

## Approved for use in Capital High School at the Sophomore Level

### Summary of the Work:

*The Glass Castle* is a memoir and true account of the author's struggles and successes growing up as a nomadic family living in poverty. Jeannette describes how she and her siblings relied on each other and their perseverance to overcome their difficult situations. Walls' engaging writing style is entertaining to read and conveys the complexities of familial relationships.

### Rationale:

This adds variety as it is written in the nonfiction genre by a female author. Its writing style allows students of diverse reading levels to engage in the plot, characters, and themes of the text. It encourages deep discussion and writing about character development. The text also lends itself well to discussion of symbol and motif. Some students may relate to their own challenging family situations and be encouraged they can still find success and may discourage stereotypes about topics such as mental health, homelessness and substance abuse by showing complex characters.

### Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

An account of growing up nomadic, starry-eyed, and dirt poor in the '60s and '70s, by gossip journalist Walls (Dish, 2000).

From her first memory, of catching fire while boiling hot dogs by herself in the trailer park her family was passing through, to her last glimpse of her mother, picking through a New York City Dumpster, Walls's detached, direct, and unflinching account of her rags-to-riches life proves a troubling ride. Her parents, Rex Walls, from the poor mining town of Welch, West Virginia, and Rose Mary, a well-educated artist from Phoenix, love a good adventure and usually don't take into account the care of the children who keep arriving—Lori, Jeannette, Brian, and Maureen—leaving them largely to fend for themselves. For entrepreneur and drinker Rex, "Doing the skedaddle" means getting out of town fast, pursued by creditors. Rex is a dreamer, and someday his gold-digging tool (the Prospector), or, better, his ingenious ideas for energy-efficiency, will fund the building of his desert dream house, the Glass Castle. But moving from Las Vegas to San Francisco to Nevada and back to rock-bottom Welch provides a precarious existence for the kids—on-and-off schooling, living with exposed wiring and no heat or plumbing, having little or nothing to eat. Protesting their paranoia toward authority and their insistence on "true values" for their children ("What doesn't kill you will make you stronger," chirps Mom), these parents have some dubious nurturing practices, such as teaching the children to con and shoplift. The deprivations do sharpen the wits of the children—leading to the family's collective escape to

### Noted Distinction:

- 260 weeks in hardcover on The New York Times Best Seller list and it remained on the paperback nonfiction bestseller list until October 10, 2018, having persisted for 440 weeks.
- Christopher Award
- The American Library Association's Alex Award (2006)
- Books for Better Living Award
- Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners

### Readability

- Lexile Score: 1010L

### Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

### Standard Alignment:

RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including works by and about American Indians. RL.9-10.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text, including those by and about American Indians, and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, including those of American Indians, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. Craft and Structure RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). RL.9-10.5 Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel

New York City, where they all make good, even the parents, who are content to live homeless. The author's tell-it-like-it-was memoir is moving because it's unsentimental; she neither demonizes nor idealizes her parents, and there remains an admirable libertarian quality about them, though it justifiably elicits the children's exasperation and disgust. Walls's journalistic bare-bones style makes for a chilling, wrenching, incredible testimony of childhood neglect.

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/jeannette-walls/the-glass-castle/>

plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. RL.9-10.7 Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two 9 including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently. W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or text, including culturally diverse topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. W.9-10.1.d Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. W.9-10.1.e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. W.9-10.2.c Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. W.9-10.2.d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. W.9-10.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL.9-10.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. SL.9-10.1.b Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed. SL.9-10.1.c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions. SL.9-10.1.d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, with specific attention to culture, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented. L.9-10.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies, recognizing the role culture plays in the development of language. L.9-10.4.a Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

### Notes on the Text:

*(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)*

This book successfully teaches Socratic Seminar discussion skills and formal literary analysis of characterization, symbolism, and motif, and vocabulary.

### Connection to the Curriculum:

This text may dispel stereotypes students may have about homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, and mental health. Its readability, entertaining, and engaging nature allows students of varying reading levels to engage in the text.

## **Additional Connections:**

*(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)*

The 2017 film adaptation can be used to analyze two medium adaptations of the same text. They have differences in characterization, themes, and tones. Student feedback states the vast majority enjoy reading this text and find it meaningful.