled along by **inertia**, sleepwalking, an afterthought to the war.

inertia (i-nūr'shə) *n.*
tendency to continue to do what one has been doing

So he walked carefully, counting his steps. When he had counted to three thousand, four hundred and eighty-five, the column stopped.

One by one the soldiers knelt or squatted down.

The grass along the path was wet. Private First Class Paul Berlin lay back and turned his head so that he could lick at the dew with his eyes closed,
120 another trick to forget the war. He might have slept. "I *wasn't* afraid," he was screaming or dreaming, facing his father's stern eyes. "I wasn't afraid," he was saying. When he opened his eyes, a soldier was sitting beside him, quietly chewing a stick of Doublemint gum. ☹

"You sleepin' again?" the soldier whispered.

"No," said Private First Class Paul Berlin. . . .

The soldier grunted, chewing his gum. Then he twisted the cap off his canteen, took a swallow and handed it through the dark.

"Take some," he whispered.

"Thanks."

130 "You're the new guy?"

"Yes." He did not want to admit it, being new to the war.

The soldier grunted and handed him a stick of gum. "Chew it quiet—okay? Don't blow no bubbles or nothing."

"Thanks. I won't." He could not make out the man's face in the shadows.

They sat still and Private First Class Paul Berlin chewed the gum until all the sugars were gone; then the soldier said, "Bad day today, buddy."

Private First Class Paul Berlin nodded wisely, but he did not speak.

"Don't think it's always so bad," the soldier whispered. "I don't wanna scare you. You'll get used to it soon enough. . . . They been fighting wars a long
140 time, and you get used to it."

"Yeah."

"You will."

They were quiet awhile. And the night was quiet, no crickets or birds, and it was hard to imagine it was truly a war. He searched for the soldier's face but could not find it. It did not matter much. Even if he saw the fellow's face, he would not know the name; and even if he knew the name, it would not matter much.

"Haven't got the time?" the soldier whispered.

"No."

"Rats. . . . Don't matter, really. Goes faster if you don't know the time,
150 anyhow."

"Sure."

☹ **POINT OF VIEW**
Identify the point of view from which this story is told. How might your impression of Paul be different if you didn't receive such detailed descriptions of his thoughts and feelings?

"What's your name, buddy?"

"Paul."

"Nice to meet ya," he said, and in the dark beside the path they shook hands. "Mine's Toby. Everybody calls me Buffalo, though." The soldier's hand was strangely warm and soft. But it was a very big hand. "Sometimes they just call me Buff," he said.

And again they were quiet. They lay in the grass and waited. The moon was very high now and very bright, and they were waiting for cloud cover.

160 The soldier suddenly snorted.

"What is it?"

"Nothin'," he said, but then he snorted again. "A bloody *heart attack!*" the soldier said. "Can't get over it—old Billy Boy croaking from a lousy heart attack. . . . A heart attack—can you believe it?"

The idea of it made Private First Class Paul Berlin smile. He couldn't help it.

"Ever hear of such a thing?"

"Not till now," said Private First Class Paul Berlin, still smiling.

"Me neither," said the soldier in the dark.

". . . Dying of a heart attack. Didn't know him, did you?"

170 "No."

"Tough as nails."



9.3d

Language Coach

Slang Many slang words—words used informally with special meanings—have original meanings that relate to animals. When the soldier can't find out the time, he says, "Rats" (line 149), expressing disappointment. What do you think *croaking* and *lousy* mean in line 163? What are the original meanings of these words?



Class of '67 (1987), Charlie Shobe. Oil on canvas. © Michael Tropa/National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum.

Analyze Visuals

In this painting, the prone soldiers' boots take up the **foreground**, or front of the painting, while the standing soldiers are relegated to the **background**. What does this suggest about the message of the painting?

“Yeah.”

“And what happens? A heart attack. Can you imagine it?”

“Yes,” said Private First Class Paul Berlin. He wanted to laugh. “I can imagine it.” And he imagined it clearly. He giggled—he couldn’t help it. He imagined Billy’s father opening the telegram: SORRY TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON BILLY BOY WAS YESTERDAY SCARED TO DEATH IN ACTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, VALIANTLY SUCCUMBING TO⁴ A HEART ATTACK SUFFERED WHILE UNDER ENORMOUS STRESS, AND IT IS WITH GREATEST SYMPATHY THAT . . . He giggled again. He rolled onto his belly and pressed his face into his arms. His body was shaking with giggles. ☹️

The big soldier hissed at him to shut up, but he could not stop giggling and remembering the hot afternoon, and poor Billy Boy, and how they’d been drinking Coca-Cola from bright-red aluminum cans, and how they’d started on the day’s march, and how a little while later poor Billy Boy stepped on the mine, and how it made a tiny little sound—*poof*—and how Billy Boy stood there with his mouth wide-open, looking down at where his foot had been blown off, and how finally Billy Boy sat down very casually, not saying a word, with his foot lying behind him, most of it still in the boot.

He giggled louder—he could not stop. He bit his arm, trying to stifle it, but remembering: “War’s over, Billy,” the men had said in consolation, but Billy Boy got scared and started crying and said he was about to die. “Nonsense,” the medic said, Doc Peret, but Billy Boy kept bawling, tightening up, his face going pale and transparent and his veins popping out. Scared stiff. Even when Doc Peret stuck him with morphine,⁵ Billy Boy kept crying. _)

“Shut up!” the big soldier hissed, but Private First Class Paul Berlin could not stop. Giggling and remembering, he covered his mouth. His eyes stung, remembering how it was when Billy Boy died of fright.

“Shut up!”

But he could not stop giggling, the same way Billy Boy could not stop bawling that afternoon.

Afterward Doc Peret had explained: “You see, Billy Boy really died of a heart attack. He was scared he was gonna die—so scared, he had himself a heart attack—and that’s what really killed him. I seen it before.”

So they wrapped Billy in a plastic poncho, his eyes still wide-open and scared stiff, and they carried him over the meadow to a rice paddy, and then when the Medevac helicopter⁶ arrived they carried him through the paddy and put him aboard, and the mortar rounds⁷ were falling everywhere, and the helicopter pulled up and Billy Boy came tumbling out, falling slowly and then faster, and the paddy water sprayed up as if Billy Boy had just executed a long



REALISM

The imaginary telegram includes a past-tense verb in the **passive voice**, meaning that the subject *son* receives the action of the verb *was scared*. When a verb is in the **active voice**, the subject performs the action. Although the passive voice should be used sparingly in formal writing, it is realistic here because it emphasizes the person rather than what scared him to death. Why might the writer of a government telegram use the passive voice to emphasize *son*?

SEQUENCE

Reread lines 183–196. What happens to the story’s order of events in these lines? Identify the clues that helped you form your answer.

4. **valiantly succumbing** (sə-kūm’ing) to: bravely dying from.

5. **morphine** (môr’fēn’): a powerful drug used as a painkiller.

6. **Medevac** (mēd’ī-vāk) **helicopter**: a helicopter used for transporting injured people to places where they can receive medical care. “Medevac” is a contraction of “medical evacuation.”

7. **mortar rounds**: shells fired from small, portable cannons.

and dangerous dive, as if trying to escape Graves Registration, where he would be tagged and sent home under a flag, dead of a heart attack.

“Shut up. . . !” the soldier hissed, but Paul Berlin could not stop giggling, remembering: scared to death.

220 Later they waded in after him, probing for Billy Boy with their rifle butts, elegantly and delicately probing for Billy Boy in the stinking paddy, singing—some of them—*Where have you gone, Billy Boy, Billy Boy, Oh, where have you gone, charming Billy?* Then they found him. Green and covered with algae, his eyes still wide-open and scared

230 stiff, dead of a heart attack suffered while—

“Shut up. . . !” the soldier said loudly, shaking him.

But Private First Class Paul Berlin could not stop. The giggles were caught in his throat, drowning him in his own laughter: scared to death like Billy Boy.

Giggling, lying on his back, he saw the moon move, or the clouds moving across the moon. Wounded in action, dead of fright. A fine war story. He would tell it to his father, how Billy Boy had been scared to death, never letting on . . . He could not stop.

The soldier smothered him. He tried to fight back, but he was weak from the giggles.

240 The moon was under the clouds and the column was moving. The soldier helped him up. “You okay now, buddy?”

“Sure.”

“What was so bloody funny?”

“Nothing.”

“You can get killed, laughing that way.”

“I know. I know that.”

“You got to stay calm, buddy.” The soldier handed him his rifle. “Half the battle, just staying calm. You’ll get better at it,” he said. “Come on, now.”

250 He turned away and Private First Class Paul Berlin hurried after him. He was still shivering.

He would do better once he reached the sea, he thought, still smiling a little. A funny war story that he would tell to his father, how Billy Boy Watkins was scared to death. A good joke. But even when he smelled salt and heard the sea, he could not stop being afraid. ☹



Chopper Lift-Out (1967), Ken McCadyen. Oil on canvas on hardboard, 30.6 cm x 48.2 cm.
© The Australian War Memorial Collection.

SEQUENCE

What information has been communicated to the reader in this flashback? Explain, citing details from the text.



9.3d

Language Coach

Idioms An idiom is an expression whose meaning differs from the literal meaning of the words, taken together, in the expression. In a war story, a military idiom can be confusing. What does *half the battle* mean literally? What do you think it means in lines 247–248?