

English 11 Honors

Summer Reading Assignment: *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls

**Introduction:** Throughout the course, we will consider the question “What does it mean to be an American?” We will consider how our national character today has been defined by our personal history, and how the literature from various times reflects this. Keep this question in mind as you read *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls.

**Assignment:** As you read the novel, you are to keep a reading journal. In the journal, you will record quotations which seem significant to you, and then write comments in which you analyze the significance of the quote. Look for quotes that reflect some of the traits that are uniquely American. These include:

- a spirit of independence
- the idea of the self-made man
- the pursuit of the American Dream
- the quest for adventure and exploring new frontiers
- self reliance
- optimism in the face of adversity

In addition to focusing on these topics, you can choose a quote that:

- reveals a significant trait of a character
- helps develop a theme (author’s message) or motif (recurring image or symbol)
- contributes to the tone (author’s attitude toward subject matter) of the novel
- creates humor

Or, you can:

- make a connection to something in your own life or experience (This reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_)
- ask a question
- make a prediction
- make a comparison to today’s attitudes and culture

What you should not do is read Spark Notes or Cliff Notes or any other commentary from critics to get ideas for your commentary. We are interested in your own interpretation of the memoir, written in your own words. If there is evidence of plagiarism, you will receive a grade of 0 for this assignment.

**Requirements:**

- Must have at least 20 entries.
- Entries must be drawn from all parts of the novel. You must have one from the last chapter commenting on the relevance of the ending.

- Quotations must include a context (say what’s happening at that point in the story), as well as the chapter and page number.
- Commentary must focus on interpretation or analysis; **no summary**.
- When appropriate, the commentary should identify the trait or topic of focus. (ie: The pursuit of the American Dream reveals a character.) You can simply use this phrase in your commentary and bold face the type.
- A printout of the assignment must be handed in on the first day of class; late work will not receive credit.
- The assignment must be available as a Word or text document; this will be submitted to Turnitin.com during the first week of class to check for plagiarism. This means the assignment must be typed.

**Example:** Below are a few sample entries to use as a guide. To create your journal, you can use the Word template provided or, if you don’t have Word, create a similar document in the program you use.

Passage	Commentary
Chapter 1 pg 5-This is the meeting of the author and her mother. “What makes you think I need your help?”	This scene introduces the contrast between the life of the author and her parent. It reveals the author’s concern for her mother and her mother’s <b>spirit of independence</b> as she rejects the accepted values of society.
Chapter 2 pg 9-The author is three and cooking hot dogs. “But at that moment, I was wearing the dress to cook hot dogs, watching them swell and bob in the boiling water as the late-morning sunlight filtered in through the trailer’s small kitchenette window.”	This passage is revealing the author’s <b>self sufficiency</b> . She realizes in her household she cannot count on her parents for even the basics of her young life.
Chapter 2 pg 14- This is the scene where Dad stole Jeannette from the hospital. “Dad hurried down the hall with me in his arms”... “You don’t have to worry anymore, baby,” Dad said. “You’re safe now.”	Now the author’s father has been introduced and appears just as irresponsible as her mother. Denigrating the doctor, neglecting to have Brian’s head wound checked, and choosing the witch doctor over the hospital, reveal <b>Dad’s arrogance</b> , and disregard for his children’s best interests.
Chapter 2 pg 15- Jeannette, home from the hospital, is again cooking hot dogs. “Good for you,” Mom said... “You can’t live in fear of something as basic as fire.”	I have noticed that fire is mentioned repeatedly, as Jeannette passes her finger through the candle’s flame, and watches the bigger blazes until she feels the heat on her face. Apparently, this <b>motif</b> is significant in some way I will discover.

<p>Chapter 2 pg 18 This is the “skedaddle” scene when Jeannette flees with her family in the middle of the night. “Dad started telling us about all the exiting things we were going to do and how we were going to get rich once we reached the new place... “Where are we going, Dad? I asked. Wherever we end up,” he said.</p>	<p>This scene introduces the reader to the Walls’ lifestyle. Though unsavory to the reader, it does show the eternal <b>optimism</b> of the father and the <b>sense of adventure</b> he infuses in his children. It also shows <b>Jeannette’s sense of optimism</b> when she told Lori how lucky they were to be looking up at a field of stars. Americans always feel things are going to get better.</p>
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