### Glass Castle: Characters

**Directions:** Identify the following characters as you meet them in the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeannette Walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maureen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rex Walls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose Mary Walls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Miss Bivins

List and Describe other important characters as you read.
Glass Castle – Discussion Questions
Jeannette Walls

Part I: A Woman on the Street

1. Describe the incident at the opening of the book. How does Jeannette Walls react? What does her mother later say in reaction to her daughter’s view of the situation?

2. Why do you think Walls opens the book with this story?

3. What do you now want to find out?

4. What are your initial views of the mother and daughter?

5. Look at the closing two lines of the section. What purpose do they serve?

6. Look at the epigraph before the section. What do you suppose it means? We will return to the epigraph at the end of the book

Part II: The Desert

Pages 9-28

7. Describe the hot dog incident. What do we learn about Jeannette from the incident? What do we learn about the father, the mother, and the family?

8. How does the outside world view the family?

9. Describe the father (good and bad). What is a genius?

10. Describe the mother.

11. Describe the children.

12. Explain why the family keeps moving.

13. Describe the children’s education. What is important to the family?
14. How does Jeannette feel about her parents? Examples?

15. What stories does the father tell? Why? What can we tell from his stories?


17. Describe how the parents first met.

18. Describe the importance of the Mary Charlene story.

19. Figure out the birth order and ages of the children.

Page 29-57

20. What is the purpose of the story about Jeannette falling out of the car?

21. How do the children react to the fire?

22. Explain how the father teaches Jeannette to lose her fear of demons.

23. How do the family members celebrate Christmas? Why?

24. Describe the mother.

25. Describe the fight the parents have. How does the fight affect the children?

26. Describe Jeannette’s fight with the Mexican girls. What does the fight tell you about Jeannette and the family?

27. Describe the U-Haul story. What is the importance of the story?

Pages 58-90


29. Describe the episode between Brian and Jeannette with the science experiment in the shack. What does this tell us about the children? What does it tell us about the parents?

30. Describe how Jeannette learns to read.
31. How does the family change when the father loses his job?

32. Explain Jeannette’s comment on page 69: “I’d broken one of our unspoken rules: We were always supposed to pretend our life was long and incredibly fun adventure.”

33. What is odd about the closing episode on page 72?

34. Discuss the quotation on page 78: “Have I ever let you down?”

35. Discuss Jeannette’s promise to her father on page 79.

36. Discuss the importance of the Billy Deel episode?

37. Compare and contrast Jeannette’s life to Billy’s life.

Pages 91-125

38. Describe how Jeannette felt about her grandmother. How does she react when she learns of her grandmother’s death?

39. On page 93, Jeannette’s mother calls herself at “excitement addict.” Do you agree? Give examples. In what ways is this good, and in what ways is this bad?

40. Describe the new house and the family’s new life.

41. Describe the story with the gypsies. What does this tell about the family?

42. What role does religion plan in the family? Explain.

43. Explain the purpose of the zoo story.

44. Explain the quotation on page 115: “When Dad went crazy, we all had our own ways of shutting down and closing off, and that was what we did that night.”

45. Explain the importance of Jeannette’s 10th birthday story. What does the story tell us about the father?

46. Describe the family’s escapades to collect money.

47. Explain the purpose of the Grand Canyon story.

48. How does the family change at the end of the “Desert” section? Explain.

49. Explain the role which each member has in the family. Give examples.
50. Explain the movement of the family from the opening of the second section to the end. How has the family changed? How have individual family members changed?

Part III: Welch

Pages 129-158

51. Describe the quotation at the bottom of page 129.

52. Describe the family that Jeannette meets in Welch. How do they respond to the visitors? How do Jeannette and her family react to their new relatives?

53. Describe Welch.

54. Explain what happens when Jeannette attends the new school. How does Jeannette react to her new situation?

55. Explain how racism causes problems within the family.

56. How do the children respond when their parents leave for Phoenix?

57. Explain the huge fight that takes place between the grandmother and children. How do the parents respond when they return? How and why is this a significant change in the family?

58. At the bottom of page 148, Jeannette states: “And so I put it out of my mind.” Do you believe her? Is it possible to truly put something out of your mind?

59. Describe the new house the family finds. Explain how each family member reacts to this new house.

60. Explain the importance of the glass castle episode.

61. Trace Jeannette’s growth / maturity.

Pages 159-179

62. Why do the parents reject welfare or charity?

63. What’s the purpose of the Ginnie Sue Pastor story?

64. Why do so many children hate the Walls?
65. Describe the story of Jeannette taking care of her injured father.
66. How has the family changed?
67. How do the children take care of themselves?
68. What’s the purpose of the story at the bottom of page 179?

Pages 180-198

69. How does the family respond to Erma’s death? What rift develops in the family? Explain.
70. Explain the mother’s statement that sexual assault is a crime of perception. What is your reaction to her statement to her daughter?
71. Describe the episode when Jeannette must rescue her father from the bar. Why is this episode so important?
72. The mother’s mental health seems to deteriorate. Explain.
73. What’s the purpose of the ring story?
74. In what ways do Jeannette and her mother switch roles?
75. Discuss the quotation on page 188: “We’ve got to get away.”
76. What can we learn about the mother and children from the mother’s teaching job?

Pages 199-217

77. Explain the purpose of the Dinitia stories.
78. What can we learn from the story about braces?
79. How does the school newspaper change Jeannette?
80. Why is Miss Bivens so important to Jeannette and her family?
81. Why is Jeannette so enamored by newspapers?
82. What changes does Jeannette see in Maureen? Explain.

83. Describe mom’s melt-down and how each child reacts.

84. Explain Jeannette’s promise to herself on page 208.

85. Explain the difficulties Jeannette encounters in managing the family’s finances for two months.

86. Explain the importance of the bar scene. How does Jeannette’s relationship with her father begin to change?

87. Describe Jeannette’s first real job. How does the job change her?

Pages 218-241

88. Explain the importance of the section on pages 218-221.

89. Describe the plans that Lori and Jeannette make. What do these plans tell us about the sisters?

90. Describe how and why the children change their feelings for their parents.

91. How does Jeannette’s newspaper job change her? Why?

92. How do Jeannette’s parents react to her decision to leave Welch at the end of the eleventh grade?

93. Explain the importance of the Glass Castle discussion on page 238.

94. Describe Jeannette’s final departure from Welch.

Part IV: New York City

95. Explain how Jeannette adjusts to life in New York City.

96. Describe how Jeannette, Lori, and Brian find success in New York City.

97. Describe the parents’ lives in NYC.

98. How do the parents affect each child when they move to NYC?
99. How does each child try to help the parents?

100. Explain the significance of Professor Fuchs confrontation with Jeannette on page 256.

101. Explain the importance of the Christmas scene on page 263.

102. How does Dad try to support Jeannette with her education? What does this tell us about him?

103. Explain mom’s “sell out” comment to Jeannette on page 269. What’s your reaction to her comment?

104. Explain the significance of the land purchase squabble on page 272.

105. Explain Maureen’s deterioration.

106. Explain the statement: “Something in all of us broke that day” on page 277.

107. What effect does the dad’s death have on the family?

**Part V: Thanksgiving**

108. Explain how the family and individual members of the family have changed since the death of the father.

109. Explain Brian’s statement at the top of page 288: “You know, it’s really not that hard to put food on the table if that’s what you decide to do.” Why do you think he says it?

110. Explain the importance of the final toast to the father.

**Concluding Discussion Questions**

111. Go back and read the opening section. How do you now view the mother?

112. Explain the book’s epigraph.

113. In what ways are the children stronger because of their childhood experiences?

114. In what ways have the children been damaged because of their childhood experiences?
115. How do you think the parents would react to Jeannette’s autobiography?

116. In what ways were the parents good parents?

117. In what ways were the parents despicable parents?

118. Do you think the government or social services should have removed the children from the family?

119. Characterize Jeannette Walls. What do you think of her?

120. Explain the tone of the book.

121. Why do you think the book became a bestseller?

122. What theme or themes do you think the book conveys?

123. In what way or ways does the book change the way you view your own life?

124. Has the book changed you in any other way?

125. What final questions about the book do you have?