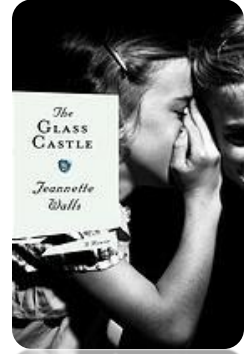


Title: The Glass Castle
Author: Jeannette Walls
Grade Level: 8th Grade



SUMMARY

The Glass Castle is a memoir – a true story about a very unusual family. The author, Jeannette Walls, chronicles the life of her brilliant but alcoholic father, her free spirited, artistic mother, and how her brother and sisters had to learn to take care of themselves. They go on incredible adventures, live in poverty, and somehow survive all kinds of circumstances. When the adult children go to New York to live, the parents follow, but choose to live homeless on the streets. This is a remarkable story of love, loyalty, and forgiveness that you will not be able to put down once you start reading.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- retrospective (pg. 5)
- roused (pg.17)
- skedaddle (pg. 19)
- pawned (pg. 28)
- warmonger (pg. 44)
- diminutive (pg. 47)
- textured (pg. 286)
- compulsion (pg. 281)
- incurable (pg. 278)
- arraigned (pg. 275)
- grievances (pg. 276)

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. Even when Jeannette's mom was down and out she would not sell her Indian jewelry (Page 259). She said they were family heirlooms and had sentimental value. She seemed to value family traditions, and yet most people thought her care of her children was almost non-existent. Using examples from the story discuss what you think. What about her father? Did he put his family first? Did he have favorites? How did he show his love? How did the children feel? (Pages 23, 24, 116, 105)
2. On page 25, Jeannette describes the "glass castle" her father has plans to build. Although these plans are for a real building, the Glass Castle became a metaphor that

stands for something they do not have, perhaps more than just a building. Ms. Walls even uses it for the title of her book. What do you think that it really stands for? Why was it difficult for the kids to make friends? (Page 20) See if you can make a timeline of all the places that they lived. What happened in each place to make them move?

3. All four children (Lori, Jeannette, Brian, Maureen) chose to move to New York City. They all did so for different reasons. What were they? What influenced their choices? How did their parents feel about their choices? By the end of the book how did their lives turn out?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

1. Jeannette's mother thought of herself as an artist and an art critic. She thought Picasso was overrated (page 5). Do some research about Picasso and cubism. See if you can paint a cubist painting. Go to a gallery and look at some artwork. Decide why or why not you like various pieces and discuss your ideas as a family.
2. The Walls were happy to be living on the streets (Page 264). Why do you think they were ok with their situation? What is it like to be homeless in NYC today? See if you can find some statistics concerning homelessness. See if you can find some research that discusses the reasons for why people are homeless and what resources are available for them. Volunteer at a center that helps homeless people.