



The Glass Castle
by Jeannette Walls

Reading Assignments

Key Events

Significant Quotations

Pages (START) to 5



- While riding to a party, Jeannette sees her mother rummaging through a dumpster.
- Instead of stopping to speak with her, Jeannette goes home, afraid someone will see her or question her relation to this homeless woman.
- When she meets with her mom, Rose Mary says Jeannette is the one who has problems, not her.



- “I’m fine. You’re the one who needs help. Your values are all confused” (5)





Pages 9-14

- Jeannette's first memory in the memoir is of her cooking hotdogs and catching on fire at 3 years old.
- She is hospitalized and loves the cleanliness and order of the hospital. Her family eventually checks her out "Rex Walls-style" before she is released.



- “I was on fire” (9).
- “I wasn’t used to quiet and order, and I liked it” (11).
- “He told me we were going to check out, Rex Walls-style” (14).



Pages 15-25



- After coming home, Jeannette goes right back to cooking for herself – she has to eat and no one else will make her food for her.
- The family “skedaddles” when they cannot afford rent and make their way to any little mining town Rex can find work in. They sometimes return to Grandma Smith, Rose Mary’s mother, who Jeannette loves but who battles with Rex.
- Jeannette recounts all the things that make Rex special (yet notes his alcoholism) – and concludes this section by describing his idea for the Glass Castle.



- “Good for you...You’ve got to get right back in the saddle. You can’t live in fear of something as basic as fire” (15).
- “When Dad wasn’t telling us about all the amazing things he had already done, he was telling us about the wondrous things he was going to do. Like build the Glass Castle....He carried the blueprints for the Glass Castle wherever we went, and sometimes he’d pull them out and let us work on the design for our rooms” (25).

Pages 26-34



- A little history on the family is shared: how Rex and Rose Mary met, what the children were like when they were born, and what life was like.
- While life is fun, at times it scares Jeannette – like the time she feared she was abandoned after bouncing out of the car on railroad tracks.
- The family moves about – to Las Vegas then San Francisco; Jeannette fears fire is following her, as the events from her earliest memories seem to reoccur.

Pages 35-41



- The Joshua Tree, a symbol of resilience, is focused on when the family is living in Midland.
- In Midland, Jeannette fears the noises and unfamiliarity of the night. To help combat these fears, Rex takes her demon-hunting.
- Though life is hard, the family does share many special moments – like the stars for Christmas gifts; some may find dispelling the myth of Santa Claus cruel, the Walls are able to instill in their children a true sense of shunning materialistic wants.

Joshua Tree





- “It wasn’t just any tree. It was an ancient Joshua tree. It took in a crease of land where the desert ended and the mountain began, forming a wind tunnel...It existed now in a permanent state of windblownness, leaning over so far that it seemed ready to topple, although, in fact, its roots held it firmly in place” (35).
- “We all laughed about all the kids who believed in the Santa myth and got nothing for Christmas but a bunch of cheap plastic toys. ‘Years from now, when all the junk they got is broken and long forgotten,’ Dad said, ‘you’ll still have your stars’” (41).



Pages 51-57



- In Battle Mountain, the Walls live in an old rail road depot – it is an unusual home, but the children love its character.
- Rex finds work as an electrician and the children enjoy their time together; Jeannette remarks that this point in their life, Rex “almost never went out drinking at night like he used to. He stayed home with us...” (56). Life is good for the Walls.



Pages 58-75



- The children enjoy freedom in Battle Mountain. At times, this proves dangerous, as with the fire in the dump, from which they're saved by Rex.
- Entertainment near Battle Mountain includes the Green Lantern, a house of prostitution near the Walls' home that peaks their interest.
- When the family has a car, they take adventures to places like the Hot Pot, where Jeannette learns to "Sink or Swim."
- Food becomes scarce and the children are forced to scavenge for food. The issues at home also drive Rex away and lead to domestic issues; all the problems lead Rose Mary to reluctantly gain a job.



- “Mom believed that children shouldn’t be burdened with a lot of rules and restrictions” (59).
- “I thought Dad would be furious, but he wasn’t. He was sort of quiet....He said it was an incredible coincidence that he happened to be walking by....Dad told us that zone [from the fire] 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 ‘em out yet,’ he said. ‘You-all got a little too close to it today’” (61).
- ““Sink or swim!”” (66)
- “I was *hungry*” (69).
- ““I’m a grown woman now...Why can’t I do what I want to do?”” (74).

Pages 76-80



- Even though Rose Mary is working, money is still limited; her income actually causes problems as Rex tries to get the money from her to spend on alcohol and prostitutes, as Brian learned after meeting Ginger, from the Green Lantern.

Pages 81-90



- Battle Mountain, while rough, begins to feel like home for the Walls children.
- Billy Deel begins to befriend then harass Jeannette; things get serious when he comes after the Walls with a BB gun. Lori and Jeannette scares him off with Rex's pistol. Eventually, after this altercation, the family must flee Battle Mountain and decide to set off for Phoenix.

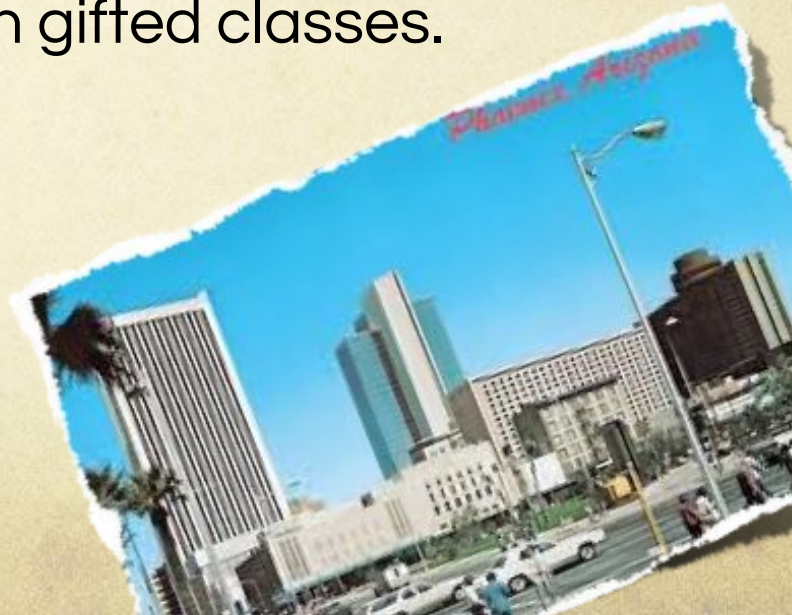


- “We’d been there for nearly a year, and I considered it home – the first real home I could remember” (81).
- “I hated Billy at that moment, I really did. I thought of telling him about binary numbers and the Glass Castle and Venus and all the things that made my dad special and completely different from his dad, but I knew Billy wouldn’t understand” (83).
- “Dad said he didn’t believe in luck, but I did. We’d had a streak of it in Battle Mountain, and I wished it had held” (90).

Pages 91-101



- After reminiscing about Grandma Smith, Jeannette finds out Grandma Smith has died; the family will move to Phoenix and live in her home.
- In Phoenix, life is good – the family has Grandma Smith's inheritance to live on, Rex is working, Rose Mary has her artwork and the children are put in gifted classes.





Pages 102-115

- Life in Phoenix provides challenges, including shady individuals coming into the home, Rex growing restless, the family shoplifting for clothes and stealing from the bank, and dreaming up the best Christmas, only to have it be the worst Christmas ever.





- “Mom and Dad liked to make a big point about never surrendering to fear or to prejudice or to the narrow-minded conformist sticks-in-the-mud who tried to tell everyone else what was proper” (103-104).
- “I could hear people around us whispering about the crazy drunk man and his dirty little urchin children, but who cared what they thought? None of them had ever had their hand licked by a cheetah” (109).
- ““I have a really good feeling about this Christmas”” (113).
- “When Dad went crazy, we all had our own ways of shutting down and closing off, and that was what we did that night” (115).

Pages 116-125



- When Jeannette turns ten, she requests Rex stop drinking. He does, after going through terrible withdrawals. To celebrate his sobriety, the family plans a vacation to the Grand Canyon. Unfortunately, the car breaks down, and after an embarrassing ride home, Rex goes off for three days.
- After he arrives back home, Rose Mary decides they need to go to Welch, West Virginia, Rex's hometown, because they are out of money and have nowhere else to turn. Rex resists until the last minute but eventually joins the family on this leg of the adventure.



- “There was only one thing I truly wanted, something that I knew would change all of our lives, but I was afraid to ask for it. Just thinking about saying the words out loud made me nervous” (116).

Pages 129–139



- The beginning of Part 3, “Welch.”
- The family takes a month to go from Phoenix to Welch, sightseeing along the way.
- When they finally arrive in Welch, Jeannette is shocked by Welch and Rex’s family – in fact, she states that she hopes Rex is playing a trick on them.
- School is not much better – the students and teachers bully the Walls children.





- "...and the air felt different. It was very still, heavier and thicker, and somehow darker. For some reason, it made us all grow quiet" (130).
- "Maybe this was one of Dad's pranks, I thought. Dad must have arranged for the weirdest people in town to pretend they were his family" (131).
- "President John F. Kennedy had come to Welch not long after he was elected and personally handed out the nation's first food stamps...to prove his point that...starvation-level poverty existed right in their own country" (134).
- "The principal decided that Brian and I were both a bit slow and had speech impediments that made it difficult for others to understand us. He placed us both in special classes for students with learning disabilities" (137).
- "There was no stopping those girls until they had their fill" (139).

Pages 140-154



- Jeannette continues to be bullied by Dinitia; this stops, however when Jeannette saves her neighbor, who is being attacked by a stray dog.
- Erma and Jeannette get into an argument when Jeannette condemns Erma's use of the N-word.
- Rex and Rose Mary return to Phoenix to pick up their belongings. While they are gone, Erma acts inappropriately with Brian. When Jeannette and Lori come to his defense, a fight breaks out. The children are forced to live in the unheated basement. When Rex and Rose Mary return, the children expect Rex and Rose Mary to see their side of things. Instead, Rex turns on the children; this leads them to believe he may have suffered at the hands of Erma, too.
- Because of the issues with Erma, the family is forced to find their own home and they move to 93 Little Hobart Street – a decrepit shack. While Rex promises to resume work on the Glass Castle, the children are less than enthusiastic about this move and wish to return West.

93 Little Hobart Street, Welch, West Virginia



House fell in. This is what's left.
Above :Stairs
Apparently the garbage hole is still there.



- “They’d always encouraged us to be outspoken about our opinions. Now we were supposed to bite our tongues. But she was right; Erma would boot us. Situations like these, I realized, were what turned people into hypocrites” (143-144).
- “It was gross and creepy to think about, but it would explain a lot...” (148).
- “The important thing, the reason he and Mom had decided to acquire this particular piece of property, was that it came with plenty of land to build our new house. He planned to get to work on it right away. He intended to follow the blueprints for the Glass Castle, but he had to do some serious reconfiguring...” (152).

Passive Vs. Active Reactions

OBJECTIVE: What events spur Jeannette to stop passively observing life and “going with the flow”? How does she react after this change?



Pages 155-167

- When Rex fails to begin work on the Glass Castle, Brian and Jeannette work on the foundation, which “slowly filled with garbage.”
- A giant rat terrorizes Maureen in her dreams and in reality; she eventually sleeps at friends’ homes.
- Jeannette takes it upon herself to improve the look of 93 Little Hobart Street by cleaning and painting half the house bright yellow.
- Kathy, Ginnie Sue Pastor’s daughter, invites Jeannette to their home, where Jeannette realizes that family isn’t really that bad.
- Brian and Jeannette battle Ernie Goad, a neighborhood bully who continuously harasses the children and calls them trash, with Brian’s ingenious sling shot invention.



- “Dad had shown us the spot near the house where we were going to put the foundation and basement for the Glass Castle. He’d measured it off and marked it with stakes and string. Since Dad was hardly ever home...and never got around to breaking ground, Brian and I decided to help...” (155).
- “...Since we couldn’t afford to pay the town’s trash-collection fee, our garbage was really piling up. One day Dad told us to dump it in the hole. ‘But that’s for the Glass Castle,’ I said. ‘It’s a temporary measure,’ Dad told me. He explained that he was going to hire a truck to cart the garbage to the dump all at once. But he never got around to that, either, and as Brian and I watched, the hold for the Glass Castle’s foundation slowly filled with garbage” (155).
- “Whatever the reason, it seemed that just about everyone in Welch – men, women, boys, girls – liked to fight” (164).



Pages 167-179

- The children foraging for food is discussed; Rose Mary also is caught keeping food from the children and eating it herself.
- Conditions at home keep getting worse.



- “Brian yanked the covers back. Lying on the mattress next to Mom was one of those huge family-sized Hershey chocolate bars...Mom started crying. ‘I can’t help it...I’m a sugar addict, just like your father is an alcoholic’” (174).
- “...none of us kids ever got sick. But even if I’d woken up one morning with a raging fever, I never would have admitted it to Mom. Being sick might have meant staying home in our freezing house instead of spending the day in a toasty classroom” (177).



Pages 180-192

- Erma dies; Rex is definitely impacted by and affected by her death, which surprises the children, who view her as pure evil after living with her when first arriving in Welch. Rex goes on a bender and Jeannette is the one who is sent to retrieve him.
- Once, while bathing at her Grandpa Walls and Uncle Stanley's apartment, Uncle Stanly inappropriately touches Jeannette; rather than be sympathetic, Rose Mary blows the entire event off.
- When playing in the yard, Brian and Jeannette find a diamond ring, but rather than pawn it for money, Rose Mary takes it and keeps it to "improve [her] self-esteem."
- Jeannette urges her mother to leave Rex – but Rose Mary claims she cannot and will not leave him. Jeannette tries to get her to sign up for welfare, but Rose Mary won't hear of that either.
- The kids are kept from swimming by Ernie Goad's harassment, but Jeannette does go one morning with Dinitia with other black women in Welch. She feels acceptance for the first time in a long time and thoroughly enjoys the day.



O. WINSTON LINK / RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE 1950'S



- “He turned down the street to Junior’s bar. We all watched him go. ‘*You’re* ashamed of *us*?’ Lori called after him. Dad just kept walking” (181).
- “‘But Mom,’ I said, ‘that right could get us a lot of food.’ ‘That’s true,’ Mom said, ‘but it could also improve my self-esteem. And at times like these, self-esteem is even more vital than food” (186).
- “‘Mom, you have to leave Dad’” (188).



Pages 193-205

- Child protective services check on the Walls family after a complaint was filed; this spurs Rose Mary to reluctantly find work as a teacher again.
- With Rose Mary working, the family gets into a pattern of having a lot of money around payday and next to nothing towards the end of the month; Lori and Jeannette attempt to create a budget.
- Attending Welch High School is a welcomed change for Jeannette, who feels like she is more accepted there because there are more students like her. Jeannette reunited with Dinitia, but they do not act as friends in public. Plus, Dinitia is going through her own issues, now that she is pregnant.
- Jeannette meets Miss Jeanette Bivens, whom she was named after; Miss Bivins is a teacher who encouraged Rex to write and seems to be doing the same with Jeannette. She gets her work at the newspaper and stands up for her when others are prejudiced towards her because of her poverty.



- “Until then, when I thought of writers, what first came to mind was Mom...But a newspaper reporter, instead of holing up in isolation, was in touch with the rest of the world. What the reporter wrote influenced what people thought about and talked about the next day...I decided I wanted to be one of the people who knew what was really going on” (204).
- “I began to feel like I was getting the whole story for the first time, that I was being handed the missing pieces to the puzzle, and the world was making a little more sense” (205).

Pages 206-217



- Jeannette feels she is letting Maureen down as Maureen becomes more and more removed from the family and essentially “lost.”
- Even though Rose Mary is working, she is doing so very reluctantly; Brian, Lori, and Jeannette are taking on more and more responsibilities.
- Lori gets the opportunity to attend summer camp away and jumps at the chance.
- When Rose Mary leaves for the summer to attend a recertification training, Jeannette is tested as Rex takes more and more of the family’s money. He tries to earn back the money by hustling – pool and using Jeannette as a distraction to entice drunk men. When Jeannette becomes angry about this, he brings up “Sink or Swim” – assuring her he knew she’d be fine.
- With no money, Jeannette gets a job at a local jewelry store; she is angry/desperate enough to steal from the shop. In the end, her conscience wins and she returns the stolen watch.



- “‘Have I ever let you down?’ Dad asked. I’d heard that question at least two hundred times, and I’d always answered it the way I knew he wanted me to, because I thought it was my faith in Dad that had kept him going all those years. I was about to tell him the truth for the first time, about to let him know that he’d let us all down plenty, but then I stopped. I couldn’t do it...” (210).
- “‘It was like that time I threw you into the sulfur spring to teach you to swim...You might have been convinced you were going to drown, but I knew you’d do just fine.’” (213)



Pages 218-234

- The summer away changed both Lori and Rose Mary; Lori realizes she must escape Welch some way or another and Rose Mary decides to quit teaching on focus on herself. When Jeannette confronts her mother about this, Rose Mary tells on her and Rex whips her, which makes Jeannette realize that like Lori, she must get out of Welch.
- Lori, Jeannette, and Brian make an “escape fund” in a piggy bank named Oz for a move to New York City.
- Rex eventually breaks into Oz and takes the money, but the kids work to refund the escape fund. Rex continues to sabotage Lori’s leaving in a variety of ways.
- Lori makes it to New York City, and Jeannette throws herself into the newspaper. She finally finds a “home” of sorts and begins to grow into herself.



- “If you want to be treated like a mother...you should act like one” (219).
- “The first [decision] was that I’d had my last whipping...The second was that, like Lori, I was going to get out of Welch” (221).
- “I believed she would [get out of Welch]. Because I knew that if Lori never got out of Welch, neither would I” (229).
- ““This family is falling apart, ‘ he said. ‘It sure is,’ I told him”” (230).
- “Dad was so eager to hear about how the interview went that he was not only home when I got back from school, he was even sober...” (234).

Pages 235-240



- Though her guidance counselor discourages it, Jeannette leaves school early and moves to New York City with Lori.
- Jeannette finally confronts her father about the Glass Castle and tells him he will never make it.



- “‘I’m not upset because I’ll miss you,’ Mom said. ‘I’m upset because you get to go to New York and I’m stuck here. It’s not fair’” (237).
- “‘Dad...you’ll never build the Glass Castle’” (238).
- “‘I’ve thought of trying to entice your brother into it [editing the *Wave*]’” (239).
- “Dad reached into his pocket and pulled out his favorite jackknife, the one with the horn handle and the blade of blue German steel that we’d used for Demon Hunting” (240).

Pages 245-257



- The beginning of "New York City."
- Jeannette arrives in New York City and gets established. There are challenges, but life is good. Lori and Jeannette invite Brian to move with them and he plans on moving after his junior year of high school. They also move Maureen from Welch to live with Lori.
- Eventually, Rex and Rose Mary also arrive in New York City, but they choose to live as homeless.
- Jeannette attends Bernard College, a prestigious college in the city, after being persuaded by her boss at the *Phoenix* to try for something better.





- “I began to dread those calls [from Rex and Rose Mary], since every time we heard from them, there was a new problem...” (251).
- “Being homeless is an adventure” (255).

Pages 258-273



- Rex and Rose Mary survive the winter homeless, but Rex gets tuberculosis. The hospital gets him a job upstate; he eventually comes back and resumes drinking.
- When Jeannette is faced with dropping out of college, Rex comes through with nearly \$1,000 to help her pay tuition.
- Jeannette moves in with her boyfriend Eric, who is in every way unlike Rex, to a fancy apartment on Park Avenue.
- Jeannette ends up with a job writing a social column; her mother criticizes her for her life choices, but Rex is much more supportive and proud. Jeannette takes to lying about her family and parents to strangers in an effort to keep credibility and hide her past.
- Rose Mary discloses that the land she has held in Texas is worth \$1 million. Jeannette is shocked that they had never sold this land before and have money in the desert or Welch.



- “This crazy-ass mother of yours, can’t live with her, can’t live without her. And damned if she doesn’t feel the same about me” (262).
- “...I’ve always been terrified I’d fall for a hard-drinking, hell-raising, charismatic scoundrel like you, Dad, but I’d wound up with a man who was exactly the opposite” (268).
- “Lori was the smart one, Maureen was the pretty one, and Brian was the brave one. You never had much going for you except that you always worked hard” (270).

Pages 274-281



- The children grow up and establish themselves, while Maureen continues to live with Rex and Rose Mary. Eventually, Maureen stabs Rose Mary after an altercation.
- Following her arrest and a year in a psychiatric hospital she leaves for California.
- Rex shares that he is dying, most likely of some sort of cancer due to his smoking and drinking. He eventually dies of a heart attack at the end of this section.
- Jeannette reevaluates her life and makes some changes.



- “Something in all of us broke that day, and afterward, we no longer had the spirit for family gatherings” (277).
- “‘Never did build that Glass Castle.’ ‘No. But we had fun planning it.’ ‘Those were some damn fine plans’” (279).
- “I had this crazy urge to scoop him up in my arms and charge through the doors – to check out Rex Walls-style one last time” (280).
- “It took me a while to realize that just being on the move wasn’t enough; that I needed to reconsider everything” (280).
- “The city lights obscured the stars, but on clear nights, I could see Venus on the horizon, up over the dark water, glowing steadily” (281).

Pages 285-288



- Jeannette, Brian, Lori, and Rose Mary reunite to celebrate Thanksgiving (Maureen is in California, but has reconciled with Rose Mary).



- Rex's last appearance:
- "We raised our glasses. I could almost hear Dad chuckling at Mom's comment in the way he always did when he was truly enjoying something. It had grown dark outside. A wind picked up, rattling the windows, and the candle flames suddenly shifted, dancing along the border between turbulence and order" (288).