

Part 1 & 2 Reading Questions

Name: _____

English 11R

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

Parts 1 & 2

Part 1 - A Woman on the Street

I was sitting in a taxi... pp.3-5

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *"You want to help me change my life?" Mom asked. "I'm fine. You're the one who needs help. Your values are all confused." (p. 5)*

1. Compare and contrast Jeannette's apartment with where her mother lives.
2. What is the significance of the quotation below? Is the mother correct?
"You want to help me change my life?" Mom asked. "I'm fine. You're the one who needs help. Your values are all confused." (p. 5)
3. Why does the writer open with this incident?

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Part 2 - The Desert

I was on fire... pp. 9-14

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "You don't have to worry anymore, baby," Dad said. "You're safe now." (p. 14)

4. Why does Jeannette Walls open the book with this incident?
5. How does this incident set the tone for the book? What is the tone?
6. What is the attitude of other adults toward what has occurred? Cite specific examples.
7. Why does Jeannette like being in the hospital? (p. 11)
8. On page 12, Mary Walls is upset when nurses give Jeannette chewing gum. Why is this ironic when compared with Mary's other behaviors?
9. On page 13: What does the parents' decision to go on the helicopter ride suggest about them?
10. On page 13: What do you think of father's argument with the doctor regarding Jeannette's bandages and infection?
11. On page 13: What is "checking out Rex Walls-style"?

A few days later... pp. 15-16

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *"You've got to get right back in the saddle. You can't live in fear of something as basic as fire." (p. 15)*

1. What is the significance of Jeannette's fascination with what almost destroyed her?

Dad came home in the middle of the night... pp. 17-18

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *"Where are we going, Dad?" I asked.*

"Wherever we end up," he said.

1. What does treatment of cat suggest about the parents? Why would this make a child fearful?
2. What do you think of what the mother tells Jeannette in order to justify why they are leaving the cat?
3. What does Brian's reaction suggest about his nature?

We were always doing the skedaddle... pp. 19-25

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *"Once he finished the Prospector and we struck it rich, he'd start work on our Glass Castle." (p.25)*

1. Who does Rex Walls think is after the family? What does this suggest about his state of mind?
2. How does Rex Walls convince people to hire him? What does this suggest about his character?
3. What is the Prospector? What do you think of this invention?
4. Describe the Rex's relationship with Grandma Smith (p.20). What does this reveal about the two of them?
5. What types of people live in the desert towns the Walls inhabit?
6. How did the children get educated?
7. What do you think of young Jeannette's acquaintance with knives and guns?
8. On p. 21, characterize the mother's knowledge of and attitude toward the natural world.
9. On p. 22, children are allowed to play in the water during lightning storms. What does this suggest about the Walls' parenting?
10. pp. 22-23: Describe Rex's various interests.

11. p. 22 Describe the family's eating habits. How does this affect the children's emotional stability?

12. P. 22: Does "a little bit of a drinking situation" truly characterize Rex's behavior? Why does Mary choose to describe his alcoholism in this manner?

13. P. 24: Are the stories told to the children really suitable for young ones? Why or why not?

14. p.25: What is the class castle and what does it symbolize?

As much as Dad liked telling stories about himself, it was almost impossible to get him to talk about his parents or where he was born... pp. 26-28

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Suffering when you're young is good for you."

1. Why do you think the father dislikes talking about his own family? What is the story of the Walls' courtship? What does this story reveal about their relationship?

2. Describe the birth of each child and what each story may signify for each child.

3. On p. 28, we get the mother's philosophy of child rearing. What values are reflected in her philosophy?

4. What do you think of her attitudes?

5. p. 28: How do the mother and father react to the death of Charlene? What does it suggest about each?

6. How might Charlene's death have affected Jeannette's relationship with her father?

Do you always like moving around? Lori asked me. (pp. 29-30)

EXPLAIN/RESPOND:

"What do you think would happen if we weren't always moving around?" I asked.

"We'd get caught," Lori said.

1. p. 30: Why does Jeannette think of Quixote, the cat, and his fate?

2. Why does Jeannette just sit and wait for the family to return? Why doesn't she seek help?

3. Do the parents take any responsibility for Jeannette's fall? Explain your answer.

We lived in Las Vegas for about a month... pp.32-34

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *"...I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt into fire. It was the sort of knowledge that kept you on your toes." (p. 34)*

1. What does father's gambling suggest about his character?

2. Why do the Walls parents distrust civilization?

After we pulled up stakes in San Francisco, we headed for the Mojave Desert... pp.35-38

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "It's the Joshua Tree's struggle that gives it its beauty."

1. P. 35: How do the Walls choose their next home?
2. p. 36-7: How does father deal with Jeannette's fears? Does this help or hurt her? What do you think of his method?
3. p. 37: What does the parents' treatment of animals say about them? What effect does it have on the children?
4. Describe the mother's artistic endeavors.
5. p. 38 What does the Joshua Tree symbolize?

I never believed in Santa Claus... pp. 39-41

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Years from now, when all the junk they got is broken and long forgotten," Dad said, you'll still have your stars."

1. Why didn't the parents believe in telling their children the Christmas/Santa Claus fantasy?
2. What was a typical Walls family Christmas like?
3. Why did father lose his latest job? What does it suggest about his character?
4. What does father give his kids for Christmas? What do you think of his gifts?

At twilight, once the sun had slid behind the Palen Mountains... pp. 42-47

"Just a little dust-up."

1. Why does Rex Walls believe Blythe is the big city?
2. What does Mary's belief that she can carry a baby for months longer than nine months suggest about her?
3. Why does Mary bolt from car and what is the effect on the children?
4. Why does Jeannette act tough for her father?
5. Why does Brian, in solidarity, try to fight for Jeannette? How and why does his reaction differ from their father's?
6. What does the crop-dusting plane suggest about the children's lives?
7. What does it mean if mother checks out "Rex Walls style" from the hospital?

A few months after Maureen was born, a squad car tried to pull us over... pp. 48-50

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "We got to ride in the back. It would be real fun, she said, a real adventure."

1. What does it suggest that even though they know it's illegal, parents put children into back of U-Haul?
2. What do you think of the fact that the furniture is secured, but the children almost fall out?

Battle Mountain had started out as a mining post... pp.51-53

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Most pianists never get a chance to play in the great out-of-doors."

1. What does it suggest that they have no beds or tables, but the mother must have a piano?
2. Describe attempt to get the piano into the house.
3. What does Mary's attitude toward the piano outside suggest about her character?

Dad got a job as an electrician in a barite mine... pp.54-57

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Why spend the afternoon making a meal that will be gone in an hour," she'd ask us, "when in the same amount of time. I can do a painting that will last forever?"

1. What do the games played suggest about the family?
2. Rex's attitude towards slots: how does this compare with his plan to raise money in Las Vegas (p.31)?
3. Why is Rex proud of his children? How is this indicated?
4. What do you think of the mother's attitude toward cooking? How does it affect her children?

Mom and Dad enrolled us in the Mary S. Black Elementary School... pp. 58-61

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Dad told us that zone was known in physics as the boundary between turbulence and order. It's a place where no rules apply, or at least they haven't figured them out yet."

1. Why does Jeannette get in trouble for her math homework? What does this show about Jeannette and about her teacher?
2. What do you think about Mary's lack of concern when Jeannette is pierced by a rusty nail?
3. Under what conditions did Rex Walls use corporal punishment on his children?
4. Why does Walls mention the zone between turbulence and order that fascinates her father?

None of us kids got allowances... pp. 62-66

1. Why are the children fascinated by the cathouse? Why is Jeannette afraid of the women in the cathouse?

Our house in Battle Mountain... pp.64-66

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: Dad kept telling me that he loved me, that he never would have let me drown, but you can't cling to the side your whole life..."

2. What do you think of Mary's attitude toward killing flies? How does it compare with her attitude toward household pets?
3. Why does Mary believe she's doing animals a favor by not allowing them to become dependent on humans? How does this connect with her attitude towards raising children?
4. Describe the manner in which Rex teaches Jeannette to swim. What does this reflect about his character? What is your opinion of his teaching method?
5. How does Jeannette react to her swimming lesson?

"Bad news," Lori said. pp. 67-72

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "I'd broken one of the unspoken rules: We were supposed to pretend our life was one long and incredibly fun adventure."

1. What is Rex's new excuse for getting fired? Why can't he keep a job? Does he want to?
2. How does the lack of food affect family unity?

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The next morning, instead of sleeping late... pp. 73-75

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "I'm a grown woman now," Mom said almost every morning. "Why can't I do what I want to do?"



1. Why does Mary decide to get a teaching job?
2. Why does teaching make Mary hate her own mother?
3. Why does Mary not want to go to work in the morning? What do you think this says about her character?
4. How does the mother's treatment of the Apache, Navajo, and Mexican children compare with the way she treats her own?
5. How do the children help their mother with her job?
6. Why does the author point out that her mother is more upset about having to work than she is about leaving Maureen with the wife of a convicted drug dealer?
7. Why does Mary discipline her own child instead of others?



Once Mom started teaching... pp.76-80

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "Have I ever let you down?" he asked...

1. Why does Rex insist on controlling the money even when he isn't earning it?
2. How does the father deny their lack of money?
3. What is Brian's attitude toward their father during this time period?
4. Why does Rex show up with groceries in the cafeteria?
5. Why does Rex ask Jeannette if she still has faith in him?
6. What do you think of a father who would bring his young son with him when visiting a prostitute? Does Brian know what goes on at the Green Lantern? On what evidence do you base your answer?

Some people liked to make fun of Battle Mountain... pp.81-90

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "When my daddy passes out, he never pisses himself!"

1. In what way is Billy's upbringing worse than that of the Walls children? What types of things does Billy do that the Walls children never would?
2. How does Jeannette react to Billy's assault? Why doesn't she tell her father about it?
3. How do the other children react to Billy's assertion that he has raped Jeannette? What does this show about the family?

Grandma Smith's big white house had shutters and was surrounded by eucalyptus trees. pp. 91-93

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "There's no reason to grieve," Mom said.

1. What impact did Grandma Smith's rules have on her daughter, Mary?
2. How does Jeannette react to the news that her grandmother has died? How does Mary react?
3. What do you think of Mary Walls' reaction to her mother's death?
4. Compare the values Grandma Smith had to those of Mary Walls.
5. What do you think of the fact that Mary Walls decides to give up teaching and spend her inheritance on art supplies?

When we pulled up in front of the house on North Third Street, I could not believe we were actually going to live there. pp. 93-101

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "I like the world just fine the way I see it," she said. (p. 97)

1. Describe the Walls' new neighborhood in Phoenix. How does it compare with Battle Mountain?
2. What is Mary Walls' reaction to her daughter, Lori's, need for glasses? What do you think of this reaction and what does it suggest about Mary?
3. On what does Mary spend her inheritance?
4. What is Mary's attitude toward cleaning?
5. Could the termites and the rotting floorboards be a metaphor for the family? If so, what does that metaphor mean?

A lot of our neighbors on North Third Street were kind of weird. pp.102-105

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: Mom and Dad liked to make a big point about never surrendering to fear or to prejudices or to the narrow-minded conformist sticks-in-the-mud who tried to tell everyone what was proper. (pp.102-105).

1. What reason do the parents give for leaving the house open at night?
2. What happens to Jeannette during the night?
3. How does the incident affect Maureen?
4. On the basis of what happens to the children, what does the parents' unwillingness to close the house at night suggest about their values and priorities?

City life was getting to Dad. pp. 106-109

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: "I'm going to show you," he said, "that no animal, no matter how big or wild, is dangerous as long as you know what you're doing." (p.106)

1. Rex Walls get so angry about a mountain lion being shot that he puts his fist through a wall. Is this the real reason for his anger? If not, what is?
2. Do you believe, as Rex asserts, that wild animals will act tame if you don't show fear?
3. What does Brian think of his father's assertion?
4. What do you think of Rex's willingness to risk the lives of his children in order to prove his point?
5. What does young Jeannette think of her experience with the cheetah? Does she regret it?

It was around this time that Dad lost his job. pp. 110-115

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *When Dad went crazy, we all had our own ways of shutting down and closing off, and that was what we did that night. (p.115)*

1. How does Mary Walls rationalize shoplifting? Is this attitude consistent with her belief in self-reliance and in not accepting welfare and handouts?
2. How does Rex justify stealing from banks? Is this attitude consistent with his other beliefs?
3. What is Rex Walls' "undercover research"?
4. Who does Rex blame for the loss of his job? What does this reveal about his character? How do Rex's behavior, beliefs, and morals shape his attitude toward the church?

I turned ten that spring, but birthdays were no big deal around out house. (pp. 116-121)

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: *I told Mom that maybe I had made a terrible mistake, but Mom said sometimes you have to get sicker before you can get better. (p.118)*

1. What gift does Jeannette want for her tenth birthday?
2. What happens to Rex when he locks himself into the bedroom?
3. How does each family member react to Rex's attempt to get sober?
4. Why doesn't the Walls family ever get to the Grand Canyon?
5. Why does Jeannette react so strongly to the lady's description of the Walls as poor?

Three days later, while Lori and I were sitting at Grandma's old upright piano... (pp. 122-125)

EXPLAIN/RESPOND: Maybe his parents could keep him in line. (p.123)

1. Why does Mary decide the family needs to move to West Virginia?
2. How does Mary Walls get a car that they can drive to West Virginia?
3. What do you think of the story on p.124 about driving without brakes?
4. In what state does the family leave the house in Phoenix?
5. Why does Rex force his children to beg him to come with them to West Virginia?

1.

2.

3.

4.