



FACING
LIFE'S

Obstacles

1 FOCUS ON THE TOPIC

1. There are many different kinds of obstacles: Physical and economic are two examples. What are some other examples of the kinds of obstacles that people face?
2. What are some ways that people overcome their obstacles?
3. What obstacles have you faced in your life? How have you tried to overcome them?

GO TO MyEnglishLab TO CHECK WHAT YOU KNOW.

READING ONE THE EDUCATION OF FRANK MCCOURT

VOCABULARY

- 1 Read the passage about author Frank McCourt. Try to understand the boldfaced words from the context.

Frank McCourt was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1930. His parents, Angela and Malachy, had moved to New York from Ireland in search of a better life. Unfortunately, life was not easy in New York. His father could not earn enough money to support his family. The McCourts returned to Ireland hoping their life would improve. Again, it didn't. Life in Ireland was equally hard if not harder than in New York. Three of Frank's siblings died as babies. Eventually, his father's **abandonment** of the family forced his four sons and Angela to live a very **meager** existence.

Frank's childhood was filled with **misery**. There was never enough food. Their house was small, dirty, and very cold in the winter. When it rained, the floor would flood with water. Frank and his brothers **yearned for** a better life.

Frank did, however, have ways to escape from his **tormented** childhood. He loved to read, and because his **dilapidated** house had no electricity, he would read under the street lamp outside his home. He also had an excellent sense of humor. Humor was the McCourts' defense against their life of relentless **poverty** and **hopelessness**. Even in the worst of times, the McCourts could find something to laugh about.

In 1949, Frank returned to the United States. He was 19 years old and only had an eighth-grade education. He was full of **shame** about his past and often invented stories about his **sordid** childhood instead of telling the truth. However, Frank was never **defeated** by his obstacles; in fact, Frank eventually used his humor and his storytelling talents to overcome the challenges life had set before him.

2 Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Frank had a hard life growing up. What were some of the obstacles or challenges he had to overcome?
2. What did Frank enjoy doing as a child?
3. Why did Frank reinvent his past when he came to America?

3 Find the boldfaced words in the reading passage. Write each word next to its synonym.

1. misery sadness
2. _____ poor, sparse
3. _____ embarrassment
4. _____ beaten, overcome by
5. _____ strongly desired, wanted
6. _____ painful
7. _____ immoral, dishonest
8. _____ having little money or few material things
9. _____ leaving someone behind
10. _____ being without hope
11. _____ falling apart, in terrible condition

 **GO TO MyEnglishLab FOR MORE VOCABULARY PRACTICE.**

PREVIEW

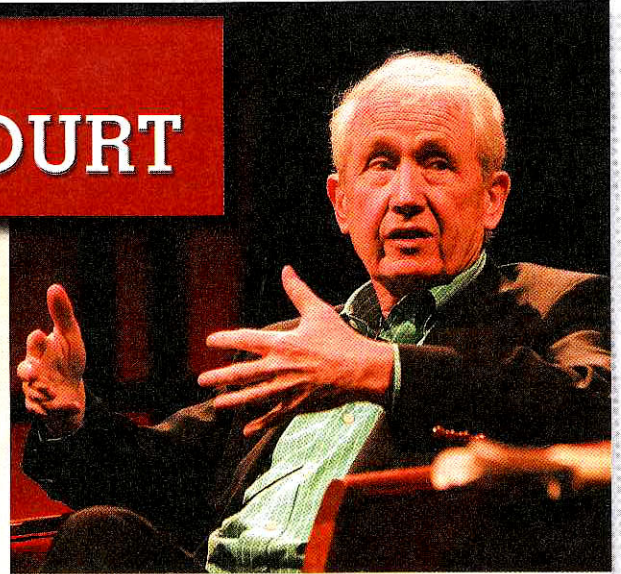
Read the first two paragraphs of *The Education of Frank McCourt*. Work with a partner to answer the questions. Then read the rest of the article.

1. Where is Frank McCourt now?
2. What do you think he means by “They gave me so much more than I gave them?”
3. What do you think happened to Frank between 1949 and 1997?

THE EDUCATION OF FRANK MCCOURT

By Barbara Sande Dimmitt
(from *Reader's Digest*)

- 1 Frank McCourt sat on a stage in New York City's Lincoln Center, his white hair glistening under the lights overhead. He was still boyish of expression at 66, and smile lines radiated from hazel eyes bright with inquisitiveness. Soon he would be addressing the 1997 graduating class of Stuyvesant High School, where he had taught English for 18 years.
- 2 He let his mind wander as he gazed out at the great hall. *I've learned so much from kids like these*, he thought. *They gave me much more than I gave them.*
- 3 “Yo, Teach!” a voice boomed. Frank McCourt scanned the adolescents in his classroom. It was the fall of 1970 and his first week of teaching at Seward Park High School, which sat in the midst of **dilapidated** tenement buildings on Manhattan's Lower East Side. McCourt located the speaker and nodded. “You talk funny,” the student said, “Where ya from?”
- 4 “Ireland,” McCourt replied. With more than ten years of teaching experience under his



- belt, this kind of interrogation¹ no longer surprised him. But one question in particular still made him squirm² “Where’d you go to high school?” someone else asked.
- 5 *If I tell them the truth, they’ll feel superior to me*, McCourt thought. *They’ll throw it in my face.* Most of all, he feared an accusation he’d heard before—from himself: You come from nothing, so you are nothing.
 - 6 But McCourt’s heart whispered another possibility: Maybe these kids are **yearning for** a way of figuring out this new teacher. Am I willing to risk being humiliated in the classroom to find out?

¹ **interrogation:** intense questioning

² **squirm:** feel embarrassed or ashamed

- 7 "Come on, tell us! Where'd you go to high school?"
- 8 "I never did," McCourt replied.
- 9 "Did you get thrown out?"
- 10 *I was right*, the teacher thought. *They're curious*. McCourt explained he'd left school after the eighth grade to take a job.
- 11 "How'd you get to be a teacher, then?" they asked. "When I came to America," he began, "I dreamed bigger dreams. I loved reading and writing, and teaching was the most exalted profession I could imagine. I was unloading sides of beef³ down on the docks when I decided enough was enough. By then I'd done a lot of reading on my own, so I persuaded New York University to enroll me."
- 12 McCourt wasn't surprised that this story fascinated his students. Theirs wasn't the kind of **poverty** McCourt had known; they had electricity and food. But he recognized the telltale signs of need in some of his students' threadbare⁴ clothes and sensed the bitter **shame** and **hopelessness** he knew all too well. If recounting his own experiences would jolt these kids out of their defeatism so he could teach them something, that's what he would do.
- 13 A born storyteller, McCourt drew from a repertoire of accounts about his youth. His students would listen, spellbound⁵ by the gritty details, drawn by something more powerful than curiosity. He'd look from face to face, recognizing a bit of himself in each sober gaze.
- 14 Since humor had been the McCourts' weapon against life's **miseries** in Limerick, he used it to describe those days. "Dinner usually was bread and tea," he told the students. "Mam⁶ used to say, 'We've got our balanced diet: a solid and a liquid. What more could we want?'"
- 15 The students roared with laughter.
- 16 He realized that his honesty was helping forge a link with kids who normally regarded teachers as adversaries. At the same time, the more he talked about his past, the better he understood how it affected him.
- 17 While at college, a creative-writing professor had asked him to describe an object from his childhood. McCourt chose the decrepit bed he and his brothers had shared. He wrote of their being scratched by the stiff stuffing protruding from the mattress and of ending up jumbled together in the sagging center with fleas⁷ leaping all over their bodies. The professor gave McCourt an A, and asked him to read the essay to the class.
- 18 "No!" McCourt said, recoiling at the thought. But for the first time, he began to see his **sordid** childhood, with all the miseries, betrayals, and longings that **tormented** him still, as a worthy topic. *Maybe that's what I was born to put on the page*,⁸ he thought.
- 19 While teaching, McCourt wrote occasional articles for newspapers and magazines. But his major effort, a memoir of 150 pages that he churned out in 1966, remained unfinished. Now he leafed through his students' transcribed essays. They lacked polish, but somehow they worked in a way his writing didn't. *I'm trying to teach these kids to write*, he thought, *yet I haven't found the secret myself*.
- 20 The bell rang in the faculty lounge at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan. When McCourt began teaching at the prestigious⁹ public high school in 1972, he joked that he'd finally made it to paradise. Some 13,000 students sought admission each year, competing for approximately 700 vacancies. Part of the fun of working with these bright students was keeping them a few degrees off-balance. McCourt asked at the beginning

(continued on next page)

³ **sides of beef**: very large pieces of meat

⁴ **threadbare**: very thin from being used a lot

⁵ **spellbound**: very interested in something you are listening to

⁶ **Mam**: a word for mother

⁷ **fleas**: tiny insects that bite

⁸ **put on the page**: to write

⁹ **prestigious**: admired or respected as one of the best or most important

- of a creative writing class, "What did you have for dinner last night?" The students stared at him as if he'd lost his wits.
- 21 "Why am I asking this? Because you need to become good observers of detail if you're going to write well." As answers trickled in, McCourt countered with more questions. "Where did you eat?" "Who else was there?" "Who cleaned up afterward?"
- 22 Student after student revealed families fragmented by divorce and loneliness. "We always argue at the table." "We don't eat together." As he listened, McCourt mentally catalogued the differences and similarities between his early life and theirs. He began to appreciate more the companionship that enriched the **meager** meals his mother had struggled to put on the table.
- 23 That night McCourt lay awake in bed, harvesting the bounty of his chronic insomnia.¹⁰ He visualized himself standing on a street in Limerick and took an imaginary walk about. He looked at shops and pubs, noting their names, and peered through their windows. He read street signs and recognized people walking past. Oblivious to time, he wandered the Limerick of his mind, collecting the details of scenery and a cast for the book that festered inside him.
- 24 Yet when he later picked up a notebook and tried to set down the previous night's travels, he stopped. McCourt knew that he was still holding back. Before, he had done it out of respect for his mother, who would have been mortified to see the darkest and most searing episodes of his childhood in print.¹¹ But she had died in 1981, and with her had died his excuse.
- 25 At least the bits and pieces that bubbled into his consciousness enlivened the stories he told in class. "Everyone has a story to tell," he said. "Write about what you know with conviction, from the heart. Dig deep," he urged. "Find your own voice and dance your own dance!"
- 26 On Fridays the students read their compositions aloud. To draw them out, McCourt would read excerpts from his duffel bag full of notebooks. "You had such an interesting childhood, Mr. McCourt," they said. "Why don't you write a book?" They threw his own words back at him: "It sounds like there's more to that story; dig deeper . . ."
- 27 McCourt was past 50 and painfully aware of the passage of time. But despite his growing frustration at his unfinished book, he never tired of his students' work.
- 28 *These young people have been giving you lessons in courage*, he thought. *When will you dare as mightily as they?*
- 29 It was October 1994. Frank McCourt, now retired, sat down and read his book's new opening, which he had written a few days before and still found satisfying. But many blank pages lay before him. *What if I never get it right?* he wondered grimly.
- 30 He stared at the logs glowing in the fireplace and could almost hear students' voices from years past, some angry, some **defeated**, others confused and seeking guidance. "It's no good, Mr. McCourt. I don't have what it takes."
- 31 Then Frank McCourt, author, heard the steadying tones of Frank McCourt, teacher: Of course you do. Dig deeper. Find your own voice and dance your own dance.
- 32 He scribbled a few lines. "I'm in a playground on Classon Avenue in Brooklyn with my brother Malachy. He's two, I'm three. We're on the seesaw." In the innocent voice of an unprotected child who could neither comprehend nor control the world around him, Frank McCourt told his tale of poverty and **abandonment**.
- 33 In September 1996 *Angela's Ashes* hit bookstores. Within weeks McCourt received an excited call from his agent: His book was getting warm reviews and selling at an unbelievable rate. The most surprising call came on April 7, 1997, when McCourt learned

¹⁰ **insomnia**: sleeplessness

¹¹ **in print**: in a book, newspaper, or magazine

that *Angela's Ashes* had received America's most coveted literary award: the Pulitzer Prize.

- 34 McCourt laid his hands on the lectern, finishing his commencement address¹² at Lincoln Center. "Early in my teaching days, the kids asked me the meaning of a poem," he said. "I replied, 'I don't know any more than you do. I have ideas. What are your ideas?' I realized then that we're all in the same boat. What does anybody know?"
- 35 "So when you go forth tonight, fellow students—for I'm still one of you—remember that you know nothing! Be excited that your whole life is before you for learning."

¹² **commencement address:** speech given at a graduation

¹³ **accolades:** praise and approval for someone's work

- 36 As he gave them a crooked smile, the students leapt to their feet, waving and whistling. *This is too much*, he thought, startled by the intensity of their response. During months of speeches and book signings, he had received many accolades.¹³ But this—this left him fighting back tears. It's the culmination of everything, coming from them.
- 37 Their standing ovation continued long after Frank McCourt, the teacher who had learned his own lessons slowly but well, returned to his seat.

MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Look again at the Preview on page 38. How did your answers to the questions help you understand the story?
- 2 Complete the timeline with information from Vocabulary on pages 36–37 and Reading One.

1934	<i>Frank McCourt's family returned to Ireland.</i>
1949	<i>Frank McCourt returned to the United States.</i>
1970	
1981	
1994	
1996	
1997	

DETAILS

Complete the left side of the chart using information from Main Ideas on page 41. Then complete the right side of the chart with details about why the event took place and what happened as a result. Look at Vocabulary on pages 36–37 and Reading One for the information.

1934 Event: Frank McCourt's family returned to Ireland.	The McCourts wanted a better life, so they returned to Ireland. Their life was still very hard. Three children died. The family remained very poor and very hungry.
1949 Event:	
1970 Event:	
1981 Event:	
1994 Event:	
1996 Event:	
1997 Event:	

MAKE INFERENCES

INFERRING THE MEANING OF IDIOMS AND EXPRESSIONS FROM CONTEXT

An inference is an educated guess about meaning. Readers can often infer the meaning of idioms and expressions from the context of a story. By closely reading the information in the sentence where the idiom or expression is used, as well as reading the sentences before and after that sentence, readers can often determine the meaning of an idiom or expression.

Look at the example and read the explanation.

What does the idiom in bold mean? (*paragraph 4*)

“With more than ten years of teaching experience **under his belt**, this kind of interrogation no longer surprised him.”

In the sentence we read that McCourt has more than ten years of teaching experience; we also read that the students’ questions do not surprise him. We can infer that McCourt’s teaching experience makes him feel strong enough to face his students. We can guess that the meaning of the idiom is “already achieved or experienced.”

Read the following idioms and expressions in context. Refer to the paragraphs in parentheses. Use context clues to determine meaning. Write a synonym or definition of the idiom or expression. Compare your answers with another student’s and discuss context clues that helped you figure out the meaning.

1. throw it in my face (*paragraph 5*)

2. forge a link (*paragraph 16*)

3. churned out (*paragraph 19*)

4. leafed through (*paragraph 19*)

5. lost his wits (*paragraph 20*)

6. harvesting the bounty (*paragraph 23*)

(continued on next page)

7. bubbled into his consciousness (*paragraph 25*)

8. dig deep (*paragraph 25*)

9. dance your own dance (*paragraph 25*)

10. in the same boat (*paragraph 34*)

EXPRESS OPINIONS

Discuss the questions with a partner. Then share your answers with the class.

1. Frank McCourt had many obstacles in his life. What do you think was Frank McCourt's greatest obstacle? How did he overcome it?
2. How did Frank McCourt's students give him the courage he had been lacking to overcome his obstacles?

 **GO TO** MyEnglishLab **TO GIVE YOUR OPINION ABOUT ANOTHER QUESTION.**

READING TWO MARLA RUNYAN

READ

1 Look at the boldfaced words in the reading and think about the questions.

1. Which words do you know the meanings of?
2. Can you use any of the words or phrases in a sentence?

Marla Runyan is an accomplished athlete who is legally blind. Despite her blindness, she has excelled in many fields in addition to athletics. How has she been able to do so much? She explains it by saying, "A poor attitude can be far more disabling than blindness."

2 Read the article about Marla Runyan. As you read, notice the boldfaced vocabulary. Try to guess its meaning from the context.

MARLA RUNYAN

By Peter Rugg



- 1 Marla Runyan is a woman used to questions. There are the interviews about how she made history chasing an Olympic dream, runners who want to know how she trains, people looking for advice on how to overcome the obstacles in their lives. They come to her looking for answers sometimes mundane and sometimes profound. But since she was a child, there has been one question that has followed her above all others. What do you see?
- 2 At the age of nine, Runyan was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease. It's a genetic condition that causes progressive vision loss, and most who suffer from it have their sight degenerate¹ to the point of legal blindness.
- 3 Now 44, Runyan's vision is reduced to shadows and indistinct shapes, though she retains some peripheral sight.
- 4 "Here's what I do see: a permanent blot in front of my eyes that almost has physical properties," she described in her autobiography, *No Finish Line: My Life As I See It*. "Imagine that someone took a flash picture, and the flash got in your eyes. For a few moments, you'd see a purplish or grey splotch. In a few minutes it

would fade away, and the world around you would appear normal again. For me, it stays."

- 5 However, she has refused to be defined by her condition. Today she holds the Paralympic World Records in the B3 division for the 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m, High Jump, Long Jump, and Pentathlon.
- 6 Her success has extended far beyond athletics. She has been a teacher, a public speaker, a coach, the race director for the Camarillo Half Marathon, a philanthropist² for Camp Ability, and, with the publication of her autobiography *No Finish Line: My Life as I See It*, a bestselling author.
- 7 This was not the life most thought Runyan would have. As a child, the specialists told her to lower her expectations. They told her she shouldn't expect to get the same grades as her fellow students because she wouldn't be able to learn the way they did. They told her that meant she likely wouldn't get into a good college.
- 8 While Runyan may not have been graced with perfect eyes, she was given a loving mother who instilled in her a sense of hard work, **self-reliance**, and pride.
- 9 "A poor attitude can be far more disabling than blindness," Runyan would later say.
- 10 All of the specialists were wrong. Runyan refused to give up because of her disability. In 1987, she graduated from Adolfo Camarillo High School, then went on to attend the University of San Diego to complete her Master's Degree in 1994. She studied education for deaf and blind students.
- 11 Still, none of it came easily.

(continued on next page)

¹degenerate: to become worse

²philanthropist: a person who donates his or her time or money to help others

- 12 As an adult, Runyan admitted to struggling in the classroom because schoolwork was so **laborious** for her. However, one place she felt free was on the field. She'd always been an athletic girl, and in college she found herself drawn to the track.
- 13 When she was running, the divisions between herself and the students with perfect vision fell away. She felt as if she could do as well as everyone else.
- 14 It was a feeling she would chase the rest of her life, and following it would lead her into history.
- 15 In 2000, when she journeyed to Sydney, she became the first legally blind person ever to compete in the Olympic Games.
- 16 Then, in 2002, she finished the New York Marathon in fourth place with a time of 2 hours, 27 minutes, and ten seconds, becoming the fastest American in that year's competition and the second fastest American woman ever to cross the finish line.
- 17 In preparation for those games, Runyan told reporters that her biggest challenge was to keep track of the people just ahead of her as she navigated the field.
- 18 To compensate for her handicap, Runyan prepared for a style of racing she described as "fast and tactical—a combination of both."
- 19 The one thing she didn't plan for, or want, was sympathy.
- 20 "I don't expect any mercy, no mercy whatsoever," she said. "They're not going to say, 'Go ahead Marla.' That's not going to happen."
- 21 Runyan's unique story put her in the international spotlight and brought her fans across the globe.
- 22 Runyan explained to reporters that, though she loves knowing that she inspires people, seeing how strongly some people react to her story can be shocking.
- 23 In that interview, Runyan went on to recount how she received an email from a woman whose son wanted to be a skateboarder but had also been diagnosed with Stargardt's. At first the mother refused to allow him, but once she read Runyan's story, she told him "Go get the ramp."
- 24 As much as these stories inspire Runyan to continue her example, she admits that even reading them can be a **struggle**. Reading is extremely difficult, and she can only do so with a voice output system on her computer. The words have to be enlarged so much that sometimes only three letters at a time can fit on the screen.
- 25 There are moments when she simply **gives up** for the day. Even the simple act of reading an email is too much.
- 26 Those moments never last long.
- 27 "I've never known anyone to be successful if all they do is blame, if they choose to be a victim," she told reporters. "If you choose to be a victim of this or that, or of what others have done to you, or what you believe to be someone else's fault, [you're] just constantly making excuses. I think the secret to achieving something is holding yourself **accountable** for your choices, good and bad, and learning from your mistakes, and then re-grouping and moving on. It's an ongoing process."

COMPREHENSION

Two of the three choices for each question are correct. Cross out the answer that is incorrect.

1. What does Marla “see”?
 - a. a permanent blot
 - b. shadows and indistinct shapes
 - c. blindness
2. How has her life defied the experts’ predictions?
 - a. She graduated from college.
 - b. She struggled in the classroom.
 - c. She became a bestselling author.
3. How did she feel on the field?
 - a. She felt equal to everyone else.
 - b. She felt free.
 - c. She felt she needed sympathy.
4. What strategies have helped her to be successful?
 - a. lowering her expectations
 - b. having a good attitude
 - c. working hard
5. How does she feel about her effect on other people?
 - a. She is shocked.
 - b. She is inspired.
 - c. She is self-reliant.

 **GO TO MyEnglishLab FOR MORE VOCABULARY PRACTICE.**

READING SKILL

- 1 Go back to Reading Two and see how many synonyms and antonyms you can find.

RECOGNIZING POSITIVE REDUNDANCY

Authors often use synonyms and antonyms in their writing for positive redundancy. This use of synonyms and antonyms in a text allows readers to read ideas more than once but with different vocabulary. In this way, meaning is reinforced, but language is new. The writer's ideas stay with the reader as related vocabulary is threaded through a text.

Look at the example and read the explanation.

Reread paragraph 4 of Reading Two, "Marla Runyan."

"Here's what I do see: a permanent **blot** in front of my eyes that almost has physical properties," she described in her autobiography, *No Finish Line: My Life As I See It*. "Imagine that someone took a flash picture, and the flash got in your eyes. For a few moments, you'd see a purplish or grey splotch. In a few minutes it would fade away, and the world around you would appear normal again. For me, it stays."

In the first sentence, Marla uses the word *blot*. What synonym for the word *blot* does she use later in the paragraph?

Answer: splotch

This synonym adds interest to her description. Instead of repeating the word *blot*, the author uses a synonym to repeat an idea, but with new language.

Noticing synonyms and antonyms will help you see where the author emphasizes important information and ideas.

- 2 Work with a partner to identify synonyms and antonyms for the words given. Then discuss the effect of using different language rather than repeating the same words or expressions.

1. In paragraph 3, the author mentions *shadows*. What similar expression is also used in this paragraph? _____
2. In paragraph 8, the author uses the word *graced*. What synonym is also used in this paragraph? _____
3. In paragraph 10, the author uses the phrase *give up*. What antonym is also used in this paragraph? _____
4. In paragraph 12, the author talks about *struggling*. What two-word expression with an opposite meaning is also used in this paragraph? _____

5. In paragraph 19, the author uses the word *sympathy*. What synonym is used in paragraph 20? _____
6. In paragraph 24, the author says reading can be a *struggle*. What similar phrase is also used in this paragraph? _____
7. In paragraph 27, the author talks about *blame*. What similar expression is also used in this paragraph? _____

 GO TO MyEnglishLab FOR MORE SKILL PRACTICE.

CONNECT THE READINGS

STEP 1: Organize

Both Frank McCourt in Reading One (R1) and Marla Runyan in Reading Two (R2) faced many obstacles and challenges in their lives. These same challenges also helped them to discover and develop their talent and become successful. Complete the chart comparing Frank McCourt and Marla Runyan.

	FRANK MCCOURT (R1)	MARLA RUNYAN (R2)
1. Obstacles they faced		
2. Person or people who influenced and inspired them		
3. Personal values, traits, or characteristics that helped them face their obstacles		
4. Talent or gift that resulted from the challenges they faced		

STEP 2: Synthesize

On a separate piece of paper, write a short paragraph comparing the lives of Frank McCourt and Marla Runyan. Use the information from Step 1. Describe their obstacles and triumphs.

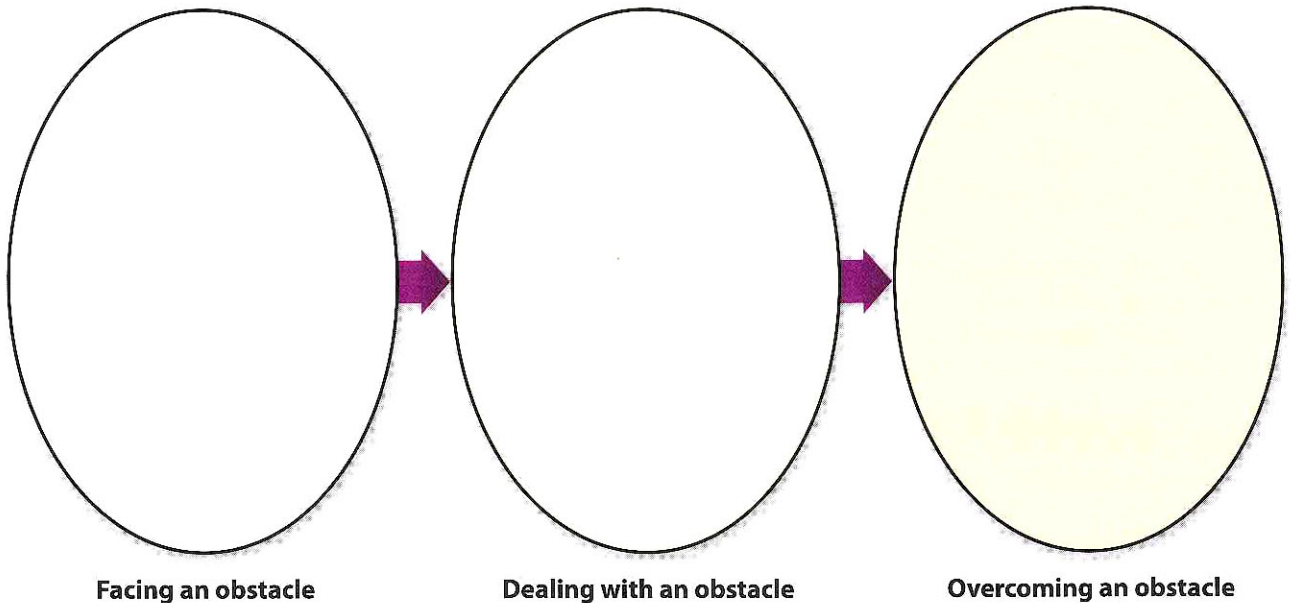
 GO TO MyEnglishLab TO CHECK WHAT YOU LEARNED.

VOCABULARY

REVIEW

The chain diagram below shows the three stages of overcoming obstacles: facing an obstacle, dealing with an obstacle, and overcoming an obstacle. Write the words from the box in the correct circles. Some of the words may be put in more than one circle. Discuss your answers with a partner.

accountable	exalted	inquisitiveness	pride
confused	expectations	laborious	self-reliance
darkest	free	misery	struggle
defeated	give up	mortified	suffer
disability	hopelessness	paradise	yearning for



EXPAND

An **analogy** is a comparison between two words that seem similar or are related in some way. In this exercise, the word pairs are either synonyms or antonyms. For example, in item 1, *struggle* is a synonym of *fight*; in the same way, *embarrassment* is a synonym of *shame*.

Work with a partner. Discuss the relationship between the words. Circle the word that best completes each analogy. Then circle *synonym* or *antonym* for each set of words. Use a dictionary if you need help.

1. struggle : fight = embarrassment : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. expectation b. sadness c. shame		
2. confusion : understanding = hopeful : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. defeated b. enlivened c. liberated		
3. exalted : noble = free : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. embarrassed b. confused c. liberated		
4. poverty : wealth = misery : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. hopelessness b. happiness c. yearning		
5. yearning : longing = self-reliance : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. inquisitiveness b. independence c. pride		
6. laborious : difficult = falling apart : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. dilapidated b. sordid c. mortified		
7. inquisitiveness : indifference = give up : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. struggle b. continue c. compensate		
8. meager : plentiful = accountable : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. irresponsible b. mortified c. inquisitive		
9. darkest : unhappiest = immoral : _____	<i>synonym</i>	<i>antonym</i>
a. tormented b. liberated c. sordid		

CREATE

Choose one of the situations. On a separate piece of paper, write a letter using words and phrases from Review and Expand.

- Imagine you are the skateboarder’s mother. Write a letter to Marla Runyan. Explain how she helped and inspired you and your son.
- Imagine you are one of Frank McCourt’s former students. You have just graduated from college. Write a letter to Frank McCourt. Explain how he helped and inspired you to overcome an obstacle.

GRAMMAR

1 Examine the sentences and answer the questions with a partner.

- a. **Teaching** was the most exalted profession I could imagine.
- b. McCourt enjoyed **writing** about his childhood.
- c. McCourt had done a lot of **reading**.
- d. Marla Runyan refused **to give up** because of her disability.
- e. McCourt persuaded New York University **to enroll** him.
- f. After McCourt's mother died, he felt free **to write** his memoirs.
- g. Marla Runyan has the ability **to inspire** others with her actions.

1. In sentence *a*, what is the subject?
2. In sentence *b*, what is the object of the verb *enjoyed*?
3. In sentence *c*, what word follows the preposition *of*?
4. Look at the boldfaced words in *a*, *b*, and *c*. They are gerunds. How are gerunds formed?
5. In sentence *d*, the main verb is *refused*. What is the verb that follows it?
6. In sentence *e*, the main verb is *persuaded*. What is the object of the main verb? What is the verb that follows it?
7. In sentence *f*, what is the verb that follows the adjective *free*?
8. In sentence *g*, what is the verb that follows the noun *ability*?
9. Look at the boldfaced words in *d*, *e*, *f*, and *g*. They are infinitives. How are infinitives formed?

GERUNDS AND INFINITIVES

Gerunds

To form a gerund, use the base form of the verb + **-ing**.

read + ing = reading

write + ing = writing*

*Note that for verbs ending in a consonant and final "e," drop the "e" before adding "ing".

1. Use the gerund as the **subject** of a sentence.

Writing is very important to Frank McCourt.

2. Use the gerund as the **object** of a sentence after certain verbs (such as *enjoy*, *acknowledge*, *recall*).

Frank McCourt enjoys **writing**.

McCourt recalled **not wanting** to offend his mother, and that held him back.

3. Use the gerund **after a preposition** (such as *of*, *in*, *for*, *about*).

Frank McCourt is interested in **writing**.

Infinitives

To form an infinitive, use **to** + **the base form of the verb**.

to read
to write

4. Use the infinitive **after certain verbs**.

- a. some verbs are followed directly by an infinitive (such as *learn, decide, agree, refuse*)
- b. some verbs are followed by an object + an infinitive (such as *urge, persuade*)
- c. some verbs are followed by an infinitive or an object + an infinitive (such as *want, ask, need*)

McCourt's students **learned to write** about their personal experiences.

McCourt **urged his students to write** about their personal experiences.

McCourt **wanted to write** about his personal experiences.

McCourt **wanted them to write** their personal experiences.

5. Use the infinitive **after certain adjectives** (such as *free, able, hard*).

McCourt's students were **free to write** about whatever they wanted.

6. Use the infinitive **after certain nouns** (such as *ability, freedom*).

McCourt's students had the **freedom to write** about whatever they wanted.

2 Work with a partner. Underline the gerund or infinitive in each sentence. Write the number of the grammar rule that applies to each.

- 1 a. Doing schoolwork was very laborious for Marla Runyan.
- ___ b. Marla Runyan has the ability to run as fast as sighted competitors.
- ___ c. McCourt acknowledged not going to high school.
- ___ d. Marla Runyan was able to compete in the 2000 Olympics.
- ___ e. A professor asked McCourt to describe an object from his childhood.
- ___ f. Marla Runyan has refused to be defined by her condition.
- ___ g. Many people don't feel free to write about their lives.
- ___ h. Recounting his experiences inspired McCourt's students.
- ___ i. McCourt couldn't think about writing his memoirs while his mother was alive.
- ___ j. McCourt's students urged him to write a book.

3 Read the information about Frank McCourt and Marla Runyan. Rewrite each situation using a form of the first verb given and the gerund or infinitive form of the second verb.

1. McCourt was worried that his memoirs would embarrass his mother. After she died, he didn't have to worry about this. (feel free / write)
After his mother died, McCourt felt free to write his memoirs.
2. Before Marla runs a marathon, she spends months preparing. It takes a long time to get ready for a 26-mile race. (need / train)

3. McCourt had no high school education, but he had read a lot. He told New York University it should admit him. (persuade / allow)

4. Marla's unique story has brought her fans from around the globe. She is happy that her story is helping others. (enjoy / inspire)

5. Frank McCourt hadn't gone to high school. He was afraid of what his students would think about him. (worry about / tell)

6. At first the boy's mother did not want him to skateboard, but after she read about Marla's story, she changed her mind. (decide / let)

7. McCourt's students didn't think they were able to write. He gave them lots of encouragement and told them "everyone has a story to tell." (urge / write)

8. Because Marla is legally blind, it is a struggle for her to read the words on a computer screen. (be hard / see)

9. McCourt remembered the town of Limerick. He could see and imagine what it was like when he was a child. (recall / live)

10. Specialists told Marla she couldn't expect to get good grades. Despite their predictions, Marla attended the University of San Diego and completed her Master's degree. (be able / graduate)

FINAL WRITING TASK

In this unit, you read personal accounts of how people overcame obstacles. You are going to *write a biographical paragraph about how you or someone you know overcame an obstacle*. Use the vocabulary and grammar from the unit.*

PREPARE TO WRITE: Listing

Listing is a prewriting activity in which you list information about a topic or category before you begin to write a paragraph or essay.

Look back at Connect the Readings on page 49 to complete the first column of the chart. In the second column, write three or more obstacles that you or someone you know has faced.

OBSTACLES FACED BY FRANK MCCOURT AND MARLA RUNYAN	OBSTACLES FACED BY ME OR SOMEONE I KNOW

WRITE: A Biographical Paragraph

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences that are related and that support a controlling idea. A **biographical paragraph** describes a person's life and sometimes focuses on one particular aspect. All paragraphs have three parts: the **topic sentence**, the **supporting sentences**, and the **concluding sentence**.

TOPIC SENTENCE

The **topic sentence** introduces the main idea and the controlling idea, which is your idea or opinion about the main idea. The topic sentence controls what you write in the rest of the paragraph. All the sentences in the paragraph must relate to, describe, or illustrate the controlling idea in the topic sentence.

(continued on next page)

* For Alternative Writing Topics, see page 61. These topics can be used in place of the writing topic for this unit or as homework. The alternative topics relate to the theme of the unit but may not target the same grammar or rhetorical structures taught in the unit.

SUPPORTING SENTENCES

The second part of the paragraph includes **supporting sentences** that give details or examples that develop your ideas about the topic. This is usually the longest part of the paragraph, since it discusses and explains the controlling idea.

CONCLUDING SENTENCE

The **concluding sentence** is the last part of the paragraph. It can do one or more of the following: summarize the paragraph, offer a solution to the problem, restate the topic sentence, or offer an opinion.

1 Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions with a partner.

Michael Jordan said, “Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.” This attitude can be seen all around us. Many people have faced great obstacles in their lives but have found ways to overcome and actually benefit from these obstacles. For example, Greg Barton, the 1984, 1988, and 1992 U.S. Olympic medalist in kayaking, was born with a serious disability. He had club feet, his toes pointed inward, and as a result, he could not walk easily. Even after a series of operations, he still had limited mobility. Even so, Greg was never defeated. First, he taught himself to walk, and even to run. Then he competed on his high school running team. He knew, though, he would never become an Olympic runner, so he looked for other sports that he could play. Happily, he discovered kayaking, a perfect sport for him because it required minimal leg and foot muscles. Using his upper body strength, he was able to master the sport. Finally, after many years of training and perseverance, Greg made the 1984 Olympic team. He says of his accomplishments, “Each step of the road has been made easier by looking just as far as necessary—yet not beyond that.” In short, even though that road was paved with obstacles, he was able to overcome them and achieve the impossible.

1. What is the topic of the paragraph? How do you know?

2. What is the controlling idea?

3. Underline the sentences that support the topic and controlling ideas. How do they relate to the controlling idea?

4. What is the concluding sentence? What does it do?

Note: For more information on topic sentences and controlling ideas, see Unit 1.

2 Now write the first draft of your biographical paragraph. Use the information from Prepare to Write and complete the chart below to plan your paragraph. Make sure you have a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Be sure to use grammar and vocabulary from the unit.

Topic Sentence:

1.

Supporting Sentences:

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Concluding Sentence:

7.

REVISE: Choosing Appropriate Support

The **supporting sentences** in a paragraph help the reader to better understand the controlling idea. Supporting sentences provide examples, details, and facts, and must relate directly to the topic sentence.

1 Read each topic sentence. Two ideas support the topic sentence and one does not. Cross out the idea that does not support the topic sentence.

1. Ever since Greg Barton was in high school, he longed to be an Olympic champion.
 - a. Greg's sports records
 - b. How Greg trained for the Olympics
 - c. ~~Greg's academic achievements~~
2. The achievements of people like Greg Barton and Marla Runyan have inspired many others.
 - a. Explanation of how they have inspired others
 - b. How many people have read about Greg Barton and Marla Runyan
 - c. Greg Barton's and Marla Runyan's obstacles
3. The poverty-stricken lives of Frank McCourt's students deeply affected him.
 - a. How Frank saw himself in his students
 - b. How Frank taught his students to write
 - c. How the students inspired Frank to write
4. Training to run a marathon is a very difficult and time-consuming process.
 - a. The patience needed to run a marathon
 - b. Reasons why people should run a marathon
 - c. The amount of practice and time needed to run a marathon

2 Each paragraph has one supporting sentence that does not directly relate to the topic sentence. Cross out the sentence and explain why it is unrelated.

1. Helen Keller lost her sight at a very early age and, so, was very frustrated as a child. First of all, because she could neither hear nor speak, she couldn't understand what was happening around her. She felt her mother's lips moving as she spoke, but this made no sense to her. She couldn't understand what her mother was doing. ~~Her mother could hear and speak.~~ Secondly, once she learned what words were, she felt she could never communicate with them as quickly as sighted people could. As a result of all her frustration, she would often cry and scream until she was exhausted.

Explanation: The sentence focuses on her mother's abilities, not Helen's frustrations.

2. Succeeding in sports liberated Marla Runyan and Greg Barton. They both faced overwhelming obstacles, but sports freed them from their hardest struggles. For example, when Marla was on the field, she finally felt she could do as well as everyone else. Similarly, when Greg found the best sport for his physical limitations, he excelled. In addition, Marla has become a bestselling author. They are both great athletes who were freed from their struggles by sports.

Explanation: _____

3. Some of the world's most talented and famous people have overcome some of the hardest obstacles. For example, Ludwig van Beethoven became deaf at age 46. Franklin D. Roosevelt was paralyzed by polio and was often in a wheelchair, but he was elected president of the United States four times. Finally, Steven Hawking is a world-famous scientist who is completely paralyzed and cannot speak. Furthermore, he lives in England. These people show us that we should never give up or let obstacles defeat us.

Explanation: _____

- 3** Look at your first draft. Make sure your supporting sentences give clear examples and details that connect with and support the controlling idea.

GO TO MyEnglishLab FOR MORE SKILL PRACTICE.

EDIT: Writing the Final Draft

Go to MyEnglishLab and write the final draft of your paragraph. Carefully edit it for grammatical and mechanical errors, such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Make sure you use some of the grammar and vocabulary from the unit. Use the checklist to help you write your final draft. Then submit your paragraph to your teacher.

FINAL DRAFT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Does the paragraph describe a person who was faced with challenges and overcame them?
- ☐ Is there a topic sentence stating the obstacle that the person overcame?
- ☐ Do all the supporting sentences relate directly to the topic sentence?
- ☐ Is there a concluding sentence that restates the main idea of the paragraph, offers an opinion, or suggests a solution?
- ☐ Did you use gerunds and infinitives correctly?
- ☐ Have you used vocabulary from the unit?

UNIT PROJECT

RESEARCH: A Famous Person Who Has Overcome an Obstacle

In this unit, you have read about two people who have overcome obstacles. Many famous people have overcome great obstacles, including emotional, physical, and political obstacles. You are going to write a biographical essay about a famous person who has overcome an obstacle. Follow these steps:

STEP 1: Choose a famous person you admire or a person from the list below who has overcome an obstacle.

Artists / Performers

Christopher Reeve
Mary Cassat
50 Cent
Vincent van Gogh
Michelangelo
Oprah Winfrey
Stevie Wonder

Writers / Scientists

Steven Hawking
Sigmund Freud
Charles Darwin
Thomas Edison
Hans Christian Andersen
Jorge Luis Borges

Sports Figures

Jackie Robinson
Magic Johnson
Natalie du Toit
Jeremy Lin
Bethany Hamilton
Tahmina Kohistani

Politicians / Leaders

The Dalai Lama
Mahatma Ghandi
John F. Kennedy
Golda Meir
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Nelson Mandela

STEP 2: Do research on the Internet about the person you chose. Check information on two or more websites.

1. If you need help getting started with Internet research, go back to Unit 1, pages 32–33.
2. Read the entries that relate to your topic.
3. Takes notes in your own words for a written report.

