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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work is to give people an idea about how Jeannette Wall's best works have contributed to humanity. *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses* have valuable messages for us. It is important to understand that these works can enrich our understanding of humanity and increase our knowledge because they portray human experiences with respect to love, family, and ambition, among other themes.

The First Chapter of this thesis deals with Jeannette Walls's personal growth, her family, and her career. Her life and her works are extremely interesting and important subjects to be studied, analyzed, and admired.

The Second Chapter is a theoretical framework concerning the Novel and different types of biography. The selected works considered here are from different categories; one of them is a novel and the other one is a memoir. A memoir is the story of someone's life at a specific time. On the other hand, a memoir isn't exactly an autobiography, because an autobiography is about the author's life. A memoir, in contrast, is about a certain point in the author's life.



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The Third Chapter presents an analysis of Jeannette Walls' most important works, *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses*. This chapter covers the most important characters of the works, the time place and concrete situations of the environment in which the characters spin out their destinies. A brief chronology of the events of each book will be given.

Finally, the last chapter gives us a deeper idea about the importance of these two works for English literature; that is, to understand valuable messages that can enrich our understanding of humanity and increase our knowledge of the world.

KEY-WORDS: Novel, Biography, Autobiography, Memoir, *The Glass Castle*, *Half Broke Horses*, Jeannette Walls' life.



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Cristina Alexandra Espinel Romero

I.D: 0704347269



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Yo, Cristina Alexandra Espinel Romero, certifico que todas las ideas, opiniones y contenidos expuestos en la presente investigación son de exclusiva responsabilidad de su autora.

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Cristina Alexandra Espinel Romero
I.D: 0704347269



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**UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA**

**“JEANNETTE WALLS FROM: HOME ON THE RANGE TO
HOMELESS”**

**Tesis previa a la obtención del Título de
Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación en la
Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.**

AUTORA:

Cristina Alexandra Espinel Romero

DIRECTORA:

Mst. Katherine Henley de Youman

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DEDICATION

THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO

My lovely parents, Milton and Agueda, who helped and guided me in all ways to finish my career successfully.

My boyfriend, Jose Vicente, who encourages me all the time to pursue my dreams. He is the one who takes care of me; thanks for your love, tolerance and willingness to adapt to the changes in my life.

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INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this thesis is to learn about Jeannette Walls. It relates events of her early life, her early career and her experiences growing up in extreme poverty, as described in her memoir, *The Glass Castle*. The writer, Jeannette Walls, describes the problems that plagued her family, and how she was able to break free from a destructive lifestyle and become a successful journalist. Her life and her works are extremely interesting and important subjects to be studied, analyzed, and admired.

Jeannette Walls is an American writer and journalist. She became famous through her work as a reporter of *MSNBC.com*, and as an author of the memoir, *The Glass Castle*, which describes the experiences of her strange family. The book reveals her own childhood in which her mother, Rose Mary Smith Walls, represents the central character, and her father the antihero.

After the success of *The Glass Castle*, Jeannette decided to produce *Half Broke Horses*, a true-life novel, which not only depicted her no-nonsense, resourceful, spectacular, and compelling grandmother, but also the change from the “old frontier” to the modern ranch system. Her grandmother, Lily Casey Smith, survived flash floods, poverty, tornadoes, the tragic loss of her best friend, Minnie, the suicide of her sister, Helen, and the Great Depression. (3-153)



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1. Chapter I: A Short Biography of Jeannette Walls



Figure 1. Jeannette Walls Collage by Cristina Espinel R.

1.1. Jeannette Walls' life

Jeannette Walls was born on April 21, 1960, in Phoenix, Arizona, and grew up in the Southwest and in Welch, West Virginia. Her mother, Rose



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Mary Walls, an artist, and her father Rex Walls, an electrician, had four children, Lori, Jeannette, Brian, and Maureen. At present, Jeannette is married to John J. Taylor and lives in Virginia.

This information can be found at the end of *Half Broke Horses* in a section called “ABOUT THE AUTHOR.”

Since Jeannette Walls’s life is extremely interesting, the following topics have been developed to explain her personal growth, her career, and her family.

1.1.1. Early life

The Walls' family life was filled with periods of homelessness. Jeannette and her family lived in various southwestern towns.

During the 1960s the family shuttled from Phoenix, Arizona, San Francisco, California, Battle Mountain, Nevada, and Welch, West Virginia, in order to avoid creditors. The family lived in unimaginable poverty.

Her story begins from the time she was a child. Jeannette was tall and skinny with red hair like her siblings, Brian and Lori. She got involved in a series of problems with her family. Jeannette’s father captured his children’s imagination and taught them how to embrace life fearlessly. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and did not want to take care of a family. Her mother, Rose Mary, preferred painting and drawing to supervising or even providing meals for her children. Out



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of necessity, the Walls children learned to take care of themselves and eventually found their way to New York.

In her books, Jeannette Walls demonstrates herself to be a person who never gives up with respect to her problems. Despite the lack of love and attention from her parents, Jeannette knew how to confront problems without fear and risked her own well-being in doing so.

1.1.2. Early Career

Jeannette had to make several important decisions during her professional life. She decided to leave her family and to live with her sister because she wanted to go to college. Jeannette excelled in every one of her jobs. She began writing for some magazines and newspapers and finally ended up publishing her own books.

Already tired of the poverty all around them, Lori Walls, her older sister, and Jeannette began planning to go to New York City. Lori fled first. After her junior year of high school, Jeannette moved away from home to live with her older sister, Lori. She moved to New York City at age 17 and graduated from Columbia University's Barnard College with honors in 1984.

When Jeannette Walls was in New York, she began her career as a journalist, writing for *The New Yorker* in the *Intelligencer* column from 1987 to 1993; *Esquire* from 1993 to 1998; and *USA Today*. Jeannette Walls has



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appeared on important shows such as *The Today Show*, *CNN*, *Primetime*, and *The Colbert Report*.

Later on in her life, Walls worked at a local Brooklyn newspaper called *The Phoenix*. Jeannette Walls is known for her work on the *MSNBC.com* gossip column *Scoop* from 1998 until her departure to write novels full-time in 2007.

Jeannette Walls is also the author of three important books. In 2000, she published the book, *Dish*, a book about the hard-scrabble world of gossip in which she explains how gossip became the news. In 2005, Jeannette Walls published her bestselling memoir, *The Glass Castle*, in which she relates the chronicles of her life. More than 250 million copies were sold, and it was translated into 23 languages, figuring on the *New York Times* bestseller list for almost three years. It has received the Christopher Award, the American Library Association's Alex Award in 2006 and the Books for Better Living Award. (*The Glass Castle* 245-281)

Finally, in 2009, she published her first novel, *Half Broke Horses*, based on the life of her grandmother, Lily Casey Smith.

1.2. Her family

The way Jeannette's parents treated her was a little strange, although she realized they were not abusive. People could say that Jeannette was living a life of chaos, but she understood that her parents



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were very different from others. Jeannette's mother, Rose Mary Walls, was the daughter of an Arizona cattle rancher, and married an Air Force officer named Rex Walls, who struggled with alcoholism for most of his life, with only short periods of sobriety. Rex was always talking about constructing a "glass castle" for the family to live in. However, that plan never came to fruition. Jeannette Walls is one of four children; she has two sisters and one brother. Her two sisters are Lori Walls, an artist, and Maureen Walls. Brian Walls, a policeman, is the only son.

Nowadays, her mother Rose Mary is seventy years old and she is still living in an unheated East Village hovel with a multitude of cats. Her father, Rex, died of a heart attack in 1994.

Love arrived when Jeannette met somebody called Eric Goldberg. In 1988, Jeannette got married to him, but she did not invite her parents to the ceremony or reception because she was afraid that they would embarrass her. Eric knew her full story, but no one in her professional life did. Jeannette had not said anything about her parents because she thought that it was not a good idea to tell people that her parents lived in poverty. Her first marriage ended after almost a decade. (*The Glass Castle* 267)

In 1996, Jeannette Walls married John J. Taylor, a journalist. Both of them were increasingly successful at their jobs. Walls' husband was the one who encouraged her to talk about her past and she finally decided to



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tell her story. As a result, she wrote her next book called *The Glass Castle*. Nowadays she lives outside Culpepper, Virginia, with her second husband, John J. Taylor, who has written for *Esquire* and is the author of *The Count and the Confession: A True Murder Mystery*; *Falling: The Story of One Marriage*; and *Circus of Ambition: The Culture of Wealth and Power in the Eighties*. (*Encyclopedia of World Biography*)

2. Chapter II: Types of Biography

2.1. Novel

At the end of the eighteenth century the word "novel" was added to the English vocabulary. During the medieval period the Italian word "novela" was used to describe popular tales. As a result, the word novel was an English transliteration of the Italian word "novella". The American Heritage Dictionary, defines novel as: "A fictional prose narrative of considerable length, typically having a plot that is unfolded by the actions, speech, and thoughts of the characters." (581)

The truth is that the novel is a genre which resists exact definition. Nowadays, the novel is one form of an extended prose narrative. It tells a story about the complexities of life as lived everyday and uses human characters in social situations. A novel has five basic but important elements: setting, plot, conflict, character, and theme.



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2.1.1. Types

There are many types of novels in English literature. Some of the most common genres are: Epistolary, Picaresque, Autobiographical, Gothic, Historical, Regional, and Allegorical.

Epistolary novel; the Encyclopedia Britannica explains that this novel is also called a novel of letters, because the narration uses the convention of letters, possibly journal entries, and occasionally newspaper reports. Some examples are *Pamela*, *Dracula*, and *The Color Purple*. (“*Epistolary Novel*”)

Picaresque novel; it is a humorous novel usually written in a first-person narrative. This type of novel relates a series of misadventures and escapades narrated in comic or satiric scenes. Notable examples of picaresque novels are *Huckleberry Finn*, *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. (“*Picaresque Novel*”)

Autobiographical novel; it is always told in the first person. A web page, Super Glossary, makes a great definition for an autobiographical novel.

In contrast with the autobiography, an autobiographical novel is a semi-fictional narrative based in part on the author's life experience, but these experiences are often transposed onto a fictional



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character or intermixed with fictional events. (*“Autobiographical Novel”*)

For example: *David Copperfield*, *Catcher in the Rye*.

Gothic novel; this type of novel combines a desolate setting and mysterious events to create an atmosphere of terror, which is supernatural, and exotic. As Ann B. Tracy writes in her novel *The Gothic Novel 1790-1830 Plot Summaries and Index to Motifs*, “the Gothic novel could be seen as a description of a fallen world.” Some examples are *Frankenstein*, *Interview with a Vampire*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. (*“The Gothic novel”*)

Historical novel; this novel centers on individuals, society, or events from the past, combined with fictional characterizations. In this genre the writer must mix what is known with what the writer imagines. Also, the Encyclopedia Britannica has a different definition about historical novels.

The Historical Novel is a novel that has as its setting a usually significant period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity (which is in some cases only apparent fidelity) to historical fact. The work may deal with actual historical personages...or it may contain a mixture of fictional and historical characters. (*“Historical Novel”*)



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Some examples of this type of novel are *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *War and Peace*.

Regional novel; this novel represents accurately the habits, speech, and folklore of a particular geographical section. It delineates the life of people in a particular place focusing on customs and speech in order to demonstrate how environment influences its inhabitants. Notable examples of regional novels are *Yoknapatawpha County*, *Bread and Wine*, and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Allegorical novel; this type of novel is representative and symbolic. The author uses symbolism and figures of speech to tell a story that has a literal and figurative meaning such as in *Alice in Wonderland*, *Animal Farm*, and *Lord of the Flies*.

Sarah Zackheim and Adrian Zackheim say in their article, *Exploring the Different Types of Fiction*, that with respect to fiction there are three main types of novels: Literary fiction, Genre fiction, and Mainstream Fiction.

During the early 1960s the term Literary Fiction was defined to distinguish a subjective genre, known as serious fiction because it focused on human nature with respect to themes, plots, and characters.



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Some examples of this genre include works such as the short story, the novel, the novel sequence, the graphic novels, and literary magazines, especially those associated with universities, or annual anthologies¹.

The Genre Fiction, the most popular variety of fiction, is a term used to group works sharing similarities of characters, settings, plots, and themes. Furthermore, the term, genre fiction, is known as popular fiction or commercial fiction. The genre fictions tell a story or are narrative writings. Most Genre Fictions have a protagonist, hero or heroine, and an antagonist, that is, a villain or antihero.

The Genre Fiction can be divided into categories, such as fantasy, horror, mystery, crime, romance, science fiction, thriller, suspense, adventure, and westerns.

The term, Mainstream Fiction, was set forth in the 20th century by publishers and booksellers in order to describe both commercial and literary works that reveal a daily reality familiar to most people.

These books deal with topics such as family issues, coming of age initiations, courtroom dramas, physical and mental disabilities, social pressures, political intrigues, and others.

¹ An anthology is a book or other collection of selected writings by various authors, usually in the same literary form, of the same period, or on the same subject. (*Dictionary.com* "Anthology")



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2.2. Types of Biography

2.2.1. Autobiography

The word autobiography comes from three Greek words: “self”, “life”, and “write”. It is the story of the author’s life to date, and usually it is chronologically based; it starts when the authors are young and tells all the things that happen to them all during their life.

2.2.2. Biography

The American Heritage Dictionary defines biography as: “An account of a person’s life written or produced by someone else.” (89)

Most biographies give an explanation of the life of a distinguished personality from birth to death. All of the autobiographies incorporate the beginning, middle, and the end of a person’s life.

An autobiography differs from a biography in its more subjective narrative point of view. In addition, autobiographers cannot relate the author’s own death.

2.2.3. Memoir

A type of creative nonfiction is a memoir. Although the memoir belongs to the autobiographical genre they are not the same. A memoir is usually shorter in nature than an autobiography. Unlike the autobiography, which focuses on the life and times of the writer, the memoir takes place



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during a particular period of time based on the author`s own memories, feelings and emotions. Also, a biography is someone`s life story written by another person. (*“What Is a Memoir? What Makes a Memoir Different from an Autobiography or Biography?”*)

2.2.3.1. The Age of Memoir

Memoirs help readers to keep alive reminiscences like Walter Kirn says in his article.

Time passes, and what it passes through is people—though people believe that they are passing through time, and even, at certain euphoric moments, directing time. It`s a delusion, but it`s where memoirs come from, or at least the very best ones. (*“Stone`s Diaries”*)

A recognized fact is that memoirs are very popular at present, at the beginning of the 21st century. A memoir is the literary form of our time that develops as essential material the author`s life experiences.

At the present time, the popularity of the memoir, as Thomas Larson says in his article *The Age of Memoir*. “...is our deep need to explore the age-old questions: Who am I? Why am I? What is the purpose of my life?.”

Everyone, from adolescents to adults, is looking for a personal narrative. Memoirs focus on the intensity of significant periods of the



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author's life; the author is remembering an essential stage in life, a remarkable relationship; prejudices, or unresolved feelings.

2.2.3.2. Definition of Memoir

The word memoir, meaning memory, comes from the Latin word "memoria". A memoir is a literary genre that relates the personal experiences of an author. The Oxford Dictionary Online defines a memoir as: "A historical account or biography written from personal knowledge. An account written by a public figure of their life and experiences." ("*Memoir*")

2.2.3.3. Characteristic of a Memoir Form

One purpose of a memoir is sharing the meaning of some experiences with the reader; the focus is on a brief period of time or series of related events.

The writer must use various techniques to reconstruct the events that happened. Then the writer must be able to write about the experience in an interesting, entertaining, and informative way.

Memoirists tell a true story, with a beginning, middle and end, and do not simply present a collection of chronological incidents. The writers use various literary devices to tell their story, such as imagery, simile, metaphor, details, dialogue, characterization, themes, and narrative structure. ("*Literary Devices | Literary Terms*")



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Memoirs follow a narrative structure, and they have all the literary elements like setting, plot, conflict, character, and theme in order to make it interesting for the readers.

2.2.3.3.1. The Nature of Memoir

The nature of the memoir, says Marc Pachter, is to be more outward than inward: “myself among others,” “myself in the world,” “my view of my public self.”

At the beginning, memoirs dealt with public matters instead of personal. The first memoirs were written by politicians or people in court society. Later, another type appeared from military leaders and businessmen who wrote about their careers rather than about their private life.

Nowadays, modern memoirs are written in the first person from the author’s point of view, and writers are recounting true events from their own life.

2.2.3.3.2. Types of Memoir

According to the web articles, *Types of Memoirs* and *Five Types of Memoirs from Survivor to Coming of Age*, there are several kinds of memoirs. The following is a brief description of these various forms:



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- **Personal memoir.** It is one of the most popular types of memoir. It is based on a particular experience or event, such as child abuse, divorce, illness, or adventure.
- **Portrait memoir.** The author tries to describe events or experiences of people, places or things of a person who is not the author.
- **Confessional memoir.** The memoir of confession is always an intimate moral portrait. Writers divulge life events that have previously been kept secret. It can be a personal, family, or even a community secret. The memoirist confesses the sins or wrongdoings and how the memoirist made amends or reformed them.
- **Coming of age memoir.** It focuses on the transformation between the childhood and adulthood of the writer. The memoirist writes about significant experiences and events of childhood: for example, family traditions, the neighborhood and community; family relationships and social elements can become parts of the story.
- **Travel memoir.** It does not only focus on the writer's travels, however; it is concerned with the experience of traveling, of how the adventure changed the writer's life. Also, writers join realistic information about specific places with personal insight creating in this way a story about a personal adventure.



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- **Political memoir.** It is written by important persons, presidents, local judges, and prime ministers, who work in a public office. They write memoirs in order to share their experiences while in their political offices.
- **Public or celebrity memoir.** In this type of memoir writers are famous people. They explain how they have reached success. The writers share their experiences, feelings, thoughts, and opinions about their public life.

The Glass Castle has element of the personal memoir, the portrait memoir, and the confessional memoir. It also can be categorized as a coming age memoir.



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3. Chapter III: Analysis of the selected work

3.1. Analysis of *The Glass Castle*

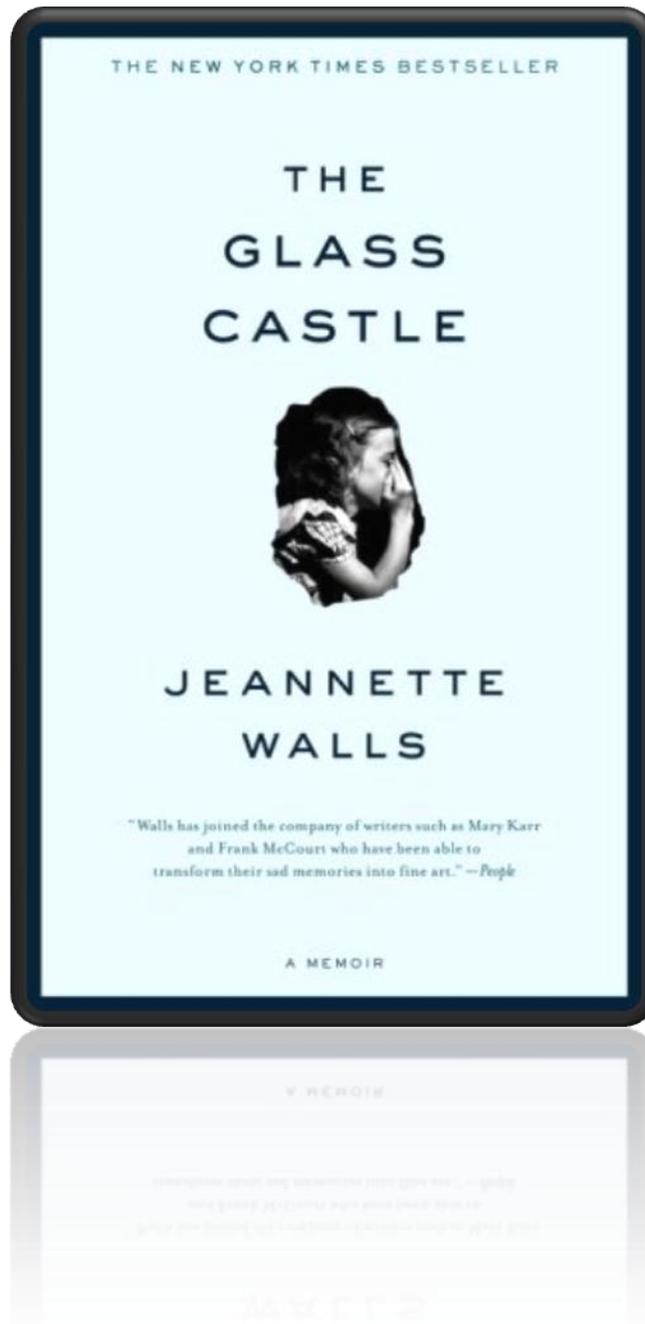


Figure 2. *The Glass Castle*. The cover of the novel.



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3.1.1. A Brief Chronology of the Events in *The Glass Castle*

This work is divided into five main sections. For the purpose of a brief chronology of the events, these are numbered and referred to as chapters.

CHAPTER I. A WOMAN ON THE STREET

The author, Jeannette Walls, begins as the first-person narrator wondering if she has overdressed for the party that evening.

Jeannette is in a taxi and unexpectedly she sees her mother scavenging. She fears that her mother, Rose Mary, might see her, call her name, or that someone that is going to the same party will discover the secrets about Jeannette's family.

Suddenly, Jeannette asks the driver to take her back home to Park Avenue. When she arrives home, she worries about the situation that she has lived with her mother. She cannot enjoy living in a luxury apartment if she worries about her parents living on the streets. She worries about them, but she is also embarrassed by them. She has tried to help them many times, but both of them always say that they are living the way they want to.

Jeannette doesn't feel well, so she decides to call a friend of her mother, and leave a message. This is the only way that Jeannette keeps



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in touch with her mother. A few days later, Jeannette and Rose Mary meet each other in a Chinese restaurant.

While they are waiting for the food, Jeannette tells her mother she is worried about her and she wants to know if there is anything she can do for her, and her mother answers that she needs an electrolysis treatment. Jeannette thinks her mother is not serious, so she tells her that Jeannette was embarrassed to see her picking through trash in the East Village the other day. Her mother, Rose Mary, tells her that she cannot change her life; Rose Mary is happy being who she is. If Jeannette sees her mother near a dumpster it is because Rose Mary is recycling because people are too wasteful. Jeannette`s mother tells her that she should accept her mother and her father for who they are. Finally, Rose Mary encourages her daughter by answering that Jeannette should just tell people the truth about them.

CHAPTER II. THE DESERT

- This chapter starts by relating about when Jeannette was three years old. She lives in a trailer park in a southern Arizona town. One day she decides to cook hot dogs. While she is standing in front of the stove and she is wearing a pink dress, she realizes her dress is on fire. While Juju, her dog, is barking and the little girl screaming, her mother runs into the room. Jeannette`s mother throws a blanket around the girl in order to protect her. Rose Mary, her mother, asks for a ride to the hospital because her



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husband is not at home. When they arrive at the hospital, nurses and doctors start to whisper about this very serious situation. Most of them tell the little girl that she is lucky to be alive. She is wrapped on the entire right side in bandages, and as a result she cannot move.

Doctors and nurses ask the little girl the same questions: How did she get burned? Who made the bruises and cuts? They cannot believe that Jeannette made those cuts by herself trying to cook hot hogs. She enjoys staying in the hospital because of the food, the order, and because of having her own room. In the hospital everything is white, clean and shiny. Everyone speaks in polite and calm voices. Those things get the girl's attention and she loves to be there. When the family comes to visit her, they are complaining, screaming and all the calm of the room disappears.

- A few days later, Rex, her father, is in the hospital and he carries the little girl out while running and leaves by the emergency exit. Jeannette and her father arrive where the car is parked with the engine on and the rest of the family inside.
- A few days after, Jeannette is at home and she cooks hot dogs again while her mother is painting. Also, her mother praises her for not being afraid of fire and her father shows her how to pass her finger through a candle flame. Jeannette becomes fascinated with fire and starts stealing matches from Rex. Behind the trailer she lights the matches and plays



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with Tinkerbell, a plastic figurine. She accidentally melts the face of her doll as she tries to show her how the fire feels.

- Jeannette's father, Rex, comes home in the middle of the night and wakes them all up. He tells them they are leaving and they have to take only what they really need. When the car is loaded, Rex drives them slowly through the trailer park so as not to alert anyone that they are going. Jeannette realizes that she is forgetting Tinkerbell, her favorite doll, so she asks if she can go back for her doll, and when her father says no, she comforts herself by holding the cat, Quixote. It growls and scratches her, and Rex stops the car and throws it out, and her mother says to the kids that they should not be so sentimental because they can get another cat. Juju, the dog, is in the car, but he is held by Brian because he doesn't want to lose Juju. After some hours, Rex has to stop in the middle of the desert because they have to rest. They sleep under the stars. Also, they have no pillows and Rex tells them this is part of his plan to teach them to have good posture and says how the Indians do not use pillows either.
- Jeannette explains how the family is always leaving hastily and this is usually in the middle of the night. The family lives in the little mining towns in Nevada, Arizona, and California. Rex gets jobs such as that of an electrician, or an engineer, but he does not like keeping a job for long. Jeannette's father sometimes alludes to how FBI agents are after him, but her mother tells her he just likes to say this because it sounds like more fun than admitting to being chased by bill collectors.



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The Walls family moves around like nomads. Frequently, they go to Grandmother Smith, Rose Mary`s mother. She lives in a big white house in Phoenix. Mrs. Smith is a West Texas flapper who loves horses. Rex and Jeannette`s grandmother are always complaining and the Walls family cannot stay with her for long.

Sometimes the children don`t go to school and sometimes their parents teach them. All three of them, Jeannette, Brian and Lori, are able to read by the age of five. Rex teaches them mathematics and he also shows them other things such as how to shoot a gun, to use a bow and arrow and to throw a knife, as well as how to understand the Morse Code. When Jeannette is four, she is pretty good with Rex`s revolver.

Jeannette`s mother loves the desert as she has grown up there. She teaches her children which plants are edible and which are toxic. The Walls family is in the desert because they want to find gold. While they are searching for gold the children like to catch scorpions, snakes and horny toads. When they cannot find gold, they collect other valuable rocks, such as turquoise and garnets.

During their stay in the desert, they describe how they live with dust storms and the rains, and how they survive them. Jeannette compares her family to the cactus: "We ate irregularly, and when we did, we`d gorge ourselves." (*The Glass Castle* 22)



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When the Walls family is living in Nevada, a train full of cantaloupes has an accident, and it jumps the track. Rex brings crates of cantaloupes and the family eats them in different ways. There is another time when the grape pickers go on strike in California. They allow people to collect the grapes for a nickel a pound, and in that time the family filled the car with grapes. During many weeks the family ate grapes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Rex always tells the children that this moving around is only temporary as he is set on finding gold. The children think that their father is a genius because he can build or fix anything, and they trust him. Rex likes to read calculus and logarithmic books and he is an expert in math, physics, and electricity, and is always inventing things. One of his important inventions is the Prospector which is designed to sift earth and distinguish rock from gold.

Jeannette remembers Rex used to tell them bedtime stories, which were always about him and he was always a central heroic figure. Rex does not like to be bothered when he is telling a story. When he is not telling them stories, he is telling them about the incredible things he is going to do, such as build The Glass Castle. The Castle will have solar panels to convert the sun's rays to electricity. Everything will come true if they find gold and thus they can start work on it.



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- Jeannette`s father likes to tell stories, but he does not like to talk about his family. It is a little complicated for Jeannette to know about her father`s past, except that he is from Welch in West Virginia and his father used to work as a clerk on the railroad. One of his favorite stories is the account of how he met Rose Mary when he was in the airforce and she was on leave from the USO to visit her parents. He and his friends are plucking up to dive 40 feet into a lake. Suddenly Rose Mary and a friend drive up. She looks like a film star wearing a white bathing suit. Rex is astonished looking at her. He follows her and tells her they are going to marry, and they do, six months later.

Jeannette thinks this is the most romantic story, but her mother does not. She says she has to say “yes” as he cannot take “no” for an answer and wants to get away from her mother as she cannot let her make the smallest of decisions on her own.

Jeannette`s father leaves the military after he gets married because Rex wants to make his fortune for his family. In a few months, his wife is pregnant with Lori who has curly hair. A year after, Rose Mary has a second daughter, Mary Charlene. She has black hair and brown eyes like her father. However, she dies when she is nine months old because of crib death. Jeannette is born two years later and her mother tells her she is to replace Mary Charlene. Brian is born when Jeannette is one year old. His mother calls him a blue baby because when he was born he had some breathing problems.



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When Jeannette`s mother is talking about Mary Charlene she never seems to be upset over the death of her child. On the other hand, her father cannot talk about her. Rose Mary says he was never the same after finding his daughter dead and since then he started drinking and losing jobs.

Finally, the author explains how her father pawned her mother`s diamond wedding ring when they were short of money after Brian was born. Jeannette remembers that they had to find gold in order to buy her mother another ring, even fancier than the one her father had pawned.

The Walls family is in the Nevada desert. While the children are sitting in the car outside a bar called "Bar None Bar" they are waiting for their parents. Lori, who is seven, asks Jeannette, who is four, if she likes moving around. She answers her with emotion, of course, and together they work out that they have lived in at least eleven different places. At this time, they are on the way to Las Vegas as their father wants to accumulate enough in the casino to finance the Prospector.

On the road Rex takes a sharp turn over some railroad tracks, and then the door opens and Jeannette falls out of the car. She rolls several yards, and she only sees how the car disappears. Jeannette`s forehead is hurt and her nose is bleeding. Her knees and elbows are scraped raw and covered with sand. The little girl is afraid and she thinks she is living the same experience as her cat; they do not want the cat with them. The girl is



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waiting long hours expecting her parents to come back to rescue her. Finally, Rex, her father, goes back, gets out of the car and takes the girl. Rex explains to Jeannette that her brother tried to tell them that she fell out, but he blubbered and they could not understand anything. At the end, Rex cleans the little girl up and she gets back in the car.

- When the Walls family arrives in Las Vegas, they live in a motel for about a month. Lori, Jeannette and Brian sleep in one bed and their parents sleep in another one. The family goes to the casinos, where Rex likes to play Black Jack; if he wins some money he buys some gifts for the kids or they go to eat in some pleasurable restaurants. A few days later, Rex and Rose Mary come back immediately from the casino and he says that one of the dealers has figured out he has a system. That is the reason the family has to move to another place. Also, Rex says the Mafia owns the casinos in Las Vegas and they are after him, so the family has to leave Las Vegas and go to San Francisco.

They stay in the Tenderloin district in San Francisco, because Rose Mary says there is more character in this area. Jeannette prefers a hotel for special residents instead of being in a motel as they have been before.

While the kids play in the hotel, their parents go out looking for money. The children are staying without care and it can be dangerous for them. Once, Jeannette finds a half-full box of matches and she likes to



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play with them in the bathroom. She likes to make a pile of toilet paper in the toilet, light it, and when it starts burning, she flushes it down the toilet.

A few days later, Jeannette wakes up and she sees flames leaping at the open window. The three kids are in the room, but their parents are not there. Jeannette wants to scream and she cannot do it. Rex comes back just in time and gets the children out.

After the hotel burns down, they live for few days on the beach. They sleep in the car called Green Caboose. Later, a polite policeman tells them to move on because it is illegal to sleep on the beach. Rex and Rose Mary decide they should move back to the desert and look for gold. Rex thinks that the cities are not safe for them, saying, "These cities will kill you." (*The Glass Castle* 34)

- On their way to the Mojave Desert Jeannette`s mother asks to stop the car to look at a Joshua tree. She has noticed something; the ancient tree is growing in the direction the wind has blown it and is leaning so much it seems set to topple over. Jeannette thinks that the tree is unattractive, but Rose Mary admires it and she decides to paint it. Rex arrives in an area called Midland where there is a pleasant house to rent.

Jeannette remembers how she lived for the first time in Midland; some terrible memories come to her mind, such as how the coyotes were howling, monsters growling, moths knocking against the screens and the creosote was crackling in the wind. Often Jeannette hears something



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under her bed and her father helps her to chase it away; Rex calls it an “old ornery Demon.” (*The Glass Castle* 36) He tells her how monsters love to frighten people, and that is the reason that you can be afraid. However, even if they love to frighten people, the minute you stare them down, they turn tail and run.

After a month, Juju is bitten by a rattlesnake and dies. The kids bury him near the Joshua tree. They have lots of cats because the children like to rescue cats, ever since they lost Quixote, the cat. Rex finds work in a gypsum mine and brings home sacks of gypsum for Rose Mary who makes Venus de Milo sculptures from a mold she has bought. At this time, Jeannette`s mother is pregnant and carries on with her artwork. Her painting doesn`t have any particular style; she just calls it primitive. Some of her pictures are abstract, some realistic, and others impressionistic. She paints dozens of pictures of the Joshua tree and she gives her children some art lessons.

- Jeannette, Lori and Brian never believe in Santa Claus because their parents refuse to let them. Jeannette argues that this is because her parents cannot afford expensive presents and do not want the children to think they are not as good as other children. The Walls family celebrates Christmas usually a week later when the bows, papers and trees have been discarded and they can collect them for free.



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Jeannette is five when her father loses his job at the gypsum mine. That Christmas they have no money at all. On Christmas Eve, Rex takes each child alone into the desert night, one by one. When it is Jeannette's turn, Rex asks her to pick a star and says this can be her present although Jeannette knows that no one owns the stars. The little girl picks Venus and her father explains how this is just a planet and it is in fact smaller than stars. That night they are discussing outer space and both of them really enjoy it.

- The Walls family leaves Midland for Blythe, Texas. They live at the LBJ apartments where many migrant workers live. Rose Mary tells her children this can be good for them as they will be able to learn Spanish without studying. Because they live in a big city, they have to go to school. Jeannette goes to the first grade and her teacher is Miss Cook who often asks her to read out loud when the principal comes in the classroom. The other pupils do not like her because she is enthusiastic to answer when the teacher asks questions. Some days after Jeannette starts school, four Mexican girls follow her home and attack her in an alleyway near her apartment. They beat her up and her father and Brian are at home when she gets in and they see her scratches and bruises. When her father asks how many there were, she lies and says six. The next day the same girls are waiting for Jeannette in the same place, but before they can attack her Brian jumps out and waves a branch at them. He tries to warn them off, but they just watch him and laugh. Then they surround him and beat him



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up. Jeannette hits one of the girls with the biggest rock that she can find. When the girls leave, Brian gets up from the floor and shows Jeannette what he has found, the iceberg lettuce farm. Jeannette decides to follow him and they eat until their stomachs ache.

- Two months after they moved to Blythe, Rose Mary gives birth. The children wait in the car while father goes into the hospital to bring Rose Mary and the little baby out. They come running out and Jeannette thinks they must have checked out the typically Rex Walls-style.

In the car, Rose Mary passes to Jeannette, a girl of five years, the new baby and says Jeannette is mature enough to hold her all the way home. The little baby is beautiful, with big blue eyes and blond hair. The baby is not named for weeks because Rose Mary wants to study her first. Finally, Rose Mary decides to call the baby Lilly Ruth Maureen, and calls her Maureen for short. Lilly is Rose Mary's mother's name, and Erma Ruth is Rex's mother's name. The children like to call the little girl Maureen because it is the diminutive of Mary.

A few months later the police try to pull them over in the car because the brake lights are not working. Rex takes off and says if the cops stop us, they are going to realize that we have no insurance or registration, and the license plate is from another car. He makes a screeching U-turn on the highway and they end up hiding in a garage and walking home.



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The following day he announces that Blythe has become too hot for them and Rex says that they should go to Battle Mountain in Nevada as he believes there is gold there. The family hires a U-Haul truck and all the children have to stay in the back with the furniture. The parents tell the children to be quiet because it is illegal to ride in the back. Jeannette is given Maureen to hold and they have to sit in the dark. The doors blow open and it is only when a car signals that they stop. Rex gets out and is angry with them, and Jeannette believes she knows he is frightened too. Then he locks the doors and they carry on as before.

- The Walls family has moved into a wooden building on the edge of town at Battle Mountain. It used to be a railroad depot and because they have little money they improvise to create more furniture. A bunch of small wooden spools are used as chairs and huge ones are used as tables. They sleep in big cardboard boxes. Also, Rose Mary buys a cheap piano. It is really complicated to pull the piano into the house. Rose Mary is supposed to drive slowly to move the piano into position but she goes too quickly and it shoots through the house. From then on it stays outside.
- Rex finds a job as an electrician in a barite mine and he leaves early and comes home early. He teaches the children how to play cards and when he is not there they invent their own games; their favorite one is exploring in the desert.



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When Rex has money, he can take the family to the Owl Club, world famous according to the sign, for dinner on a Sunday. Rex hardly ever goes out drinking; instead the family stretches out on the benches and floors of the depot and reads. They have a dictionary in the middle of the room for the children to check words. If they do not agree with a definition, Jeannette and her father discuss the definition.

Jeannette's mother reads everything, including works by Charles Dickens, Henry Miller, Pearl Buck and William Faulkner. Rex prefers science and math books. The children read whatever their mother brings home from the library. Jeannette likes the Laura Ingalls Wilder stories and the *We Were Three series*; her favorite is *Black Beauty*.

- The children attend the Mary S. Black Elementary School, and Jeannette is in second grade. She already knows the subjects Miss Page teaches, but she does not want to look keen again as she wants the other children to like her as in Blythe. Her father sometimes makes Jeannette do her arithmetic homework in binary numbers. Before class, she usually changes it back to Arabic numbers but one day she does not have time and Miss Page asks if her work is supposed to be a joke. Jeannette tries to explain it is binary numbers, and how computers use them and Miss Page stares at her. She makes her stay late and complete her homework as she has instructed.



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Many of the schoolchildren live in the same neighborhood called Tracks. All the children play with Jeannette and her siblings. Also, they are all allowed to go anywhere they want and they are only punished for talking back or for disobedience. They also have to come in when the streetlights come on and Rose Mary tells them to use commonsense.

When Jeannette is exploring in the desert, she often finds beautiful rocks and she starts a collection. The children find many different rocks such as garnets, granites, obsidians, and turquoises. Jeannette and Brian like to go to the dump and they find and take home toxic and hazardous waste, and put it in a shed that they have named their laboratory. They mix things together but nothing happens until one day they unscrew some of the lids and throw in lit matches. Finally, one of the mixtures catches fire and blows up. They are knocked to their feet and as they get up they notice one of the walls is on fire. Jeannette manages to squeeze her way out of the shed and calls for help, and Rex hears and rescues them. Fortunately he is walking home from work, and he can help them.

- The children are not given an allowance, and the way they get money is by collecting used beer cans and bottles that they redeem for two cents each. Jeannette and Brian also collect scrap metal for a penny a pound. When they have money they go to the drugstore for candy. Jeannette loves chocolate, but it melts too quickly so that she prefers a Sugar Daddy, which lasts half the day.



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On their way home, they like to spy on the Green Lantern, which is a large dark green house that Rose Mary says is a cathouse. Jeannette never sees any cats there and it seems a place of irresistible mystery for her. There are only women wearing bathing suits or short dresses who sit or lay out on the porch. Also there are Christmas lights over the door all the year round. Jeannette cannot figure out what happens in there and her mother cannot explain either. One day Brian goes over to talk to one of the women who is on the porch and after this he would wave to them.

- The Walls family home in Battle Mountain is filled with animals such as cats, dogs, nonpoisonous snakes, lizards and tortoises that the family has hunted. Once Rex buys a buzzard, which they name Buster. However, the family cannot afford pet food; the animals have to eat the few scraps the family has left. Rose Mary believes that the animals should not become dependent on them, and thinks self-sufficiency is admirable in all creatures. She also thinks nature should take its course and she means not killing flies in the house as these are food for the birds and lizards. In the same way, these are food for the cats. She also does not want poison in the house to kill flies because she thinks this cannot be good for humans either.

That winter Rex takes the family to the desert north of town, the Hot Pot, which is a natural sulfur spring. That day Rex realizes that Lori and Brian can swim, but Jeannette cannot, so he decides to teach her. He takes her into the middle, which is reputed to have no bottom, and she



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inhales water. He takes her to the shallow part to let her recover and then takes her back into the middle. Rex says to her, sink or swim, you choose what you want. He knows, however, that if something happens he has to rescue her. He still returns her to the middle. After a while, she realizes this and propels herself away from him. He shouts to her that she is swimming and when she gets out he does too and tries to hug her. Finally, Jeannette can swim, and everyone congratulates her.

- After Lori goes back home from exploring, she announces that her father has lost his job. Everyone wants to help in order to get money and buy provisions to eat. Rex is out looking for food or work and he always brings something to eat. The children are always hungry; they find some ways to take food from others; for example, at school Jeannette can slip back into the classroom at recess to take something from someone's lunch bag that cannot be missed. Another way is when Jeannette plays in a friend's yard, she can ask to use the bathroom and on the way she can take something to eat from the kitchen.

One day Lori and Jeannette arrive at home, and they eat the last piece of margarine with sugar which is the last piece of food in the house. After that, Rose Mary reprimands them and Jeannette raises her voice and explains that she is hungry. Her mother looks worried, as she has stopped pretending it is an adventure, and then starts to cry and shouts that they should not blame her. She also says she does not like living like this.



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When Rex comes home, he and Rose Mary argue and he asks her to ask her mother for money to help develop the cyanide-leaching process he is working on to separate gold from rock. She tells him her mother has offered for them to live with her if they cannot manage and this angers him. The argument continues the next day and he says she can find work as she has a teaching degree, and she replies that she is an artist. Rex hangs her out of the window while she tries to hit him in the face. She accuses him of trying to kill her and he protests that he has stopped her jumping.

- The next day, Rose Mary gets up with the children instead of sleeping late as she usually does. She applies for work in the Mary S. Black Elementary School and she is accepted immediately. Lori's teacher, Miss Page, has recently left and Rose Mary is assigned to this class. Rose Mary is very popular with the students because of the way she manages the discipline. She allows them freedom instead of teaching them rules. She also does not mind if they do not do their homework and her only rule is that they cannot hurt others. Rose Mary has good results working with the children who have been considered problem kids or slow starters. Although she is doing well at work, she hates teaching. This is because Rose Mary has to leave her last child, Maureen, with a woman whose drug-dealer husband is serving time in the state prison. Also, she is doing something that she does not enjoy; she prefers to be an artist. In the school the principal thinks Rose Mary is a terrible teacher and threatens to fire her. Jeannette,



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Lori and Brian can go over the students' homework and tests and can grade just about anything but essay questions; they help their mother with the classwork, with things like cleaning the chalkboard, dusting the erasers, and picking the papers up off the floor. Lori also helps Rose Mary with her lesson plans and corrects her spelling and also helps her with math. Then Jeannette explains how Lori understands their mother better than anybody else and does not even mind when Rose Mary disciplines her in order to show the principal she is capable of doing so.

- After Rose Mary begins work as a teacher their life improves; they have food in the fridge for most of the month, they buy new clothes, they can eat lunch in the cafeteria, but the money often runs out before the end of the month because neither Rex nor Rose Mary have ever mastered their finances in a good way.

Rose Mary's salary also causes problems as Rex thinks the check should be turned over to him because he sees himself as the head of the household. He says it is his responsibility and he wants money for his gold-leaching research. Rose Mary answers him, "The only research you're doing is on the liver's capacity to absorb alcohol." (*The Glass Castle* 76)

Though Rose Mary finds it hard to disobey her husband, she is evasive with him. He takes to escorting her to the bank on pay day and on one trip Rose Mary passes the money to Jeannette, but Rex realizes what



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she is doing and persuades Jeannette to hand it over later. That day Rex is celebrating eating and wasting the money.

Rex notices Jeannette and Brian do not have a lunch bag for school. He asks where they are and Brian says there is no food in the house. Rex pretends to whisper to himself about their mother wasting money on art supplies. He turns up at school at lunchtime with food and asks them if he has ever let them down. In a voice too quiet for Rex to hear, Brian answers "Yes".

A few months after Rose Mary starts teaching, Brian and Jeannette pass the Green Lantern. A woman, Ginger, waves at Brian, but he does not wave back. He also ignores her when she shouts to him. He explains to Jeannette that he met her on his birthday. On that day, Rex tells him to pick a present and Brian chooses a Sad Sack comic book. Then they go to the Nevada Hotel, which is near the Owl Club. Over there they have dinner with Ginger. Later, all three go to a hotel suite where Brian stays in the front room. He is reading his comic book while Rex and Ginger go to the bedroom. When they come out, Ginger sits with Brian and says she loves Sad Sack, and his father makes him give it to her. Jeannette realizes Ginger can do something else with Brian, and maybe he can understand why Rose Mary says women at the Green Lantern are so bad. She asks him this and he stares off ahead at nothing. Then he answers that he knows how she makes a lot of money and she should buy her own darn comic book.



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- After Jeannette's eighth birthday, Billy Deel and his father move into the neighborhood, Tracks. Billy is three years older than Jeannette and lights his cigarettes with a Zippo lighter. His father works in the barite mines, and he never mentions his mother. He spends his evenings at the Owl Club, and he is considered a delinquent.

He takes to following Jeannette about and telling other kids that she is his girlfriend. A few months after he has arrived, Billy tells her he wants to show her something funny and she goes with him into his house. His father is in there sleeping and snoring; his trousers are wet and his penis is out of his trousers. Jeannette asks what is funny and Billy says how his Rex has pissed himself. She is disgusted and tells him that he is not supposed to laugh at his own father. Billy tells her that she should not pretend to be better than him, and he adds that her father is a drunk like Bill's father. Jeannette understands that she has lost time with him.

That night during the dinner, Jeannette tells everyone about Billy's father and the horrible dump they live in. Her mother is disappointed with her because she does not show compassion. Also, Rose Mary explains that those boys become delinquents because they are unloved children and they grow up to become serial murderers or alcoholics.

The next time Jeannette sees Billy, she is very clear in saying that she can be his friend but not his girlfriend. A week later Jeannette is hanging out with some friends and Billy comes to give her a ring of his



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mother. Jeannette cannot keep it and she doesn't wear it; she is afraid that Billy will start to tell everyone they are boyfriend and girlfriend. Later, Billy is saying that they are going to get married and Jeannette does not like that, but she cannot give the ring back because it is too darn pretty.

A few weeks later Jeannette is playing hide and seek with some of the neighborhood kids. Billy finds her in her cramped hiding place. He forces her to kiss him and untie his trousers. There is not enough room to knee him in the groin as she has been taught so she bites his ear and he hits her back.

The next day she gives him his ring back and says she does not want to be his friend anymore. While she is walking away, he throws the ring at her and shouts that he is going to rape her. She has some doubts because she does not know what rape means.

The next day Jeannette and her siblings are indoors playing cards while their parents are at the Owl Club. Lori hears Billy calling outside and she sees he has a gun. He breaks a window; he wants Jeannette to be sorry. Jeannette and her siblings hide behind a spool table and Lori goes upstairs and returns with their father's pistol. Billy provokes her to shoot it, and she does.

They all run outside and see he has run down the tracks. Fifty yards away he shoots at them again and Jeannette fires back. The dirt kicks up in front of him and he jumps and runs off again.



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Later a police car arrives and their parents get out. Rex asks what has happened and Jeannette says it is self-defense. The policeman says gunshots have been heard and also tells them the whole family is going to have to go to court the next day. Billy Deel and his father are going to be there too and the magistrates can get to the bottom of what happened. Brian asks if they can be sent away and the policeman says the magistrate will decide.

When the policeman goes away, Rex and Rose Mary decide to leave for Phoenix that night. Their father says they can take one thing each and Jeannette chooses to take her rock collection. Lori takes *The Wizard of Oz* and Brian takes his toy soldiers.

- Jeannette loves her Grandma Smith; she is a tall, leathery, broad-shouldered woman with green eyes and a strong jaw. She has a big white house with green eucalyptus. She used to teach her children, Rose Mary and Jim. Rose Mary hated to have her mother as their teacher. When Grandma Smith sets some rules or punishments, Rose Mary breaks them.

That night they leave Battle Mountain and they go to Phoenix. Jeannette thinks they are going to Grandma's home. In the car she asks her mother if this is where they are headed and her mother answers no, because she is dead. After that, Jeannette starts hitting her mother's shoulder and asks why she has not told her before. Her father holds her fists and tells her that is enough. Her mother seems surprised that she is



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so upset and she says that she thinks it is no matter to let them know. Then she explains that doctors say that Grandma has died of leukemia, but Rose Mary thinks it is radioactive poisoning because the government is always testing nuclear bombs in the desert and Grandmother Smith and Jim, her brother, used to go out with a Geiger counter and find rocks that ticked. They would store these in the basement and would use some to make jewelry for Grandma.

Jeannette's mother says there is no reason to feel sad since because of Grandma, they have a place to live. Grandma Smith has two houses and Rose Mary, as the eldest child, chooses the older and less valuable one. She thinks it is perfect to have an art studio in and also inherits enough money to give up teaching and to buy art supplies. Rose Mary has decided to move there since her mother has died, but Rex has refused to leave Battle Mountain.

- The family arrives at the new house on North Third Street. They cannot believe how nice the house is. The children run around looking at the nice furniture in the mansion that Rose Mary has inherited from Grandma. Also, they count 14 rooms. There is also a palm tree in the front yard and an orange tree in the back yard. In addition, there is a shed that is as big as some of the houses they have lived in.

People in the neighborhood are Mexicans and Indians. All the kids from their neighborhood go to the Catholic school at St. Mary's Church.



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Rose Mary wants her children go to a public school called Emerson because she says nuns are killjoys. They go to a public school in a fancy neighborhood and they are put in reading groups for gifted children. They are also given an eye test which shows that Lori is severely short sighted. Rose Mary receives a note that explains that Lori needs glasses and her mother does not approve. Rose Mary says if someone has weak eyes they need to exercise them to make them strong. The mother gives in, though, when she receives another note saying Lori cannot attend class without them and the school will pay. When Lori receives her glasses, she cannot believe that she can see well. Later, she feels sad because she recognizes the truth that she has needed glasses for so long. In addition, she begins painting and decides she wants to be an artist like their mother. Rose Mary sets herself up in her art work and buys several typewriters to help in her writing career. She never sells her writing but pins up any rejection letters that are encouraging.

Rex joins the local electricians` union where he finds a job and buys the three eldest children their first bicycle with his first pay check. They have a telephone and record player as well as a washing machine.

Life in Phoenix is not total luxury. The house where they live has many cockroaches that increase in number. A few months after the family moves in there is a termite plague.



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- During the night Rex and Rose Mary always leave the front and back doors open because they have no air-conditioning and they argue that they need the air to circulate. Maureen, who is four, has nightmares that intruders in masks are coming in to get them. Also, Jeannette, who is ten, wakes when somebody is touching her private parts. She recognizes the man's voice; it belongs to a scraggly guy with sunken cheeks who has been hanging about recently. She shouts "pervert" and kicks his hand. Brian runs into the room with a hatchet he keeps by his bed. The man bolts out and Brian and Jeannette run after him. Rex is out and Rose Mary is asleep. They do not find the man, but on their way home they slap each other's hands and decide they have been Pervert Hunting. They look for the man again the next day when their father returns, but they never find the guy. Jeannette asks if they can close the doors and windows when they are going to sleep. But their parents do not want to because they say that everyone needs fresh air.
- Rex is missing the desert and he thinks his family is getting too soft, too dependent on creature comforts. One day, he is furious when he hears on the radio that a mountain lion has been shot by a policeman after being found in somebody's garden. He takes the children to the zoo to demonstrate how animals leave humans alone if they show they are not afraid.

He takes the family to see a cheetah and as he squats outside the fence, the cheetah comes closer. Rex moves his hand slowly into the cage



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and touches the cheetah`s neck, and the cheetah moves his face against his hand. A man calls for them to get back, but they ignore him. Then Jeannette asks if she can pet him and Rex guides her hand, and the cheetah licks her.

A crowd has gathered and a woman tries to pull Jeannette away. Rex says they should leave and as they are walking away the cheetah follows them down the side of the cage.

- One more time, Rex loses his job. He is excluded from the union and the money from Grandma Smith has disappeared. They start scraping by.

Sometimes during school Jeannette has only one meal. When she does not have a quarter to pay for it her compassionate teacher, Mrs. Ellis, helps her. One afternoon, Brian and Jeannette go to look for some bottles in the dumpsters. After that, they change them for some coins. While they are searching for bottles, they find some chocolates. After that, they like to go over there to see if maybe a new chocolate bar is waiting for them.

Maureen does not have friends of the same age in the neighborhood. Thus, she only has imaginary friends. After that, Rose Mary decides Maureen should attend pre-school, but does not want her to wear the thrift-store clothes that the rest of them wear. Rose Mary`s plan is to take them shop-lifting. While she hides a dress, the children cause a ruckus in order to distract the clerk. This only works three or four times until she is asked to pay. Rex starts drinking again. When he comes home



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in a drunken fury the children try to calm him down so Rose Mary can hide.

That year, Rose Mary says she has a good feeling about Christmas and the family can celebrate Christmas on Christmas Day, instead of a week later. From early December on they buy gifts at the thrift-store and also a tree at the gas station. They put all the presents under it and decorate it with Grandma's antique ornaments.

Their mother says they can open the presents after Mass that night. All the children go to church. Unfortunately, Rex has been drinking all day at home and Jeannette tells her mother to allow her father to go to the church. It is a big mistake that Jeannette makes because her father shouts in the church, "Mary was a sweet Jewish broad who gets herself knocked up and Jesus H. Christ is the world's best-loved bastard." (*The Glass Castle* 114)

Then all the family is escorted out onto the street.

At home, Rose Mary gives Rex his present, which is a brass cigarette lighter from the 1920s. He flicks it a couple of times. Then Rex says that he really wants to light up Christmas. He lights the lighter and thrusts it into the dried out tree; instantly, it catches and the ornaments explode. Everyone is too stunned to do anything; they go for blankets and water; in this way they put the fire out, but smash the ornaments and ruin all the presents. Rex sits on the sofa all this time, and laughs and tells



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Jeannette`s mother that he has done her a favor as trees are considered pagan symbols of worship. Nobody says anything and they only just stand there trying to understand that Rex has ruined the Christmas that his family has spent weeks planning.

- By spring Jeannette is almost 10. That year, Rex asks her if there is anything he can do for her now that she is going to be in double digits. She knows he does not mean to buy an extravagant present, such as a pony or a dollhouse, and although she is nervous she asks if he can stop drinking.

The next morning Jeannette`s father tells her that for the next few days he is going to keep himself in his bedroom and he wants the children to steer clear of him.

On the second day of his abstinence, she can hear him groaning. After a week his delirium stops and he is pale, thin and shaking. He spends the summer recuperating. By early fall, he says they are all going on a long camping trip at the Grand Canyon. They all like the idea and pack the car.

Out in the desert Rex asks Jeannette how fast she thinks he can make the car go. She says faster than the speed of light and sees the needle pass 100. Rose Mary asks him to slow down, but this only makes him go faster. Suddenly, there is a clattering noise and the engine dies. He is unable to fix it and says they will have to walk back almost 80 miles.



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Around midday a car stops and a woman gives them a ride. She refers to them as poor people and Jeannette says they are not poor. The woman replies quickly that she has not meant it in that way. Jeannette can tell she has, though, and nobody says much else for the rest of the journey. As soon as she drops them off, their father disappears. Jeannette waits on the front step until bedtime, but he does not come home.

- Three days later, Rex comes home drunk and wants to know where their mother is. He becomes so angry that he pulls Grandma's closet of china over and kicks Brian when he tries to grab his leg. Also, he smashes a chair and throws cutlery around. He finds their mother in the bathroom and he follows her out. She grabs a knife and slashes at the air. The fight ends when he wrestles her to the floor and she finally accepts that she loves him. They laugh and hug each other.

Rex is drinking again, and there is no money. Rose Mary thinks they should move back to his home town, Welch, West Virginia, where Rex's parents live. He hates that idea and he refuses to help his wife. Jeannette's mother has inherited some land in Texas and she receives checks from a company that is hiring it for drilling rights. With that money she buys a car. Rose Mary does not have a valid driver's license. Also, she realizes that she does not have time to ask the teachers for their school records. The Walls family is set to leave their father, but still he refuses to come. When Jeannette shouts from the car window that she



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needs him, Rex runs to the doorway. Then all the family shouts at him again that they need him. At the end, he flicks the cigarette he is smoking, and he climbs in the car and tells Rose Mary that he is going to drive.

CHAPTER III. WELCH

- Their new car, which is an Oldsmobile, is described as 'a clunker' from the time they buy it and they have to tie the hood down to stop it popping up. They have to sleep in the car and Jeannette is embarrassed when they wake to find people surrounding the car and grinning. Rose Mary tells her to enjoy the comic episodes in life more.

They reach Welch in November and at the house of the grandparents a large woman answers the door. She welcomes her son without a smile and says to Rose Mary that it is nice to see her grandchildren before she dies. When Jeannette calls her Grandma, she snaps back that her name is Erma. Grandpa and Uncle Stanley introduce themselves and Jeannette can see no similarities between these people and her father.

There are three bedrooms upstairs, but Erma says nobody has been up there for around ten years because of the rotten floorboards. Uncle Stanley gives them his room in the basement and says he can sleep on a cot in the foyer.



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After dinner, Rose Mary and the children go down to bed. They hear a noise upstairs and Rose Mary goes to investigate. She comes down and says Erma asks the children not to laugh while they are in the house.

- The next day, Rose Mary and Rex take the children for a tour around Welch. The family stops at the river called Tug and Jeannette asks if during the summer they can go fishing and swimming in it. Rex answers no, and he explains that the county has no sewage system, and that when people flush their toilets, the matter goes straight into the river. He also tells them that this river, Tug, has the highest level of fecal bacteria of any river in North America. Welch has old brick buildings; the town is covered with black coal dust.
- Rose Mary takes Brian and Jeannette to see the principal at Welch Elementary School. She explains to him that they have left Phoenix and she has not had time to pack their school records and birth certificates. Rose Mary guarantees the principal that her children are extraordinarily intelligent. When the principal asks some questions, Brian and Jeannette cannot understand his questions. There are differences in their accents; no one can understand the other. Finally, the principal decides they are a bit slow and have speech impediments, so he places them initially in a special class for students with learning disabilities.



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Jeannette is in the fifth grade and her day is divided into periods, with different teachers and classrooms for each. During her first day at school, her favorite subject is History. She also takes English, and her teacher, Miss Caparossi, informs her class that someone there, Jeannette, is thinking that she is better than her and the other students in West Virginia. The teacher belittles her and goads the children to join in. At lunch time, Jeannette is eating her sandwich that only contains a thin smear of lard. She is the last student that leaves the cafeteria. Outside, a half dozen black girls follow her. Those girls surround her and beat her up because they believe Jeannette is better than them.

- When all the children get home, Rose Mary and Rex ask them how the experience was during the first day. All of them answer that everything is OK. Jeannette does not want to speak of what happened to her. The bullying continues for weeks and Jeannette does not tell her parents about it. Dinitia Hewitt is the tall girl who is the leader of these bullies. Jeannette is called poor, ugly and dirty and she thinks it is hard to argue against this.

Jeannette thinks of telling Rex about the fighting, but she does not want to sound like a whiner. Also, she is scared that if she tells Rex he can turn up at school drunk and make things worse. When Jeannette tries to tell her mother about the black girls, her mother says she should tell them how Martin Luther King, Junior would be ashamed of their behavior. Jeannette tries to shame them with her mother's argument and the girls shriek with laughter as they push her to the ground.



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A month after, when Jeannette sees a large mongrel dog cornering a little African-American boy, she threatens the dog with a stick and carries the boy home by piggy back. When she takes him home, she sees Dinitia on the porch across the street and she looks at Jeannette with curiosity.

The next day the gang moves towards her, but Dinitia hangs back and without their leader they lose their sense of purpose. The following week Dinitia asks Jeannette for help on her English assignment. She never apologizes for bullying her, or even refers to it, but she does thank her for bringing her neighbor home.

Erma, Jeannette`s grandmother is racist and because of this Jeannette goes to Dinitia`s house and does not invite her home. Erma refers to Dinita`s neighborhood as Niggerville. While Jeannette is talking to her grandmother, she tells her that the children have been teaching her to never use the word nigger, so the girl tells Erma she is not supposed to use this word. Erma is upset and calls her ungrateful. Later, Jeannette`s mother tells her that she might not agree with Erma but has to be polite. Jeannette sees this as hypocritical and thinks it is based on the fear that Erma might throw them out.

- In Winter Rex and Rose Mary decide to return to Phoenix and say to the children they are going to rescue all the stuff they have left behind. The



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children want to go, but they cannot because it is going to be a quick trip, strictly business.

After a week Rose Mary and Rex leave, and Erma becomes even more cantankerous, and she sexually abuses Brian. She insists that Brian`s britches need mending. Erma goes with Brian to grandfather`s bedroom because there is a sewing kit there. Fortunately, Jeannette hears Brian protesting, and she catches her grandmother kneeling on the floor in front of Brian. Jeannette calls her grandmother a pervert. Lori hears the commotion and comes running. Erma goes to slap Jeannette but Lori stops her and says they should all calm down. Then Erma slaps Lori and knocks her glasses off, and Lori slaps her back. They trade blows again and fly at each other. Brian and Jeannette cheer Lori on and this wakes up Uncle Stanley who separates them.

After that confrontation, they are relegated to the basement. This has its own door that leads outside and they are not even allowed to use the bathroom. Uncle Stanley sometimes sneaks beans down to them, but is afraid to stay as Erma might turn her anger on him.

The following week, a storm hits the town and a foot of snow falls. Erma would not let them use any coal as she says they don`t know how to use the stove. As soon as they return from school, they get into bed and do their homework there.



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Lori, Brian, and Jeannette are in bed when their parents come back from Phoenix. Erma talks to them about her grievances against them. Rex comes down and he is furious with them. Jeannette tells him they are just protecting themselves. When Rex goes back upstairs, Jeannette asks Lori if she thinks the same thing that happened to Brian can have happened to Rex. Jeannette realizes that it can be a reason why her father drinks so much, or refuses to come to West Virginia. Lori says to try not to think about things like that or it will make her crazy.

- Jeannette's parents explain that their house in Phoenix has been ransacked by looters. They have rented a trailer to carry all the stuff that is left in Phoenix. The car breaks down in Nashville, and they have to abandon it along with the trailer. Then they catch the bus to Welch.

When Rex and Rose Mary are talking to Erma, she does not want to forgive the children. They are still banished to the basement and so they decide to find somewhere else to live. Jeannette asks to return to live in Phoenix. Jeannette's parents find a house they can afford. It has no indoor plumbing, it has three rooms, it does not have a bathroom, and Rex confesses he cannot afford to turn the electricity on. The house costs one thousand dollars and they do not have to make a down payment, but have to pay fifty dollars a month. Rex says they will not be living there for too long and they are buying this because of the land that comes with it. He says they can build their new house, the Glass Castle, there.



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All the family moves in that afternoon to Ninety-three Little Hobart Street. There is not much to move. Rex finds some tables and chairs, so he builds some makeshift closets, shelves, and bunk beds. He also brings home a four-drawer dresser and the children also have a wooden box each for their personal stuff. Jeannette places her geode in this. They call the kitchen the loose juice room because on the rare occasions the electricity is on they receive shocks from the damp or metal surfaces. Every time it rains outside, it rains in the kitchen too. The children try to patch the roof, but they cannot do it. Rose Mary, Lori and Jeannette try to make their own dresses.

- Rex has shown the children the spot where they are going to build the Glass Castle. After that, Jeannette and her brother decide to make the best of living there. The children dig a hole in the garden where the foundations and basement would be for the Glass Castle. Later, Rex says they should throw the garbage into this hole as a temporary measure because the family has not paid for their garbage to be picked up.

Unexpectedly, because of the rubbish, there is a large river rat that appears in their house. Jeannette calls Brian and he throws a cast-iron skillet at it, and the rat hisses back at them. That night, Maureen, who is now aged five, is frightened to go to sleep and she keeps saying the rat is coming for her. Fortunately, Jeannette turns on the light and they see the rat crouching on Maureen's lavender blanket a few inches from her face. She screams and pushes her covers off and the rat lands on the floor.



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Jeannette tries to kill it with a broom but it dodges her and Brian can hit it with a baseball bat. Finally, Tinkle, their dog, catches it in his jaws and kills it. When Rose Mary comes into the room, she says she feels sorry for the rat; it needs to eat too, and she says it deserves a name; she calls the rat Rufus.

After this incident with the rat, Jeannette sleeps with the baseball bat near her bed and Brian has the machete. Maureen can hardly sleep at all and she dreams that rats are eating her. Jeannette is worried about their garbage outside the house because the hole is almost filled up, but Rose Mary does not care about that. Jeannette wants to make improvements with the house, so she decides to paint the house with some yellow paint that Rex has brought. When Rose Mary sees Jeannette painting the porch she thinks that yellow houses are tacky. But neither her parents nor siblings are impressed. Jeannette cannot continue painting during the freeze because the paint will be ruined.

- Children like to play in Little Hobart Street. Brian plays tackle football and most of the girls, like Jeannette, love their afternoons sitting on the brick wall surrounding the armory, combing their hair, and touching up their lip gloss. Cindy Thompson desires to be Jeannette`s friend, but she really wants to recruit her for the junior Ku Klux Klan.

A few miners live in Welch, but most people are unemployed. Most of the mothers have no husbands. Some of the fathers have black lung.



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Jeannette`s family is the poorest family in Welch. When teachers give them bags of clothes, Rose Mary and Rex refuse any form of help or charity and they say they can take care of their own.

Jeannette meets the Hall family. All the children are born mentally retarded and all of them live with their parents. Jeannette meets Kenny Hall, the oldest one; he is forty-two years old. The children in Welch tease him and tell him that he can go on a date with Jeannette if he does something for them. One Saturday night Jeannette has to explain to him that she does not date older men and she will not go out with him.

The Pastor family is the toughest family in Jeannette`s neighborhood on Little Hobart Street. Ginnie Sue Pastor is the town whore in Welch. She is thirty-three years old and has 9 children. Ginnie is married to Clarence Pastor who has black lung, but he never smiles or waves at passerbys.

Kathy is Ginnie Sue Pastor's oldest daughter. In school Kathy is bothered for being the daughter of a whore. Kathy and Jeannette become friends. While both girls are on the way home from school, Jeannette relates her experiences in California. Kathy is fascinated and she convinces Jeannette to come to her house to tell her mother about life in California.

Jeannette decides to go and visit the Pastor family. Inside the house she meets "Sweet Man," the youngest of Ginnie`s children. Ginnie



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teaches Jeannette a great deal about the realities of life and what you are willing to do to put food on the table.

- Welch is the most violent town the Walls Family has lived in. A lot of children want to fight with them, but they usually fight back as a team. When Jeannette is ten years old, and her brother, Brian, is nine, they have a fight with Ernie Goad. This boy does not like Brian and Jeannette. Ernie bothers them by saying they live in garbage because they are garbage. Although this is true, Jeannette gets mad. Every day Ernie and some of his friends go to Jeannette`s house and they throw rocks into the house. Jeannette and Brian start working on a plan in order to keep those terrible boys away. The siblings work together to defend each other, and in this way they create a catapult. They end the problem by catapulting rocks at the bad children.
- A great advantage of summer is that children have more light by which to read. Rose Mary usually goes to the Welch public library, and she brings two pillowcases full of novels, biographies, and histories. Except for Rex, all members of the family are obsessive readers. Lori is described as the most obsessive. She loves *The Lord of the Rings*, whereas Jeannette prefers books concerned with people dealing with hardships such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Lord of the Flies* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Jeannette identifies with the central character, Francie Nolan, in the last book mentioned. Francie is identical to her in the way she sees the good in her father.



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One night that summer when her father comes home with his head and face matted with blood, Jeannette worries about him. She wants to know how he got hurt. Rex asks her to sew up the gash on his arm. At the beginning Jeannette cannot do it, but her father says he would do it by himself, except he cannot do it with his left hand. In addition, he is so pickled that he cannot feel it. The next morning Jeannette leaves the house and her father is asleep. When she comes back in the evening, Rex is gone.

- There are two ways the family has food to eat. The first is when Rex returns after disappearing for days bringing food. The second one is when Rose Mary receives a check from the oil company. Jeannette and Brian become expert foragers. Sometimes they find food, like apples and wild blackberries, outdoors.

When Jeannette starts sixth grade, other kids from the school make fun of her and Brian because they are so skinny. During the lunchtime both of them like to read. Jeannette always says that she has forgotten her food. No one believes her, however, and she starts hiding in the bathroom. Over there, lunch bags are thrown away and she retrieves what is left.

Jeannette realizes that Rose Mary is weirdly getting heavier. This is explained when one night when Rex is not at home and they have nothing to eat Rose Mary disappears under the blanket on her bed. Brian notices she is chewing something. She denies it, but he throws her cover back



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and reveals she has been eating a huge family-sized Hershey chocolate bar. She has already eaten half of it and starts crying, saying she cannot help it and says she is addicted to sugar just as their father is addicted to alcohol. She says they should forgive her like they do him. The children say nothing, and Brian divides the bar into four pieces and they wolf it down.

- During winter Jeannette wears the same coat with no buttons that she been wearing since the family first came to Welch. There are forty-two coal retailers in Welch, so coal is cheap in that area. But Rose Mary says there is no room in the budget for it. Jeannette and Brian desire to have a warm house; for this reason they start collecting pieces that fall off a lorry; they fill only half of the bucket, and they tend to collect wood. Brian also notices that their home is the only one with no snow on the roof, and that they therefore have absolutely no insulation. Rose Mary says they might not have heat, but they do have each other. It is so cold there are icicles inside the house and they even wear their coats to bed. The children like to sleep with the dogs, Tinkle and Pippin, because they keep them warm. Brian sleeps with Iggy, an iguana, against his chest to keep it warm. One night, it freezes to death.

In January the snow starts melting. When the wood is too damp to light, the Walls use kerosene to help start the fire. Once it explodes when Lori uses it and her thighs are scorched. For weeks, the fronts of her legs are open sores.



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One day in winter, Jeannette goes to the house of her classmate, Carrie Mae Blankenship, because she needs to work on a school project. She learns what a thermostat is and desires that her family have one in the house on Little Hobart Street to keep them warm during the winter.

- During the second winter in Welch Erma dies. Rex says her liver has failed and Jeannette's mother sees it as a slow form of suicide and says Erma drank herself to death. At the funeral, Jeannette can see her father is distraught and notices it is the first time she has seen him wearing a tie.

As the family walks home, Rose Mary asks the children if they have anything nice to say about Erma now she has passed away. After a long silence, Lori says, ding-dong, the witch is dead and Jeannette and Brian snicker. Rex looks angrily at them and says they make him ashamed. After that, he turns to go to Junior's bar and they watch him. Lori shouts, you are ashamed of us? Rex does not pay attention and keeps walking. Four days later, Rex has not come home and Rose Mary sends Jeannette to find her father since he has said he likes her best. She tracks him down, she is asking for him at Junior's bar, Howdy House, and the Pub. Finally, Jeannette finds her father, but he does not want to leave the bar; he orders a Coca-Cola for his daughter and a shot of whisky for himself. When Rex leaves with Jeannette he falls down before he reaches the door. A man gives them a lift. Rex is singing aloud, and Jeannette is talking to the man at the bar about what she wants to be, either a veterinarian or a geologist, specializing in the Miocene period. She also



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tells him how geodes are formed. The man interrupts her and says that she has big plans.

A couple of months after the death of Erma, Uncle Stanley falls asleep while reading comic books, and while smoking, and their house burns down. He and his father move to an apartment and this has a bathroom which the Walls family uses.

One time when Jeannette is sitting next to her uncle, her mother is in the other room working on a crossword puzzle, and Lori is in the bath. Her uncle touches her thigh and starts to masturbate. Jeannette tells her mother about this incident and the only thing that Rose Mary says is "Poor Stanley. He is so lonely." (*The Glass Castle* 184)

She asks Jeannette if she is okay and Jeannette nods and shrugs. Lastly, Jeannette refuses to go back to Grandpa's and she decides to take a bath at her home.

In the spring, the rains come and the ceiling in the kitchen and on Brian and Maureen's side of the bedroom starts leaking. Everything in the house is damp and Rose Mary falls through a rotten step and falls down the hillside; she has bruises on her legs and arms for weeks. The porch and railing have also started to rot and it is now dangerous to go to the toilet at night as it means a 10 foot drop to the ground. Rose Mary agrees with Jeannette that something has to be done, so they decide to buy a



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bucket to use as a toilet. When it is full, someone has to carry it outside, dig a hole and empty it.

- Jeannette and Brian are outside scrounging on their land. Suddenly Brian finds a diamond ring. They test it to see if it is real, and think of how they can buy food and pay off the house as there has been talk of an eviction. They might even buy some sneakers for each of them.

They show the ring to their mother, Rose Mary, and she says she needs to have it appraised. When she returns, she says it is a genuine two-carat diamond. Jeannette asks what it is worth and Rose Mary says it does not matter as she is keeping it to replace the wedding ring her mother has bought her, and Rex has pawned. Jeannette says that they can buy a lot of food and Rose Mary agrees but says it can also improve her self-esteem and adds that this is even more vital at times like these.

Jeannette, who is twelve years old, is advising her mother that she should leave her husband. If she leaves him they would qualify for government aid. Rose Mary is opposed to welfare because she thinks they are going to be a charity case. Jeannette tells her mother that she should get a job, and when she has a salary they can move into a little apartment. Rose Mary does not like the idea saying that it sounds like an awful life. Then Rose Mary smiles and she looks worried. She says she cannot leave her husband as she is a Catholic and adds that she is an excitement addict.



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- Jeannette lives the hottest summer in June; she and her brother have been swimming in the public pool but they are deterred after Ernie Goad and his friends tell everyone they live in garbage. These boys say that Jeannette and Brian need to be ejected to prevent an outbreak at the pool. After that, both siblings decide to leave the pool. A week later, Jeannette runs into Dinitia Hewitt downtown. Dinitia asks her to come swimming with her in the morning, which is when African-Americans use the pool. Jeannette worries if anybody would mind about her presence there and Dinitia says only her own kind might, but they would not be there. The next morning they go swimming together, and Jeannette is accepted by the other women. All the morning Jeannette stays in the pool and records that she never felt cleaner.
- In the afternoon after Jeannette has been swimming, she is alone in the house. A man from the Child Welfare knocks on the door. Jeannette will not let him in and denies they are neglected as a report has said. She says her father works and he is developing a technology to burn low-grade bituminous coal safely and efficiently. Also she tells him her mother is an artist, writer and a teacher. He leaves saying he will return to talk to them, but never does.

When he leaves, Jeannette is furious but also thinks there is no reason she is going to lose her siblings or send her siblings to live with different families. She wants the family to leave Welch, yet recognizes they are stuck.



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Rose Mary returns home and Jeannette tells her mother about the visit. She also says that since she refuses to leave Rex, the government could split the family. Instead of answering her back, her mother begins painting. She paints a picture of a woman in water; she is drowning in a stormy lake. When she finishes, Jeannette asks what she is going to do. Her mother finally snaps that she will get a job, and throws her paintbrush into a jar.

- There are no qualified teachers in McDowell County and Rose Mary finds a job by the end of the week. In that time, all the family tries to clean the house in case the Child Welfare man returns.

Rose Mary works in a town called Davy, which is 12 miles away, north of Welch. She has to get a ride from another teacher called Lucy Jo Rose. Lucy Jo resents Rose Mary for this duty and treats Rose Mary as though she is a dirty person.

When Rose Mary gets paid their troubles are over. She buys appliances for the home, and they usually go grocery shopping. At the end of the month, they have only one dollar for dinner. The children are worried about the money and they think that Rose Mary will spend the money on herself or maybe she will give it to Rex. Lori and Jeannette want to manage the budget in a better way.

- Jeannette attends Welch High School, and she is in seventh grade. Dinitia goes there too. That summer morning Jeannette and Dinitia have spent



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the happiest time swimming in the pool. But she never invites Jeannette back. Both girls pass notes to each other in study hall, but they know the negative attitudes of others about them being together.

By this time Dinitia has changed and Jeannette relates how her spark has gone. Also, Dinitia starts drinking alcohol at school and just before Christmas she passes Jeannette a note saying she thinks she might be pregnant. After the holidays she does not come back to school, and after a month, Jeannette goes to her home. A man with yellow eyes answers and says she does not want to see her. Later, they all learn Dinitia has been arrested for stabbing her mother's boyfriend to death.

While girls speak endlessly about boyfriends and losing their virginity, Jeannette knows that the boys are dangerous. Also, no one pays her any attention, and Ernie Goad calls her pork chop ugly. By this he means she is so ugly she will have to tie a pork chop around her neck if she wants a dog to play with her.

Jeannette is six feet tall, pale with bright red hair and prominent teeth. She decides to make her own braces. She knows that her parents cannot pay for them. As a result, she starts working as a babysitter and she does other kids' homework for cash. After discovering the price of braces, Jeannette cannot afford them. She makes a contraption out of rubber bands and a coat hanger and wears this while in bed.



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- That year, Jeannette starts working for the school newspaper, *The Maroon Wave*. She wants to join a group where she feels she will belong and no money is required to be a member.

When Rex was a teenager in high school, Jeanette Bivens was the high school English teacher and also the faculty adviser for the newspaper. She was the English teacher of Jeannette's father. She encouraged Rex to write and submit a poem, "Summer Storm", to a state-wide competition. When he won the first prize, one of his teachers speculated aloud saying that it was amazing that the son of two lowlife alcoholics like Ted and Erma Walls could have written it. After that, Rex decided to walk out of school, but Miss Bivens convinced him to return to earn his diploma. Rex had named Jeannette because of this teacher, but her mother added an extra N to make it sound more elegant and French.

Jeannette is the only seventh grader who works for *The Wave* and starts as a proof reader. She works in the office of the local newspaper, which is where *The Maroon Wave* is printed, and keeps warm at the same time. One of the women complains about the smell coming from her and on Miss Bivens' advice Jeannette tries to keep cleaner. Jeannette realizes that she needs to go back to Grandpa and Uncle Stanley's home for a weekly bath.

While in the office, she watches the reporters and editors going about their business, and their jobs appeal to her. She has thought of



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writing as working in isolation as her mother does, but she notices that writing is in touch with the rest of the world. When she finishes what she has to do, she reads the stories on the wire service. Earlier, she has only known what was going on in the world through her parents. Now she feels as though she is getting the whole story for the first time.

- Jeannette feels she is not protecting Maureen. For her seventh birthday, Lori and Brian and Jeannette save money to get her a special present. Maureen likes to hear stories about California and she thinks of it as a magical place of light and warmth. Also, she appears to be the happiest of the siblings who spends most of her time with the families of her friends. A lot of these are Pentecostal and their parents try to save her soul.

At the end of the school year, Rose Mary has to write a complete meltdown. Instead of writing the students evaluations she has been painting and she cannot bear to face the principal. Jeannette cannot believe her mother is acting like this at thirty-eight. The only thing Jeannette realizes and promises herself is that her life will not be like this when she is that age.

Lori thinks her mother has it tougher than the rest of the family as she is married to Rex. Jeannette disagrees and thinks her mother should be stronger and then she would be able to manage her husband. Jeannette has a chance to test this theory that summer because her mother goes to Charleston to renew her teaching certificate and Lori goes



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to a summer camp for students with special aptitudes. Jeannette is thirteen when she is the head of the household.

Her mother gives her two hundred dollars and this is to pay the bills and buy food for two months. For the first week this is fine, and then her father starts to ask for five dollars and then twenty and she does not like to refuse him.

On Saturday, Rex tells Jeannette that he is going to pay, but he has to earn some money. Rex wants her to accompany him on a business trip. He borrows a car and drives them to a roadside bar at a nearby town. Rex buys them both a beer even though she wants Sprite. Then Rex goes to play pool. A man called Robbie joins her; she smiles at him. They dance together and Jeannette expects her father to tell him off. He does not do this, but does ask him to play pool.

Her father holds back at first but then raises the stakes and starts winning. Robbie dances with her after every game and this goes on for a couple of hours with Robbie getting increasingly drunk. After Robbie loses some money, he says it is enough. This guy wants Jeannette to come upstairs to his apartment to listen to a record.

She is uncertain, but her father winks and tells her to holler if she needs him. When Jeannette goes upstairs, she sees two other men are there and they grin wolfishly at Robbie. She and Robbie dance, but after this he pushes her on his bed. He tries to kiss her, so Jeannette is angry



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with her father; she does not shout for his help, but shows Robbie her scars and he lets her go.

On the way home, Rex takes out the money he has won and gives some to her. She feels like throwing it at him, but she knows they need it. Jeannette tells him how Robbie tried to attack her and he tried to touch her. Then he compares it to the time he threw her in the spring to teach her to swim and knew that she would be okay.

- Rex disappears the next evening. When he comes back home, Jeannette refuses to go with him to other bars. Rex still asks for money. Also, He cashes a check meant for Rose Mary. After that, Rex disappears; the family does not have money. Lastly, Jeannette realizes what her mother is up against.

Jeannette finds work in a shop called Becker's Jewel Box in McDowell Street. She is thirteen but she says she is 17. Becker hires her and pays her forty dollars a week. She likes the job, but she is furious that he does not trust her when she is on her own. When a woman comes over from another of his stores, she gives Jeannette some beauty tips. Also she tells Jeannette that she is paid commission on her sales. Later, Jeannette asks her boss about commission and he tells her she is only an assistant and she is not a salesperson. The next day she steals a watch which she likes so much. At home Jeannette sees the watch and she is scared that someone will ask for the watch. In this way, she will have to explain how



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she got it. Finally, she decides to return it; however, when she realizes she will never be able to wear it, she is glad to return it.

- In late August Lori returns home from her summer-camp. Lori starts talking about her great experiences living outside of Welch. Lori thinks if the family wants to live in a different way, if they want to have a shot at a happy life, they should move away from Welch. A few days later, Rose Mary comes back and tells them she has been living her life for other people and intends to quit her job and devote herself to art. Jeannette explains she has changed over the summer. She tells her mother to go back to work, but she does not want to do anything. After that, Jeannette tells Rose Mary that if she wants to be treated like a mother she should act like one.

Her father reprimands her for this and Jeannette asks them why they do not act like parents. They argue and he insists she apologize, but she does not. He takes off his belt and tells her to bend over. She thinks if he beats her he will lose her forever and calls his bluff. Nevertheless, he hits her six times on the thighs.

She walks out of the kitchen and sees her mother outside the door. Her mother says nothing, but Jeannette can see her triumphant expression. She goes out and runs into the woods; Jeannette makes two important decisions. The first is that this is the last whipping she will have. The second one is that, like Lori, she is leaving Welch as soon as



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possible; it does not matter if she does not finish high school. She starts saving money; she buys a plastic piggy bank. She puts in seventy-five dollars from her job and this is the beginning of her escape fund.

- During fall two filmmakers, Ken Fink and Bob Gross, from New York City show up at their school. These men are different from anyone they have ever met. They have been sent as part of a government cultural enrichment program. One weekend they show a Swedish film and afterwards Lori shows them some of her illustrations. They tell her she is talented and say she needs to go to New York if she is serious about being an artist.

That winter Jeannette decides she wants to go to New York City; Lori and Jeannette come up with a plan that winter. Lori will leave in June after graduating and Jeannette will follow as soon as she can. They start saving together and both work at various jobs to do so. Brian also pitches in with money from work, such as gardening. This all goes into their piggy bank, which they call Oz. They keep this in their bedroom and can only get to the money by breaking it.

One day that winter, Rex buys a new car, a Cadillac. Rose Mary is not teaching anymore, so she spends time painting. On weekends they load the car with Rose Mary's paintings and try to sell them at craft fairs throughout West Virginia. These visits remind Jeannette how easy it is to move on when the urge strikes.



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- As spring approaches, it is almost time to travel to New York. Rose Mary agrees that Lori go to a big city. She advises her to go to Cooper Union art school. One night, Rex comes home drunk. When Lori is working on a sculpture which will help her achieve a scholarship, her father ruins it.

Jeannette says Lori should still go to New York even if she is not accepted in an art school. Lori can take the money they save to live on until she finds a job. One evening in May, Jeannette finds the piggy bank has been broken into and Rex goes missing for three days. They have been saving money for almost nine months. After three days Rex comes home and he denies it; he offers them some money, which they let fall to the floor.

Lori is worried because she thinks she will never get out of her house. Jeannette encourages Lori to leave, and thinks if her sister does not she will not either. Jeannette has another plan to save money; she buys a purse and she wears this on a belt under her clothes. When it becomes too full, she shoves the money in a sock and hides this in a hole in a wall.

When school ends they only have thirty seven dollars, but one of the teachers, Miss Sanders, offers Jeannette a job for the summer which she passes on to Lori. This involves babysitting during the summer in Iowa. She is going to earn two hundred dollars and also she is going to have a ticket to New York.



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When she leaves, she hugs everybody, except Rex. She has not spoken to him since he took their money and as the car drives away she does not look back once.

- That fall Jeannette is going into tenth grade and Miss Bivens makes her the news editor of the paper *The Maroon Wave*. Rose Mary buys a camera and Jeannette takes pictures to send to Lori. Jeannette begins to go to different extracurricular events at the school. She spends time in Miss Bivens's classroom, where she writes articles or edits stories. In the darkroom she develops her photographs, but after school, she works.

When Jeannette is a junior, Miss Bivens makes her the editor in chief. After that Jeannette tries to raise the circulation of the paper with various schemes, and it doubles when she starts up a column called Birthday Corner. This lists the names of students who have a birthday coming up that month.

That year Welch High School has a visitor called Chuck Yeager. He is a man from West Virginia. Also, he is a war hero, and aviation pioneer. He has to give a motivational speech in Welch High School. Chuck Yeager is Rex's hero and he is very excited to hear that he is coming. Jeannette carries out an interview with him for the school newspaper called *The Maroon Wave*.

- Lori writes regularly from New York and tells them how she loves it there. She lives in a hotel in Greenwich Village, and she works as a waitress in a



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German restaurant. Also she takes art classes. Jeannette starts 11th grade and from that time she counts off the months until she will join her sister. During the middle of her junior year, the school guidance counselor tries to persuade Jeannette to stay local, but Jeannette realizes she is not even that interested in graduating from Welch school.

Jeannette wants to leave home in five months. She tells her parents about her plans and Rex leaves without saying a word. Rose Mary looks sad and Jeannette tells her she will write. Her mother replies that she is not upset because she will miss her, but because, “you get to go to New York and I’m stuck here. It’s not fair.” (*The Glass Castle* 237) Only Lori and Brian agree with Jeannette’s plans, but Rex does not like the idea and he hardly speaks to her. However, one night in spring he comes to Jeannette and asks her to look at his old blueprints of the Glass Castle. She has not seen these for ages and they have not spoken of it since the foundations had been filled with garbage.

Because Lori has gone, Rex tells Jeannette he is reconfiguring the layout and Jeannette’s room will be bigger. She stares at these precise plans. Then Jeannette says that he will never build it. He asks if she has faith in him and she replies that she is leaving in three months anyway. He says that she can study locally and work at *The Welch Daily News*. Also, he swears that he will build the Glass Castle. Jeannette tells him to go ahead and build it, but not for her, as she is leaving.



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- The last days of May, it is the last day of school. Miss Bivens tells her she thinks she will do all right up there. Jeannette packs her clothes and binds copies of *The Maroon Wave*. Jeannette wants to leave everything else of the past behind. She gives her geode to Maureen.

Jeannette cannot sleep that night, and her bus leaves at 7.10 am. Rose Mary is not an early riser, so she says she will not be getting up to see her off. Also, she knows that farewells are too sentimental. When she leaves the house that morning, she sees her father sitting outside. Rex insists on carrying her suitcase. At the station, he pulls out his favorite jackknife and gives it to her. Rex says he will feel better knowing she has it. Also, he tells her if things do not work out she can always come back home and he will be there for her. She knows this is true, but also knows she will never be coming back.

CHAPTER IV. NEW YORK CITY

- When Jeannette arrives at the terminal in New York, she hears someone calling her name. He is Evan, who is Lori's friend, and he is waiting for her because Lori is working. Jeannette gets lost a couple of times, so she has to ask directions. She finds a job at a burger bar on Fourteenth Street. She earns eighty dollars a week. In the middle of summer, Lori finds them an apartment in the South Bronx. It is bigger than their entire house in Welch on Little Hobart Street. Jeannette's favorite room is the bathroom because it has a black and white tile floor, a toilet, and a tub.



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In the fall, Lori helps Jeannette to find a public school where students sign up for internships rather than classes. In this way Jeannette works at a weekly newspaper called *The Phoenix* on Atlantic Avenue in downtown Brooklyn. When Jeannette has turned eighteen, she is given a job there and that spring she has never been happier. She earns a hundred and twenty-five dollars a week.

Jeannette writes long letters to Brian and he writes back to say how things are deteriorating further. Rex is drunk all the time except when he is in jail. Maureen is more or less living with neighbors. When Jeannette calls Brian to know if he wants to come to New York to join them, he immediately accepts. Brian finishes his junior high school, and he goes to New York City. He finds a job in an ice cream parlor in Brooklyn. Brian usually waits for Jeannette after her work ends and they take the subway home together on the South Bronx.

Jeannette does not care if she isn't going to college as she is working as a journalist already at *The Phoenix*. Mike Armstrong, her boss, encourages her to go to college. Also, he says she can come back to this position if she ever wants to. Lori's friend tells her that Columbia University is the best in New York. Since that university only took men at that time she applied to its sister college, Barnard, and she was accepted.

Jeannette receives grants and loans to pay the steep tuition fees and has some savings too. She works answering telephones at a Wall



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Street firm to pay the remaining amount. Jeannette moves to an Upper West Side apartment where she lives with a psychologist. Over there she has a room, but she has to take care of two children. On weekends she works in an art gallery and as an editorial assistant on one of the biggest magazines in the city.

Their parents call from Grandpa's home with more and more bad news. Lori announces it is time for Maureen to move to New York City. She is only twelve, but Lori says she will take care of her. Rose Mary agrees to the idea, but Rex accuses Lori of stealing his children. During the winter Maureen arrives and she enrolls in a good public school in Manhattan. On weekends, they all meet up at Lori's apartment where they eat and talk about Welch.

- Jeannette has been in New York for over three years. One morning when she is preparing for class, she is listening to the radio. The announcer reports that there is a traffic jam on the New Jersey turnpike. A van has broken down and clothes and furniture have spilled on the road. That night the psychologist tells Jeannette that her parents are in New York City. Jeannette asks them if it has been their van that has broken down, and Rose Mary admits it, saying "yes".

Jeannette's parents rent a room in a boarding house a few blocks from Lori's apartment. In a couple of months they are thrown out for not paying the rent. After that, they move to a flophouse but are kicked out



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after Rex sets their room on fire when he falls asleep with a lit cigarette in his hand.

Brian thinks his parents should be made to be self-sufficient, but Lori agrees to take them for just one week or two, but this turns into four months. Rex's drinking is a problem and Brian says Rex can stay with him if he follows his rules. Rex refuses this and sleeps in the van. Lori asks Rose Mary to clean out the apartment but she refuses to do that. Finally, she goes with their dog, Tinkle, to live in the van with Rex. They live there for a few months, but one night they have left the van in a no parking zone and it is towed away. After that, they sleep on a park bench, and they are homeless.

- Rex and Rose Mary learn to live as homeless people. Rose Mary says living in that way is an adventure. As fall comes and the weather cools, they spend more time in the libraries which are warm and comfortable. Rose Mary works her way through Balzac and Rex has become interested in chaos theory and he reads about *Los Alamos Science* and *The Journal of Statistical Physics*.

Jeannette does not know what to do about them and she has grown tired of taking on people who ridicule them. Also, this is one of the reasons why she does not own up about them and their circumstances to Professor Fuchs. One day this professor is talking about homeless and she is explaining about the origin of homeless. Jeannette has said maybe



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sometimes people get the lives they want. Professor Fuchs asks her what she knows about the lives of the underprivileged. The other students stare at Jeannette and she replies, “You have a point.” (*The Glass Castle* 257)

- In January, it is freezing and chunks of ice the size of cars are floating down the Hudson River. The shelters fill quickly, but Jeannette’s parents hate them anyway and they prefer to sleep in the pews of the churches. When these are full, Rex goes to a shelter and Rose Mary and their dog go to Lori’s apartment. At these times, Rose Mary’s facade will crack and she will cry, saying that life in the street can be hard.

For a while, Jeannette considers leaving college, Barnard, in order to help her parents. But Lori convinces her that this won’t be a good idea and it will break their father’s heart. Rex is very proud that he has a daughter studying at an Ivy League college. Also, Brian points out that their parents have options, such as working or moving back to West Virginia or Phoenix. Rose Mary has a collection of antique Indian jewelry including the diamond Brian has found, and the property in Phoenix and land in Texas. Jeannette meets with Rose Mary at a coffee shop to talk about these options that her mother has. Jeannette’s mother says that she has spent all her life taking care of other people and now it is time that someone take care of her. Rose Mary does not want to sell any of her jewelry or properties.

- Rose Mary and Rex survive the winter, but every time Jeannette sees them they look a little worse for the wear. In the spring, Rose Mary tells



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Jeannette that her father has tuberculosis. She visits him in the hospital and he tells her he has been reading more about the chaos theory and particularly a study of the transition between order and turbulence by Mitchell Feigenbaum. This has led him to think there is a possibility that God exists.

- Rex stays in the hospital for six weeks and he does not only beat tuberculosis, but he has been sober longer than any time since his detox in Phoenix. He knows he will start drinking again if he goes back on the streets. Rex finds a job as a maintenance man in an upstate resort. He tries to persuade Rose Mary to join him there, but she refuses.

Rex calls Jeannette from time to time and he says how he enjoys his work and how he is staying sober. During winter in November, Jeannette receives a call from Brian and he tells her that Rose Mary has persuaded Rex to quit his job and return to New York. She asks Brian if he thinks he will start drinking again; Brian says he has already.

The children all have their own lives now as Jeannette is in college; Lori is an illustrator at a comic-book company, and she lives with Maureen who attends high school. Brian has become a warehouse foreman and is serving in the auxiliary forces until he is old enough to take the police entrance examination.

That Christmas Rose Mary suggests they celebrate Christmas at Lori's apartment. Jeannette buys her mother an antique silver cross and



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her father warm clothes and when he opens the present he says she must be ashamed of him and walks out of the apartment. Their mother says they have to see it from his point of view as all this money has been spent on him when their presents are from the streets. Jeannette supposes her mother does not want her gift, but Rose Mary says she loves getting presents.

- By the following summer, Rose Mary and Rex have been three years on the streets. In August Rex asks to talk to Jeannette about her course selection for that year. She tells him she is thinking of dropping out as she still owes one thousand for her tuition fees and he asks why she has not told him sooner. After a week Rex calls her. Then he meets her at Lori's home where he gives her nine hundred and fifty dollars in cash. Also, he gives her a mink coat which he says can raise at least fifty dollars. He wins the money at poker and both parents have insisted that she take the money.
- A month later, Jeannette's mother tells her that Rose Mary and Rex have found a place to live. It is an abandoned building on the Lower East Side. They are squatting and she says how they are like the pioneers who helped tame the Wild West.

Jeannette goes to see them and notes how neglected and similar it is to their house in Welch. Her parents are clearly proud, and they have made friends in the neighborhood.



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That spring Jeannette graduates from Barnard. Only Brian comes to the ceremony because Lori and Maureen have to work. Rose Mary says it will be a lot of boring speeches and does not come. Jeannette wants to invite Rex but dares not risk him turning up drunk. She tells him this explanation and he accepts it, saying: "I don't have to see my Mountain Goat grabbing a sheepskin to know she's got a college degree." (*The Glass Castle* 267)

Jeannette has been dating a man called Eric for several years. He is Lori's friend and he comes from a wealthy family. When Jeannette is looking for a roommate, Eric tells her that she can move in with him. Jeannette goes to live with Eric on Park Avenue.

- Jeannette invites her parents to visit, but her father never comes as he says he will feel out of place. Rose Mary goes to visit her. Jeannette asks her if she can do anything to help her and Rex because now she has a good job and she can improve their lives. Rose Mary says they do not need anything, but they are very worried about her. Rose Mary asks where her values have gone.

This question of values is related to Jeannette's work. She has been given a weekly column about the movers and shakers. She is invited to dozens of parties a week, art-gallery openings, benefit balls, private dinners, and others. While working in this environment Jeannette is convinced that she will not keep her job if people find out the truth about her parents. She feels she is a liar when she avoids talking about them.



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- Jeannette says that living with Eric is calm and predictable. After four years together they get married.

Shortly after the marriage, Jeannette's uncle, Jim, dies in Arizona. Rose Mary asks Jeannette to do her a favor. She and Jim have inherited a half each of the land in West Texas. Rose Mary wants to keep the land in the family. The land costs a million dollars and Jeannette thinks it is a lot of money. Rose Mary explains to her that the land has value to her. Also, Rose Mary says her father taught her to never sell land. Whatever Jeannette asks her, she continues saying it is important to keep land in the family. Jeannette tells her it is too much money, and her mother says she is disappointed in her.

- Lori is working as a freelance artist, and Brian joins the police force as soon as he turns twenty. Maureen has graduated from high school and enrolls in college, but she never applies herself and ends up living with Rose Mary and Rex. Sometimes she works as a bartender or waitress. The longer she stays there, the more lost she becomes. Since she was a kid she has been with someone who has taken care of her. While Rex calls her a sick puppy, she calls him a worthless drunk.

Jeannette tries to talk to Maureen about her future, but Maureen says she only wants to fight the Mormon cults that have kidnapped thousands of people in Utah.



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Jeannette tells their mother that Maureen needs professional help, but her mother denies it. The doctors say she needs to seek her own help or be placed under an order of court. Six months later Maureen stabs Rose Mary. This happens after Rose Mary tells her to move out, to develop a little self-sufficiency. Maureen snaps, and Rose Mary insists she has not meant to kill her. She needs stitches, though, and the police are called.

In court, she is denied bail and in the hallway they argue with each other about whose fault it is that Maureen has done this. Maureen is sent to an upstate hospital. After one year Maureen is released, and she decides to travel to California. Jeannette thinks they should stop her, but Brian approves she should get away from them.

Maureen does not want anyone to see her off. Jeannette gets up when she is scheduled to leave and thinks about her as her bus is pulling away, and says she is sorry, sorry for everything.

- After this event with Maureen, Jeannette hardly sees her parents. Brian is married, has a child and lives on Long Island. Lori lives in her apartment near the Port Authority. She is in touch with, but independent of, her parents.

One year after Maureen leaves for California, Jeannette gets a call from Rex and he asks her to come to the Lower East Side. Also, Rex asks her to buy a bottle of vodka. Jeannette thinks that the real reason that he



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needs her is because of the liquor. She calls her mother to corroborate that Rex is sick, and he really is.

When Jeannette arrives, Rex tells her he is dying. They talk all night and she apologizes for not inviting him to her graduation. Rex says that it does not matter to him and he adds that he is really proud of her. Rex says whenever he thinks of her he figures he must have done something right. She says, “course you did.” Before leaving, Jeannette kisses her parents and leaves.

- Two weeks later, Rex has a heart attack. When Jeannette reaches the hospital, her father is in the emergency room and his eyes are closed. Rose May and Lori are close to him, and he is hooked up to machines. Jeannette takes his hand and an hour later they turn the machines off. Her father has died.

Some months later, Jeannette feels she always wants to be somewhere other than where she is. She comes to realize that being on the move is not enough and she has to re-consider everything. A year after her father dies she leaves her husband, Eric. Jeannette takes a small apartment on the West Side. Her compulsion to keep moving has faded, but she goes for long walks at night toward the river. “The city lights obscure the stars, but on clear nights, I can see Venus on the horizon, up over the dark water, glowing steadily.” (*The Glass Castle* 281)



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CHAPTER V. THANKSGIVING

- In November, Jeannette and her second husband, John, are waiting for a train on which are her mother and her sister. It is five years since Rex has died, and Jeannette has not seen Rose Mary and Lori. Jeannette and John have bought a country farmhouse. It is John's idea to invite her family to Thanksgiving and this is their first Walls family get together since Rex's funeral.

Jeannette introduces John to Rose Mary and Lori. They drive to her house and when they pull into their drive, Jessica, who is John's fifteen year old daughter from his first marriage, comes out with Brian and his eight year old daughter, Veronica. He has become a decorated sergeant detective and he has separated from his wife around the time that Jeannette has from Eric.

When the food is ready, Brian says how it is not really hard to put food on the table if that is what you decide to do. And Lori says, it is no time to have recriminations, and they sit down for dinner.

After they sit down for dinner, Rose Mary tells them her good news, which is that, as she has been a squatter for almost fifteen years, the city has decided to sell her and the other squatters for one dollar apiece. Also, she says she has been in touch with Maureen. She is still in California, and Jeannette has not spoken to her since she left, but Maureen is thinking of coming back for a visit.



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They drink a toast to Rex and they start talking about Rex and his great escapades, and all the experiences lived with him. Also, Rose Mary says how life with Rex was never boring.

3.1.2. Setting of *The Glass Castle*

The setting helps the reader to understand about the time and location in which the story takes place. In this case, the setting of *The Glass Castle* is going to be analyzed.

3.1.2.1. Place

The story takes place in numerous cities and little towns including:

Las Vegas, Nevada

Battle Mountain, Nevada

San Francisco, California

Phoenix, Arizona

Midland, California

Welch, Virginia

Blythe, California

New York, New York

3.1.2.2. Time

The story takes place from approximately 1963 to 2005.

3.1.2.3. Weather conditions

When the Walls family is in the desert on the West coast they live with sandstorms. They see batches of dust devils swirling and dancing their way across the desert. The desert is very representative of the arid, dry childhood Jeannette, Brian, Lori and Maureen experience. Also, when



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the rains come, the skies darken and the air becomes heavy. Raindrops the size of marbles come pelting out the sky. The family moves to Welch. It has a winter season which brings new challenges to the Walls family. During January when they are in New York City, it is freezing, and chunks of ice the size of cars are floating down the Hudson River. Jeannette's parents prefer to sleep in the pew of the churches.

3.1.2.4. Social conditions

The family is always moving around like nomads. Because of this they live in degrading poverty. It is difficult to survive in Midland. Only four inches of rain falls a year. Water for humans comes in on the train once a day in special containers. The family constantly is short on cash and food; they move around the country frequently and try to re-settle. This family is dysfunctional. The children suffer discrimination because they wear the same clothes at school, and they don't have food to eat during their lunchtime. The treatment of the children is shocking, and the saddest thing is that Jeannette and her siblings still desperately love their neglectful parents.

3.1.2.5. Mood or atmosphere

Jeannette and her siblings struggle to survive. At the end they triumph over all the disadvantages that their parents place before them. The Walls children learn to fend for themselves and protect each other.



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3.1.3. Plot

The plot is how the writers organize events to develop their basic idea; it is the logical sequence of events. It has a beginning, middle and end. The plot of this memoir is divided into nine parts, most of which represent a place where the Walls family lived.

1. Phoenix, Arizona

Phoenix is the birthplace of Jeannette Walls. When Jeannette is three years old, she remembers her family lived in a trailer park in a southern Arizona town. This little child burns herself while cooking hot dogs. Her mother, Rose Mary, takes her to the hospital where she is cured. Jeannette really enjoys being there because nurses and doctors take care of her. After six weeks, Rex, her father, appears and makes the traditional skedaddle. He leaves without paying, and the rest of the family is waiting in the car in front of the hospital.

2. Las Vegas, Nevada

The Walls family lives in a motel room in Las Vegas. Rex develops a winning method for blackjack and he buys everyone some gifts. Also, the family goes to eat in pleasant restaurants. One day Rex's gambling method is finally discovered by the casino staff. The family has to get out of town.

3. San Francisco, California

When the family arrives in San Francisco, they stay in a hotel in a place called the Tenderloin District. In that place Jeannette plays a lot



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with fire in the bathroom. She does things like putting piles of toilet paper in the toilet; she sets them on fire and then flushes them down. One night the hotel is on fire. Rex helps them to escape and they wait in a bar across the street. After this incident, the family lives for a few days in their car on the beach. But one night a policeman tells them that they have to leave because it is illegal to sleep on the beach. So the family decides to move back to the desert.

4. Midland, California

The Walls family moves to the south, to a town called Midland. Living in the desert is complicated because they do not have enough water. The water comes in by train once a day in special containers. At night the only thing they can hear are the coyotes howling. Jeannette thinks she hears something under her bed, so she tells her father. Jeannette thinks there is a demon; both of them go on a search for the demon. After having no luck finding the demon, Rex tells Jeannette that all you have to do is show demons that you are not afraid of them and they will not hurt you.

5. Blythe, California

In Blythe, the family lives in LBJ's apartments. Living in a big city involves education, so Jeannette goes to school. She is one of the smartest kids in the class in reading. Also, Jeannette always raises her hand fast when the teacher asks a question. But other students call her a teacher's pet and matchstick because she is tall and skinny. When Jeannette goes home, four Mexican girls jump her and beat her up. The



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next day the girls are again waiting for her, but this time Brian helps her. Because Brian is shorter than the girls, they are not scared of him and they begin to beat him. Jeannette grabs a rock and hits one of the girls in the head. Then they finally leave. Finally, Jeannette and Brian go to an iceberg lettuce farm that Brian has found. Over there, both of them eat, play and get dusted by a crop duster that flies overhead. Twelve months after the family moves to Blythe, Rose Mary gives birth. They name the little child Lilly Ruth Maureen.

6. Battle Mountain, Nevada

In Battle Mountain, the Walls move into a wooden building on the edge of town. It is a former depot station that has no furniture. Since they do not have money for furniture, they improvise. The children sleep in big cardboard boxes. The family uses a huge wooden spool as a table and the smaller spools as chairs. While Rex gets a job at a Barite mine, he stops drinking so heavily because he spends time playing with his children. The Walls' neighborhood is full of low income families. In school Jeannette`s class is filled with the children of miners and gamblers. Also, the town has the Green Lantern, a big dark green house where whores live. After some months, Rex loses his job, but he always arrives home with food. Rose Mary starts teaching in the same school where her children are. Billy is a juvenile delinquent and he starts bothering Jeannette. She does not want to accept him as her boyfriend and he gets mad. Also, he goes to her home and shoots his gun. Jeannette and her



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siblings shoot him back. Finally, some of the neighbors report seeing kids shooting guns at each other. A policeman comes to tell them that the Walls family has to go to the courthouse the next morning. Rex and Rose Mary decide to move to Phoenix.

7. Phoenix, Arizona

When they arrive in Phoenix, they stay in the house of Grandma Smith on North Third Street. It has fourteen rooms and trees in the yard. The children go to school and they are all put into gifted reading groups. Rex gets a job as an electrician and buys the children bicycles. The family has an insect problem. The house is infested with roaches, and termites. The Walls' neighborhood in Phoenix is kind of weird because it is filled with a family of Gypsies and perverts. Rex loses his job, and he starts drinking again. The children do not have food for their lunch. Rose Mary thinks it is a good idea to move to the east, to West Virginia.

8. Welch, West Virginia

In November the Walls family arrives in Welch, West Virginia. The family decides to go to the home of Rex's family. The Walls children meet their grandparents and Uncle Stanley. The children go to Welch Elementary school where the children suffer bullying. During the winter Rose Mary and Rex decide to go back to Phoenix. One week after Jeannette's parents leave, Erma becomes even more cantankerous, and she sexually abuses Brian. This leads to a fight between her and Lori, and Jeannette calls her grandmother a pervert. The family moves out of the



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house and gets a place on Ninety -third on Little Hobart Street. They stay there until all the children graduate and move out. Over there the children also have enemies and they have to fend them off.

9. New York, New York

After several years of surviving poorly, Lori moves to New York City because she wants to study and search for a better life. When Jeannette finishes her junior year, she goes where Lori is. In the end all of her siblings join Lori and Jeannette, eventually deserting their parents. Then Jeannette`s parents move to New York in order to be closer to their children. However, life in New York City is worse for the parents. Nevertheless, they feel they are living adventures since they are homeless.



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Figure 3. Walls Family Travels by Cristina Espinel R.



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The Glass Castle, is a personal memoir written in first person. This kind of memoir focuses on a person's entire life or a special episode of a person's life. *The Glass Castle* focuses on some special episodes of Jeannette Walls' life. It takes place during a particular period of time based on the author's own memories, feelings and emotions, during her career, journeys, sad experiences, and marriage.

This work is a personal memoir because it is based on particular experiences of Jeannette Walls' life from the time she was a girl until when she was an adult who became a great and famous author. It is important to remember that a memoir is written like a novel, but the story is not fictional. *The Glass Castle* is not fictional because it relates true events that actually happened. In addition a memoir isn't just a collection of chronological incidents; it has a beginning, middle and end, with an interesting narrative structure in order to make it fascinating for the readers.

At first sight, readers see Jeannette Walls as a sophisticated woman who looks like she comes from a wealthy family. However, the reality is that Jeannette comes from a poor background. She had to overcome miserable events in her life in which her parents sometimes were an obstacle to Jeannette in reaching her goal.

3.1.3.1. The Author's style

Jeannette Walls, in the memoir, *The Glass Castle*, uses the most creative form of writing, descriptive. A style that is very descriptive is a little difficult because it is basically about being able to evoke emotions in the reader through



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the power of words. This technique is extremely effective because it involves the reader in the story and makes the action and scenery very believable through detailed descriptions and observations. The writer has the ability to arouse the reader's senses and create a lasting impact on his or her mind. For example, when Walls describes the desert area in which she grew up, she talks at length about the "...dry, crackling heat, the way the sky at sunset looked like a sheet of fire, and the overwhelming emptiness and severity of all that open land that had once been a huge ocean bed." (*The Glass Castle* 21)

Also, the author captures the reader's attention using pithy sentences, and unkind language that reminds the reader that the Walls family life was not a wonderful fairy tale. For example, the author describes an argument between Rex and Lily Smith in which both of them use phrases like: "You flea-bitten drunk!, You goddamned flint-faced hag! and You no-good two-bit pud-sucking bastard!" (*The Glass Castle* 20)

3.1.3.2. Rising Action

The rising action begins when Jeannette sees her mother searching through a dumpster. After that, she begins to remember, through a series of flashbacks, how she grew up, and the problems that she has lived in a dysfunctional family.

3.1.3.3. Falling Action

The falling action involves a meeting during Thanksgiving. All the family gets together again. After Rex's death the family barely sees each other. During



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the meeting everyone remembers their parents and their experiences. Rose Mary puts emphasis on the fact that she has lived the best years of her life with her husband.

3.1.4. Conflict

3.1.4.1. Protagonists

The main character is Jeannette Walls who tells the reader all about her life in an abusive and dysfunctional family. Through her memoirs people understand that she could comprehend her parents even if they treated their children in a bad way. Jeannette's siblings are also protagonists.

3.1.4.2. Antagonists

There are numerous antagonists in this memoir who are obstacles for the protagonist. The greatest antagonists are the parents. They love their children, but they neglect them. Jeannette spends her entire life trying to understand them.

Another antagonist in this memoir is money. The Walls family was always short during the early years. They were affected because they did not have money to buy food, they were late with the bill payments, and they also had to wear thrift clothes.

3.1.4.3. Climax

The climax of this plot is when the protagonist tries to resolve the conflict. Jeannette tells their mother that Maureen needs professional help, but her



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mother refuses to get it. The doctors say she needs to seek her own help or be placed under an order of court. Six months later Maureen stabs Rose Mary. In court, she is denied bail and in the hallway the Walls family argues over who is to blame.

3.1.4.4. Outcome

The outcome is the final resolution of the story or the end. Jeannette's sister, Maureen, goes to California. After Rex's death, the Walls family comes together. They meet at Jeannette's country home and celebrate Thanksgiving.

3.1.5. Characters

Major Characters

- **Jeannette Walls** is the protagonist and main character of the story. Jeannette relates the events of her earliest memory from the age of three to adulthood. She is an intelligent child and she knows how to overcome the poverty she endures as a child during her life living with neglectful parents.
- **Rex Walls.** He is Jeannette's father. Mr. Walls was born in Welch, West Virginia. Rex is an educated man with extensive knowledge of Astronomy and Geology. When Rex joins the Air Force, he gets out of Welch. During his time in the Air Force, he meets his wife Rose Mary.

Rex has a hard time keeping a job. He invents credentials in order to get jobs; Rex does not keep a job longer than a few months. Also, he wastes the money on his addictions, drinking and smoking.



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Mr. Walls creates chaotic and fantastical stories to tell his family in order to explain the realities of life. One of these situations happens when the Walls have to move because of bill collectors, and Jeannette's father tells his children that they are being chased by FBI agents. Another situation happens; through the pretended discovery of gold Rex wants to build a house for his family, one that he names, "The Glass Castle". Rex dies in New York in 1994 because of a heart attack.

- **Rose Mary Walls.** Rose Mary is the wife of Rex and the mother of Jeannette, Lori, Brian, and Maureen. This character enjoys art and dislikes rules. One of the biggest dreams of Rose Mary is to be a successful artist. She takes jobs as a school teacher. Although her husband is a drunkard, Mary is a tolerant and loyal wife. Rose Mary loves adventures, and she does not interest herself in money or luxuries. An example of this is when Rose Mary moves to New York and she chooses to be homeless instead of living with her daughters, Lori and Jeannette, who give her the opportunity to make her life better and easier.
- **Lori Walls.** Rex and Rose Mary's first child. As the oldest child of the family, she often takes charge of the household when neither Rex nor Rose Mary is up to the job. Lori is a skilled artist and that is the reason she leaves her family in Welch, West Virginia, to go to New York in order to be recognized as an excellent artist. Jeannette encourages Lori to escape from the life she hates and in this way Lori overcomes her dismal childhood situation. New York City is the place where she still lives to this day.



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- **Lilly Ruth Maureen Walls (Maureen).** She is the youngest daughter of the Walls children; she is named after her two grandmothers, Lilly and Erma Ruth. She is considered the prettiest because of her blonde hair. The book does not put a lot of attention on Maureen until the end when she is a very attractive but disturbed young woman. In the same way as her sisters, Lori and Jeannette, Maureen does not enjoy a good childhood and she spends most of her time at friends' houses. By the end of the story Maureen turns violent and eventually runs away to California.
- **Mary Charlene Walls:** Rex and Rose Mary's second daughter. One night in her crib she dies at only nine months old. This death was one of the causes that made Rex start gambling and drinking.
- **Brian Walls.** He is Jeanette's younger brother. Brian Walls is the only son in the Walls family. He is the third of four children. Like other Walls children, Brian has red hair. He also has freckles on his nose. Brian realizes that his father cannot protect his sisters because of his bad habits, so he learns very young how to protect them. In his adulthood Brian follows Jeannette and Lori to New York. He becomes a police officer and eventually a detective.

Minor Characters

- **Erma Walls.** She is Rex's mother who lives in West Virginia. She does not like to be called Grandma because it makes her feel old. When Erma's grandchildren live with her, she becomes cantankerous, and she sexually abuses Brian.



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- **Ted Walls.** He is Rex's father. He murmurs when he speaks. He has short, white, hair. Also, he is a racist and has bad attitudes about nearly everything.
- **Uncle Stanley.** He is Rex's brother who smells of whiskey and lives with his parents. Stanley smothers his brother's children with hugs and kisses when he meets them. He is not good at all because one day Stanley tries to rape Jeannette.
- **Grandma Smith (Lilly Smith).** She is Jeannette's maternal grandmother. She is a teacher and she is described as both wealthy and controlling of Rose Mary, Jeannette's mother, as she grew up. Grandma Smith is the opposite of her daughter, Rose Mary. During the Walls family travels they sometimes stay in Grandma Smith's house in Phoenix. This character is also loved by Jeannette and she has a great influence on Jeannette's life.
- **Jim.** He is Rose Mary's brother. After Jim died in Arizona, Rose Mary wanted to buy Jim's land because it was important to her for sentimental reasons.
- **Ginger.** A prostitute who lives in the Green Lantern. During Brian's birthday Rex invites her to come live with them.
- **Bertha Whitefoot.** She is a half-Indian woman who is a neighbor of the Walls in Battle Mountain. She lives with about fifty dogs fenced in her yard. She knows about Billy Deel, and she calls him

the devil with a crew cut and the terror of the Tracks. (*The Glass Castle* 82)



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- **Billy Deel.** He is eleven years old, tall, and skinny when he moves to Battle Mountain, an area called Tracks. He lives with his father in a house near Jeannette's home.
- **Miss Page.** Jeannette's second grade teacher who is prone to anger and violent outbreaks. She is fired when she brings a loaded rifle to school to motivate her students to do work.
- **Miss Shaw.** She is Jeannette's third grade teacher in Phoenix. She moves Jeannette to a gifted reading group.
- **Mrs. Ellis.** Jeannette's fourth grade teacher in Phoenix. She helps her with money when Jeannette does not have any.
- **Buster.** It is a wounded Buzzard that Rex brings home to the family in Battle Mountain. Jeannette is happy when the bird finally heals and flies away.
- **Quixote.** It is the Walls' cat who has a missing ear. He is grey and white. Rex throws the cat out of the car when they are in Arizona.
- **Dinitia Hewitt.** She is an African American classmate of Jeannette's in Welch. Both girls become friends after Dinitia witnesses Jeannette helping a neighbor escape a dog attack. When Dinitia is in seventh grade, she becomes pregnant. She is arrested for stabbing her mother's boyfriend to death. Finally, everyone realizes that her mother's boyfriend sexually abused Dinitia.
- **Jeanette Bivens.** She is Jeannette's favorite high school English teacher. Miss Bivens supports and guides Jeannette when she works on the school



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newspaper called *The Maroon Wave*. Also, Miss Bivens had been the English teacher of Jeannette's father and had encouraged him to be a writer. Rex named his daughter, Jeannette, after Jeannette Bivens. Jeannette's mother added an extra N to make her name sound more elegant and French.

- **Ginnie Sue Pastor.** She is the town whore in Welch. She is thirty-three years old and has 9 children. Ginnie is married to Clarence Pastor. This lady teaches Jeannette about the realities of life and what you are willing to do to put food on the table.
- **Ginnie Sue's husband.** Unfortunately Clarence has black lung. The only thing that he does is to spend his days sitting in his home, but he never smiles or waves at passerbys.
- **Kathy Pastor.** She is Ginnie Sue Pastor's oldest daughter. In school Kathy is bothered for being the daughter of a whore. Kathy and Jeannette become friends.
- **Sweet Man Pastor.** He is Ginnie's youngest son.
- **Ernie Goad.** This boy lives in Welch. He bothers Jeannette and her brother, Brian, calling them garbage. The siblings work together to defend each other. In this way they create a catapult. They end this problem by catapulting rocks at Ernie and his friends.
- **Carrie Mae Blankenship.** She is a classmate of Jeannette's in Welch. Jeannette goes to her home and she discovers what a thermostat is, and



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desires that her family have one in the house in order to keep them warm during the winter.

- **Tinkle.** It is the Walls` family dog. It is a Jack Russel terrier that lives with them on ninety-three Little Hobart Street when they are in New York City.
- **Pippin:** It is a curly-haired mutt. It lives in Welch with the family during winter.
- **Iggy.** It is the iguana that Brian picks up in Welch at G.C. Murphy, the five and dime on McDowell Street, because it reminds him of the desert. One night Iggy freezes to death because the family cannot afford to heat their house during the winter.
- **Oz.** It is the name of the piggy bank that Lori, Jeannette and Brian use to collect funds in order to escape from Welch and go to New York City.
- **Lucy Jo Rose.** She is a teacher of Jeannette's at Davy Elementary School. Lucy Jo is ordered by the principal to give Rose Mary a ride to the school. Lucy Jo resents Rose Mary for this duty and treats Rose Mary as though she is a dirty person.
- **Robbie.** He is a man with a black mustache who Rex bets with in a bar while playing pool. Robbie flirts with Jeannette, and she goes with him to his apartment where Robbie gets aggressive.
- **Mr. Becker.** The owner of Becker's Jewel Box in McDowell Street. He hires Jeannette as an assistant and pays her forty dollars an hour.



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- **Ken Fink and Bob Gross.** Two filmmakers from New York City go to Welch as part of a government cultural enrichment program. They encourage Lori to move to New York City if she is serious about becoming an artist.
- **The Sanders Family.** This family lives in Welch and Jeannette babysits for them. The Sanders decide to move to Iowa, and they take Lori with them to work for the summer. As compensation for her work they pay Lori two hundred dollars and they buy her a ticket to New York.
- **Chuck Yeager.** He is a native West Virginian, war hero, and aviation pioneer. Mr. Yeager visits Welch High School to give a motivational speech. Chuck Yeager is Rex's hero and he is very excited to hear that he is coming. Jeannette conducts an interview with him for the school newspaper called *The Maroon Wave*.
- **Miss Caparossi.** She is Jeannette's English teacher at Welch Elementary School. She informs her class that someone there, Jeannette, is thinking that she is better than she and the other students in West Virginia.
- **JuJu.** The black mutt Jeannette's family owned when they lived in Southern Arizona. JuJu's death leads to Jeannette's first memory of her brother Brian crying.
- **Kenny Hall.** He is an old man who has a mental disability. The children in Welch play tricks on him and tell him that he can go on a date with Jeannette if



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he does something for them. One Saturday night Jeannette has to explain to him that she does not date older men and she will not go out with him.

- **Evan.** He is a pale guy with thick, black-framed glasses. He is Lori's friend who picks Jeannette up from the train station when she arrives in New York City.
- **Mike Armstrong.** He is the owner, publisher and editor-in-chief of a newspaper called *The Phoenix*.
- **Professor Fuchs.** She is one of Jeannette`s favorite teachers at Barnard. She teaches political science, and this teacher challenges Jeannette's views about homeless; Jeannette is too ashamed to tell her that her opinions are informed by her own life.
- **Eric.** Jeannette's first husband, Eric, is from a wealthy family and is a company owner. He lives on Park Avenue and he invites Jeannette to move in with him after she graduates from Barnard.
- **John Taylor.** He is Jeannette`s second husband who helps her find her real place in life and readily accepts her family with all their imperfections. John`s mother grew up in an Appalachian village not far from Welch.
- **Cindy Thompson.** A girl in Welch who tries to befriend Jeannette and convince her to join the junior Ku Klux Klan.



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3.1.6. Point of View

The Glass Castle is written in the first person. It is a memoir of Jeannette Walls' life. Jeannette is the narrator and relates all about her life from the time she was a child.

3.1.7. Theme

There are two important themes that are going to be analyzed.

- **Forgiveness.**

Forgiveness is one of the first and most important themes. Jeannette's parents neglect their children in different ways. They do not care if they have food, clothes and health. They should be punished, but their children try to understand them. The Walls children, for various reasons are forced to learn that they must have courage to face adversity. Also, Jeannette eventually comes to accept her family through writing this memoir because she is finally able to reach a peaceful state of mind.

- **Responsibility**

Another important theme is responsibility. The most responsible people in the family are the children, instead of their parents. While their parents are worried about their needs, the Walls children learn to fend for themselves and protect each other.



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3.2. Analysis of Half Broke Horses

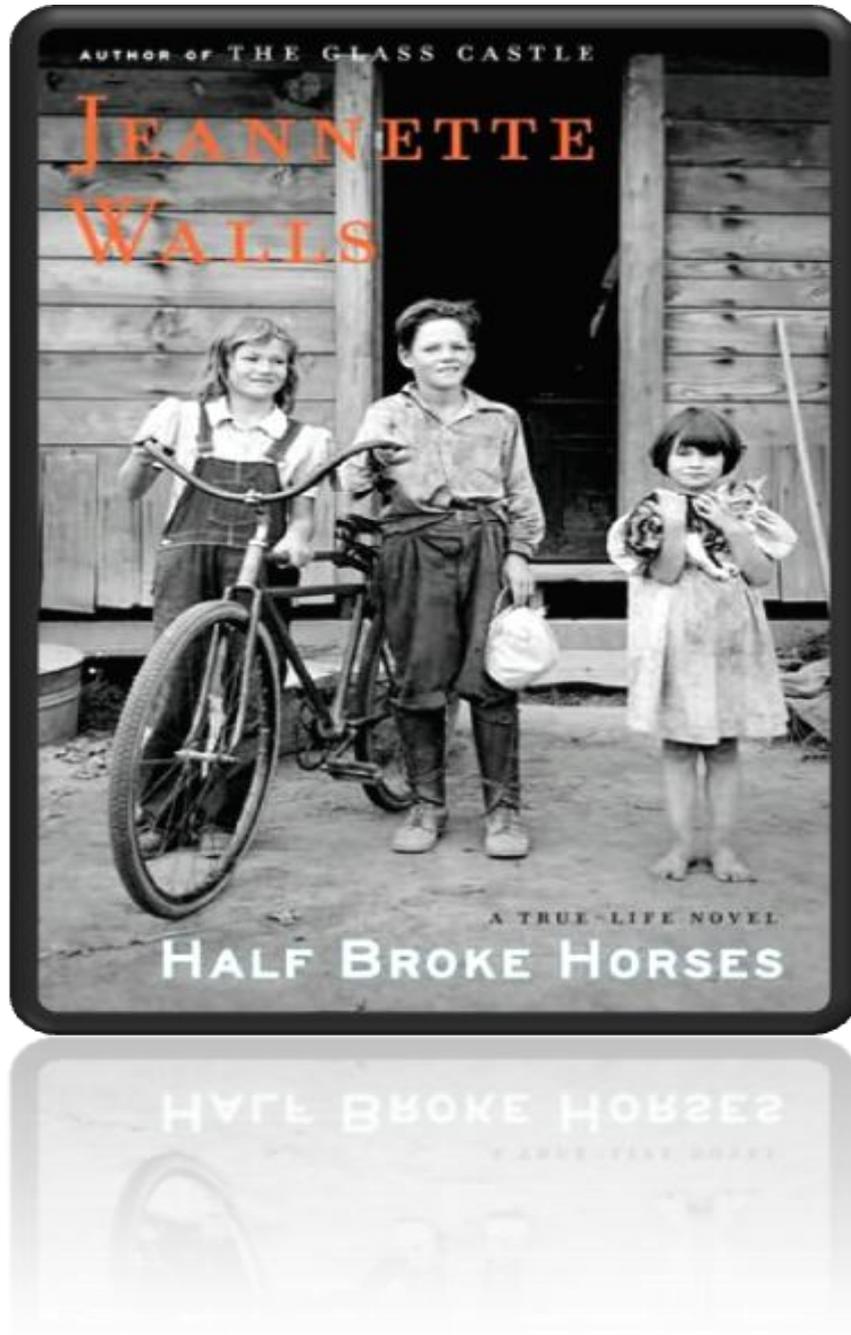


Figure 4. *Half Broke Horses*. The cover of the novel



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3.2.1. A Brief Chronology of the Events in *Half Broke Horses*

This work is divided into nine main sections. For the purpose of a brief chronology of the events, these are numbered and referred to as chapters.

CHAPTER I. SALT DRAWN

- One afternoon of August, Lily, who is ten years old, is outside with her little brother Buster, who is nine years old, and her little sister, Helen, who is seven. They are finishing their chores for the day. Lily and her siblings bring the cows in for their milking, but something wrong has happened to the cows; they are standing stiff-legged and straight-tailed, twitching their heads around. Lily kneels down and presses her ear to the ground. She realizes that a flash flood is coming. Lily manages to set the animals free, and she grabs her siblings by the hands in order to save their lives. Lily, Buster, and Helen make it to a large cottonwood tree just before the flood hits. The children are getting tired, but all of them are forced to spend the night in the tree. From time to time all the children switch places in order that no one's arms would wear out. Lily uses every trick that she knows to keep Buster and Helen awake and therefore preventing them from falling out of the tree and drowning. By morning the water drains away enough to allow the children to get down out of the tree and go to their house. When their parents see them they run to where the children are. Her mother, Daisy, starts praying and thanking the Lord because her children are alive. Daisy insists that they have a guardian angel. Lily is upset because she says the person who saved them was not a guardian angel; instead of this



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angel there was someone who kept them awake, and figured out how to switch places when their arms got tired. Finally, Lily`s father, Adam Casey, tells her the guardian angel is her.

- The family has a homestead on Salt Draw, west Texas. They have milking cows, dozens of chickens, some hogs, and peacocks. Lily`s father, Adam Casey, has the primary occupation of taking care of carriage horses. Although he had an accident with horses he loves them. When he was three years old, he was running through the stable and a horse kicked him in the head. After this, he was in a coma for many days. When he woke up, he had a physical disability with his right leg. Thereafter, he was unable to sit in a saddle. He realized that if he could not ride horses, he could drive them.
- Adam Casey spent some years in jail. After Adam Casey got out of prison, Lily was born in a dugout on the banks of Salt Draw in 1901. Lily`s father had grown up on a ranch in the Hondo Valley in New Mexico. Lily`s grandfather, Robert Casey, arrived there in 1868, so he was one of the first Anglos in the valley. When Adam Casey was a young man there were more settlers who had moved into the area. Because there were a lot of people, the river could not support them. There were disputes about property lines and water rights which resulted in brawls, lawsuits, and shootings. When Adam Casey was fourteen, during one of the disputes, Robert Casey was murdered. Lily`s father stayed with his mother working on his ranch. Twenty years later, the dispute was still going on, and a settler was killed. Adam Casey was convicted of murdering him. He insisted he was innocent, but he had to serve three years in prison. When



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Adam Casey was free, he met Daisy and married her. They left the Hondo Valley for High Lonesome. Most people in High Lonesome lived in dugouts because timber was so scarce in Texas. Their dugout had one room, a packed dirt floor, a wooden door, a waxed-paper window, and a cast-iron stove. One problem of living in the dugout was that when it rained, the ceilings and walls turned to mud. Another problem was the mosquitoes. Their bite marks stayed swollen for days. When Lily was seven, she came down with yellow jack fever.

- Lily's grandfather, her Mom's father, was a miner in the north of San Francisco. They lived in mining boom towns. In the story Daisy Mae Peacock has soft white skin. When she goes outdoors, she always wears a hat and gloves and a veil over her face. Daisy refuses to do chores such as toting water or carrying firewood. Adam Casey does this kind of work with the help of Apache, who is the ranch hand. Daisy has the help of Lupe, who is a household helper, especially for cooking and washing. After Robert Casey's death, his children start arguing over how to split up the herd. Adam Casey inherits the Hondo Valley spread, but he feels his elder brother, who has taken the herd to Texas, has cheated him out of his share, and he is constantly filing lawsuits and appeals. Adam Casey has a terrible temper. When he returns from his trips he comes trembling with rage.
- Floods are common in Salt Draw, Texas. There is one every couple of years. When Lily is eight, there is one huge flood, and the dugout collapses. Mr. McClurg has built a house with timber, but after the flood, his house falls apart, so he decides to return to Cleveland. Adam Casey is in Austin. When Adam



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gets home, all the family go to scavenge Mr. McClurg's lumber. By the end of the summer, Adam and his family have built a brand-new wooden house.

- Adam has some problems speaking, so nobody can understand him. When the family goes to Toyah, the nearest little town, the kids follow Adam around imitating him. Lily and her siblings hate it when those kids start to bother their father.
- Daisy is a woman who keeps her kids genteel. She is dainty, only four and a half feet tall, and she wears a tight corset. She is closest to Helen, who has inherited her frail constitution. Buster has an irresistible smile, and he is one of the fastest and smoothest talkers in the country. Daisy thinks Lily does not have the makings of a lady because she rides horses too much. Also, Lily is not really attractive; her front teeth jut out, so her mother buys her a red silk fan to cover her mouth.
- When Lily is five, she starts to help her father train the horses. Adam takes six years to train a pair of carriage horses appropriately. Lily's father always says that the first thing that Lily needs to know about horses is that a horse needs to learn to be a horse, and also Lily needs to think like a horse. Adam has a whole vocabulary to speak with horses by using grunts, murmurs, clucks, tocks, and whistles. When Lily is riding a horse called Roosevelt, a hawk swoops down in front of them. The horse spins around and Lily is flung off the horse; her forearm breaks in two. Lily starts to complain about horses, but finally she understands that it was not the horse's fault, it was just an accident.



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- Lily's jobs are feeding the chickens and collecting the eggs. She collects a hundred eggs a week. Once a week she goes to Toyah to sell the eggs. Mr. Clutterbuck pays a penny per egg, and then he sells them for two cents each. Lily's father, Adam, has a theory, The Theory of Purpose, which holds that everything in life has a purpose. That is one of the reasons why Adam never buys any of his kids toys. Adam thinks playing is only a waste of time, but Adam never forbids them to play baseball with the Dingler kids. When Lily is ten, she is playing baseball and trying to steal a base. One boy throws the ball at her hard and it hits her in the stomach. The pain is terrible and it does not go away. Adam takes the girl to the hospital, because her appendix has been ruptured. He explains to his daughter that the appendix is a vestigial organ, which has no purpose.
- Lily's mother, Daisy, likes to say, if you want to be reminded of the Lord's love, watch the sunrise. And Lily's father, Adam, says, if you want to be reminded of the Lord's wrath, watch a tornado. When Lily is living in Salt Draw, she sees many tornados. Lily is ten; she and her father are working with the horses. Adam, sees the tornado first, and runs to warn Daisy, while Lily is unharnessing the horses. Adam has all the family get into the crawl space under the house. While the tornado is close to the house, it whips up sand and branches and breaks bits of wood in one big swirl around the house. Daisy starts to pray, and Lily is so scared that she starts to pray too. The house shudders, but the floor above their heads holds fast, and very quickly the tornado moves on. After that, everything is quiet again, and all of them are alive.



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- The tornado has plucked up the windmill and smashed it down on the roof. It is a complete wreck. Life has been hard in west Texas, so Adam thinks it is safe to return to New Mexico and takes up life on the Casey ranch. They have some peacocks, six pairs of horses, the brood mares, and cows. The family packs everything into wagons. They consider it is time to move on.

CHAPTER II. THE MIRACULOUS STAIRCASE

- The family travels three days to arrive in Hondo Valley, New Mexico. They see a mirage in the distance. In the sky there is an inverted image of the town of Tinnie, six miles away. Lupe makes a sign of the cross. Adam explains the mirage.
- The KC Ranch is larger than the one at High Lonesome. There is more land to contend with and to care for which means more land for the horses but also more work. The family is still training horses, and Adam is still writing politicians and newspapers, railing against modernization. Also, Adam is working on a book arguing the case for phonetic spelling, and he is writing a biography of Billy the Kid. It is going to vindicate the Kid, prove that Adam, despite his speech impediment, is better with words than anyone who has ever laughed at him.
- When Lily is twelve, her brother, Buster, enrolls in a fancy Jesuit school near Albuquerque. Lily turns thirteen, and goes to the Sisters of Loretto Academy of Our Lady of the Light in Santa Fe. Mother Albertina is the Mother Superior in Santa Fe who shows Lily and her father all over the Academy. Lily likes the



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Academy and she wins a gold medal for her high scores in math, and another medal for overall scholarship. About halfway into the school year, Mother Albertina calls Lily for a talk. It is time to think about Lily's future. In those days, there were only four careers available. A woman could become a nurse, a secretary, a teacher or a nun. Mother Albertina tells her that she has a strong personality and she can be a wonderful teacher. She only needs to have the calling. She is going to have time to reflect on it. For the next couple of months, Lily thinks that she does not want to be a nurse because sick people irritate her. She does not want to be a secretary because she is going to be at the beck and call of her boss. At the end, she decides to be a teacher because she loves books, and learning. Also, she is going to be her own boss in a classroom. She figures out that teaching is her purpose in life.

- One of the nuns tells Lily that Mother Albertina wants to see her again. Mother Albertina says that she has got some unfortunate news. Adam, Lily's father, is unable to assemble the funds to pay her tuition. The school is not a charity institute because it counts on the money to meet expenses, provide scholarships, and support the order's mission on the Indian reservations. Mother Albertina tells her there is one option. She can take the cloth. The church can pay her tuition if she joins the order of the Sisters of Saint Loretto. Lily is not completely enthusiastic about the idea. She needs time to think about it, so she asks for one night in order to decide if she wants to be a nun. But Mother Albertina tells all the girls that unless you are certain, it is probably a bad idea. Lily realizes that she does not need a night to know she is not cut out to



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be a nun. She does not have the calling, and she does not have that serenity nuns have. She cannot stand taking orders from anyone, not even the Pope. While Lily is in her room with her suitcase next to her, Mother Albertina comes to take her to the depot. Lily's eyes well up with tears and her lip starts quivering. Before Lily boards the coach, Mother Albertina takes her hand and says, "When God closes a window, he opens a door. But it's up to you to find it." (*Half Broke Horses* 42)

- Adam is sitting in the buckboard with four huge dogs in the back waiting for Lily. He gets down and tries to hug her, but Lily shrugs him off. Lily asks her father about her tuition, and Adam starts to explain to her. He has bought these dogs from a breeder in Sweden. Those dogs are not just any dogs because they are Great Danes, dogs of the nobility. All the four dogs have cost eight hundred dollars, but once he starts selling the pups, the family is going to get the profits. Lily gets angry and she says that Adam took her tuition money to buy dogs. Her father answers that she does not need to finish school because it is a waste of money, and they need her on the ranch. Adam can teach her and her mother can teach her too. Lily asks about Buster; he is in school because he is a boy and he really needs that diploma.
- When they arrive at the KC ranch, Lily observes that the ranch has fallen into a state of mild disrepair over the months. Also, her father has brought in a tenant farmer called Zachary Clemens, and his wife and his daughter named Dorothy. All of them live in an outbuilding on a corner of the property. Adam lets the Great Danes roam free. While Dorothy is collecting pecans, she finds all four



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dogs shot dead. She goes to report to Adam what she has seen, and he goes to confront Old Man Pucket. While Adam drives back up, Lily and Dorothy sit on the corral fence shucking pecans. Adam tells them Old Man Pucket has unashamedly admitted killing the dogs, declaring they were on his property chasing his cattle. So he was afraid they were going to bring one of his herd down. Adam is furious and is cursing. He runs into the house and brings his shotgun. He jumps into the carriage, but Dorothy and Lily race over. Lily grabs the reins, and Dorothy pushes down the brake and the gun falls away from Adam's hands. Adam settles down, but the next day he goes into town for the hearing, detailing his accusations, researching the law case. Lily is going to speak in court for him, so her father rehearses her statements.

On the day of the trial, all the family gets up early. Also, Old Man Pucket goes with a couple of his sons. Lily starts explaining how her father has imported the dogs from Sweden, and they have been found shot to death. She calls her first witness, but she is interrupted by the judge. He asks Mr. Pucket if he has shot those dogs, and Mr. Pucket answers that he obviously did. Mr. Pucket says that the dogs were on his property chasing his cattle, and from a distance he thought they were big wolves. Mr. Pucket realizes that the dogs were valuable animals, so he knows Adam deserves some compensation for their loss. He says Adam can take some livestock, horses or cattle.

- A few days after the trial, Old Man Pucket shows up at the ranch with a string of horses. Adam is furious and he does not want to see him. Lily goes to meet Mr. Pucket. Lily receives the horses; then they shake hands, and Lily says payment



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is acknowledged. Lily's father comes to look at the horses when Old Man Pucket leaves. There are eight horses in all, stumpy, tough little mustangs. None of the males is gelded. They are unshod, and their manes and tails are matted with burrs. The problem with half-broke horses like these is that no one takes the time to train them. One of those horses catches Lily's attention; it is a mare. She loves mares because they are not as crazy as stallions, and they have more fire than your typical gelding. The horse is a pinto, no bigger or smaller than the others, but she seems less scared. Lily slowly walks up to her following all Adam's rules. Lily calls the mare Patches.

- The next day Adam is going to geld the new males. Lily sets about breaking Patches properly. It is one of the smartest horses. The following summer Buster comes home from school, because he has completed the eighth grade. He is not interested in high school because he knows enough math and reading and writing to run a ranch. While Buster is on the ranch, Dorothy becomes his good friend. They are sweet on each other.

One day in July, Lily rides Patches into Tinnie to pick up some dry goods and collect the mail. There is a letter for her from Mother Albertina. She writes to her because she considers Lily could be an excellent teacher. Because of the war that has started in Europe, there has been a shortage of teachers in the remote parts of the country. If Lily is able to pass a test the government is giving in Santa Fe, she can probably get a job, without a degree, even though Lily is only fifteen years old. Lily's parents do not like the idea. Adam thinks his daughter is too young to be on her own; and Daisy thinks Lily has a better chance of



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marriage if she stays in the valley, where she is known as the daughter of a substantial property owner.

- The test is easier than Lily has expected. Some weeks later, Buster comes to the ranch with a letter for Lily. She has passed the test, so she is going to replace a teacher in northern Arizona. The school is in Red Lake, Arizona, some miles to the west, so she rides on her friend, Patches, one morning in early August. Before she leaves, while they are having their breakfast, all of the family members are giving her some advice. While Adam is not happy that Lily will be away from the ranch, he has no valid argument to keep her there. Everyone except Daisy is standing on the front porch; Lily can see her mother watching her through the windows of her bedroom.

CHAPTER III. PROMISES

- Lily travels on Patches for some weeks. Most of the storekeepers are happy giving her advice and directions and drawing maps on paper bags. Lily finds several Indian reservations, and she meets a half-Navajo woman on a donkey named Priscilla Loosefoot. Both of them are going in the same direction. One night, they have to rest and they pitch camp in a grove of juniper trees on the side of the road. Priscilla is a real talker, so Lily thinks they can be a good team in order to travel together; in this way Lily can learn how to identify herbs. They drift off to sleep; suddenly there is something that wakes Lily up. She finds Priscilla checking her saddlebags. After that, Lily is so disappointed that she saddles up Patches and moves on alone. She crosses into Arizona at the



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Painted Cliffs. After another ten days, she reaches Flagstaff and a hotel, where she takes a bath because she will arrive at Red Lake in two days. She has been on the road for twenty-eight days, so she is tired, and she has lost weight.

- Red Lake is a small ranch town about thirty miles south of the Grand Canyon. After Lily arrives in Red Lake, Mr. MacIntosh explains to her that because of the war, men are joining the army and women are leaving the countryside to take the high-paying factory jobs the men have left behind. So, there is a shortage of teachers in rural areas. They need a person who has finished at least an eighth grade education, which Lily does not have. However, they hire Lily anyway. Lily loves her job. The superintendent is rarely at the school, leaving Lily to teach as she wants. She has fifteen students of all ages and abilities. Halfway through the year, Superintendent MacIntosh finds a certified teacher for Red Lake, so Lily is sent on to another little town called Cow Springs. For the next three years Lily travels from town to town, to Leupp, Happy Jack, Greasewood, and Wide Ruin, teaching children of all ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, and abilities. Lily teaches her students things they need to know. Lily learns that every child can be taught, it simply takes a while to learn the trick of teaching those that do not learn in a conventional manner. Lily is a strict teacher but the students and parents like her. When the war ends, Lily's job ends too. Lily is turning eighteen, and Superintendent MacIntosh explains to Lily that the men are all returning home. Women are available to work again as certified teachers, and some of the men coming back from overseas are teachers, too.



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- It is time to ride back to the KC; Lily is going to take about half as long as that first journey out to Red Lake. During the trip, Lily sees a plane. It is the first time that Lily has seen one, and she is so excited that she kicks Patches and they gallop after the plane.
- When Lily arrives home, she thinks it seems smaller than she remembered it. Lupe is the first person that sees Lily, and she gives a shriek. So everybody comes running from the house and barn. Adam says that she has left them as a girl and now she is a woman. Lily's parents have some gray strands in their hair, and Buster has grown a mustache; Helen has become a willowy sixteen-year-old beauty. One year before, Buster and Dorothy got married. They live in the new wing of the house. Helen is happy to sew and bake pies, but she hates any kind of work that makes her break into a sweat or that gives her hands calluses. She wants to go to Los Angeles and become an actress in the movies. After eating breakfast, Adam and Lily walk out onto the porch. He asks her if she is ready to get back in the corral. Lily has two choices. She can stay on the ranch or strike out on her own. If she stays on the ranch, she has to find a man to marry or she will become a spinster aunt. Striking out on her own means going someplace where a young unmarried woman can find a job. After one month, she decides to go to Chicago.
- Lily is on the train to Chicago, and it is her first train trip. When she arrives at Chicago, Lily has never seen such a mass of people, all moving together like a herd, jostling and elbowing. She rents a bed- four to a room. Then she buys a newspaper and looks at the help wanted ads, circling possibilities with a pencil.



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She starts searching for a job, and it is difficult because she does not have an eighth-grade education. She only has her teaching experience, and her options are pretty much limited to factory work or to becoming a maid. Finally, she finds a job working for a commodities trader and his wife, Mim, on the North Side. She spends her time scrubbing, polishing, and dusting, and she leaves after doing the dinner dishes. Mim had told Lily that she should keep her head down; therefore Lily does not like the way Mim treats her. Lily gets another job as a maid. In the evenings, Lily goes to school to get her diploma. At the time it was common to observe women marching for the right to vote. Lily attends a couple of rallies with one of her roommates, Minnie Hanagan. Lily loves to argue with Minnie about politics, religion and everything else under the sun. When Lily is turning twenty-one, her best friend, Minnie, gives her a tube of dark red lipstick.

- Lily has been living in Chicago for almost two years. One evening, Lily comes home from work, and one of her roommates tells her that Minnie is dead. Minnie was working at the bottling plant when her long black hair got caught in the machinery. Lily realizes that there is a lot of danger in this world, and she has to be smart about it. So she decides to cut off her hair just below her ears. She feels she looks like a model. One Sunday, she is walking along the lakefront, when a man named Ted Conover strikes up a conversation. That day he buys her a snow cone, and they sit on a bench. He laughs to himself about his jokes, and he remembers Minnie so much. In this way, Lily thinks that she needs someone in her life that can make her laugh.



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- Some weeks later, Ted invites Lily to dinner at the Palmer House hotel. They start seeing each other regularly. They go to a ball game, to the movies and to the theater. Also, he teaches her how to swim. Six weeks after she has met Ted, he gives her a diamond ring. They get married in the Catholic Church. Lily wears a blue linen dress. They move into a boardinghouse that takes in married couples, and they celebrate in their room with a bottle of bathtub gin. Lily does not wear her diamond ring to work because she worries about it being stolen.
- Lily has never had someone to take care of her, but she has found that she likes being married. While Ted is away, Lily is fine because she is busy with work and her night school. When she is twenty-six, she finally gets her high school diploma. One summer morning, Lily is crossing the street; a white roadster with wire spoked wheels comes tearing around the corner. The driver slams on the brakes when he sees Lily, but it is too late. The driver, named Slick, wants to take her to the hospital and pay for the examination. But Lily insists that she has no serious injuries, only bruised bones and some nasty scrapes on her arms and knees. In the hospital the nurse asks her about her husband, so Slick thinks it is a good idea to contact him. He finds the number, and Lily calls Ted. A man answers, and tells Lily that he is on the road. But his wife's name is Margaret. After that, Lily does not know what to say, so she hangs up.
- Lily realizes that there is one way to find Ted. His office is near the Loop. When she arrives, she takes a newspaper in order to cover her face. Lily can see him, and she follows Ted at a safe distance. Finally, Ted arrives at some apartment



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buildings, he goes in, but he does not come back. There are four apartments on each floor, so Lily stops at every door. On the third floor, she finds Margaret; behind her Lily can hear a couple of boys arguing. Also, she can hear Ted's voice saying, "who is it, honey?" (*Half Broke Horses* 80) The only thing that Lily can say is that she is doing the census, and she needs to confirm that a family of four is living there. Margaret answers that they are five. Lily smiles and says, "That is all I want to know." (*Half Broke Horses* 80)

- Ted and Lily have a bank account. Lily is worried about that and she goes to the bank to see they have almost two hundred dollars in the savings account, but the teller tells Lily there are only ten dollars left. She goes back to the boardinghouse and packs her pearl-handled revolver in her purse. She goes to Ted's office. When he sees her, Lily starts cursing him. Also, she hits him. Ted's eyes well up with tears, and he explains that he has taken the money because he has run up some gambling debts and the dagos are after him. Also, Margaret is the mother of his children, but he really loves Lily.
- Lily takes another walk along the lake, and starts thinking about all the things that she has lived through in Chicago. She goes to the Catholic Church where she married and tells the priest what has happened. They can apply to the bishop for an annulment if they can prove Ted has been married. She gets a copy of Ted's other marriage certificate. Lily thinks Ted's wife needs to know what has happened, so she decides to write a letter explaining it all. After mailing the letter, Lily takes the ring Ted has given her in to a jeweler. But he tells her that it's fake, so she throws the ring in the lake.



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- Lily is twenty-seven years old, and she needs more than ever to get her college education and become a teacher. She applies to the Arizona State Teachers' College in Flagstaff while she is waiting for the annulment. She has two jobs during the week and another on weekends; in this way she has enough money for a year of college. Finally, the day comes to say good-bye to Chicago. Lily has left the city of the future thinking that she has come to Chicago wanting a slice of that modernity, loving the city for it, but Chicago has not loved her back.

CHAPTER IV. THE RED SILK SHIRT

- Lily returns to the KC Ranch. It has been several years since Lily has been home. Buster and Dorothy have two children. Lily is excited to see Patches, who is now 17 years old. Lily easily falls into her old routine of farm chores. Lily's main concern is Helen who has moved to Los Angeles to chase her dream of making it in the movies. Her mother has encouraged her to move to Los Angeles. Her mother is sure that someone can discover her daughter's talent or maybe Helen can find a rich Hollywood husband.

Once again, Lily realizes that she has changed, and living on the ranch no longer holds the same appeal that it once did. The family expects Lily to leave again. Lily leaves for Flagstaff earlier than planned. Lily loves college. Being older, she is not distracted by drinking and boys. Lily takes every class she can handle, reads every book, and gets the most from the entire experience. Lily begins to have concerns about money. The president of the college, Grady Gammage, tells her that Red Lake needs a teacher.



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- When Lily arrives at Red Lake, she sees that the schoolhouse has a teacherage built onto the back, so she has her own room to sleep in. She has thirty-six students of all ages, sizes, and breeds. After one month, Lily goes to the town hall to pick up her first paycheck. There is a corral next to the building, and Lily watches a small sorrel mustang. Two deputies, one of them called Rooster, are inside the corral. Rooster tells her that before she gets her paycheck, she needs to pass a simple test. It is riding that little fella out in the corral. Lily accepts and she rides the horse. She remembers all the things her father has taught her. The two guys realize that she really knows about horses.
- After Lily rides the horse, women and men ask her for her opinion on problem horses and problem children. Rooster, Orville Stubbs, starts acting like her faithful sidekick. He works only part-time as a deputy. Rooster introduces Lily to the other horsemen in Red Lake, telling folks she is the former Chicago flapper who has come to teach the kids of Coconino County. He encourages her to enter his mustang called Red Devil, in local races. So Lily starts winning some of those races. On Saturday, she starts playing poker with Rooster and his friends. Lily becomes known as Lily Casey, the mustang-breaking, poker-playing, horse-race-winning schoolmarm of Coconino County. After a while Rooster is sweet with Lily, but she tells him that she has been married once. So she has no desire to marry again. After that, both are good friends. One day he comes to the teacherage and he says he has something important to tell her. The only thing he wants is to learn how to write; from that time Rooster becomes her secret student.



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- On Saturday afternoon Lily teaches Rooster how to read and write. She is racing Red Devil and winning. Lily spends her money buying a crimson-colored shirt of genuine silk. One day in early spring, Rooster and Lily ride down to a race. Lily and the Red Devil take the lead early in the second heat. They are going into the first turn when a car near the rail backfires with a loud bang. The horse bucks and veers sharply to the right; Lily is rolling on the tracks. She is fine, so she gets back on and finishes the race. But Lily has felt that fifteen-dollars. Lily is angry with the owner of the car, Jim Smith, because he was spooking her horse during the race. Jim offers to teach her about cars.
- Jim Smith teaches Lily how to drive. He has a Model T Ford. Lily discovers that she loves cars even more than she loves horses. Cars are faster than horses; cars do not need to be fed if they are not working. Cars obey you. Her driving lessons with Jim begin to include trips to the Grand Canyon to deliver gas to a filling station near there; then picnics. After a while Jim is courting her. He has been married once before, but his wife has died ten years earlier. When Jim was eleven, his father gave him a rifle, some bullets, and a packet of salt and said, "You have your food for a week." (*Half Broke Horses* 99). After that, he became an excellent marksman and horseman. When he is in Arizona, he becomes a lumberjack and homesteader. After his wife dies, he joins the cavalry, and serves in Siberia. Lily realizes Jim is no slouch, but he is twenty years older than she. However, he has the characteristics of being a wonderful husband. He is calm, and he never loses his temper. Also, he is dependable and established, he is solid and he has his own business. Even so, Lily is not



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prepared to marry again, but they are enjoying themselves having picnics, and taking horseback rides.

- Lily receives some letters from Helen in California. She is always meeting Mr. Wonderful, the man with the connections who treats her like a princess. After some letters, Helen stops mentioning that particular Mr. Wonderful. Lily worries that Helen is in danger of becoming a floozy. So Lily writes her letters warning her not to count on men to take care of her. But Helen writes back scolding her for being negative, explaining that this is the way all girls make it in Hollywood. In a new letter Helen confesses that she is pregnant by the latest Mr. Wonderful, who wants her to get an abortion. Helen is scared because some women have died after an abortion. She does not know what to do; she is ashamed to go back to her parents at the ranch. Lily writes her back, telling her not to get an abortion. She needs to have the baby, and Lily recommends her sister to come where she is, to Red Lake. A week later, Helen arrives in Flagstaff. Helen looks unattractive. On the way to Red Lake, Helen is smoking some cigarettes. She is worried about Mr. Wonderful if she can get him back by putting the child into an orphanage. She is worrying about whether childbirth can ruin her figure for bathing-suit scenes in movies. The only thing that Lily says is that Helen needs to be realistic.
- While Lily is teaching, Helen spends her time sleeping. Lily thinks her sister needs fresh air and sunshine. So they go for a stroll through town every afternoon, and Lily introduces Helen to people as her sister from Los Angeles. When there is a race, Jim Smith brings Helen in his car. He is courteous and



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considerate towards Helen. However, Rooster thinks that Helen is a beautiful woman. But Helen is not interested in him.

- Helen and Lily start attending the church in Red Lake; the priest is Father Cavanaugh. Six weeks after Helen has arrived, she and her sister are in the church when Helen faints away. The priest comes to her and he feels Helen's forehead and touches her stomach. So Father Cavanaugh realizes that she is pregnant, but that she does not have a ring on her finger. Her soul is in mortal danger, because she has committed the sin of lust. Helen has only one option, it is to go to the church's homes for wayward women. Helen's secret is out, and the townspeople of Red Lake begin treating Helen and her sister in a different way. One evening, Superintendent MacIntosh is on the teacherage. He wants to talk with Lily, so they go for a walk. He is talking about Helen's condition, moral standards, school policy, and says that the students need to have the good reputation of the Arizona Board of Education. He insists that things are out of his hands; he is getting pressure from all the parents of Red Lake. Lily feels humiliated; she walks back to where Helen is waiting, smoking a cigarette.
- Helen has listened to the whole conversation that Lily has had with Superintendent MacIntosh. Helen is inconsolable, so Lily tries to encourage her. Lily thinks it is a great idea to write a letter to their parents telling them everything. Helen insists that her parents will disown her. Lily remembers the words of Mother Albertina and Lily repeats them to her sister. When God closes a window, he opens a door, and it is up to us to find it. Helen finds comfort in those words. The next day, Lily borrows the car from Jim so Lily and Helen



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can go for a picnic up at the Grand Canyon. While Lily goes to get the car, Helen gets dressed at home. When Lily is coming back she feels like something is choking her. So she has a bad feeling, and she drives as fast as she can. When she opens the door, Lily finds her sister dangling from a rafter. Helen has hanged herself.

- Lily cannot bury Helen in the Catholic Church because Father Cavanaugh says that suicide is a mortal sin; it is impossible now to repent and receive forgiveness. Finally, Jim, Rooster and Lily drive far away from the town, and find a beautiful place at the top of a valley. Over there, they bury Helen.

CHAPTER V. LAMBS

- Lily's thoughts on suicide: "When people kill themselves, they think they're ending the pain, but all they're doing is passing it on to those they leave behind." (*Half Broke Horses* 113)

Lily is consumed by pain over Helen's death. Everything annoys her: kids yelling or even laughing in the school, church bells ringing, birds chirping. If it wasn't for the children Lily says she would stay home, but she has a contract and a duty to fulfill. For the first time, Lily decides that she wants to have a child. Lily proposes the idea to Jim Smith. Lily tells Jim that her only criteria includes being partners in the marriage and that Jim, as a Mormon, will not take another wife. Jim says he believes Lily is all he can ever handle.

- Jim and Lily get married in the schoolhouse in 1930. Lily is 29 years old.



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The couple moves to Ash Fork, a bustling little town on Route 66 at the base of Williams Mountain. They build a garage. Jim teaches Lily to pump gas. She changes oil and fixes flat tires. During the winter Lily gets pregnant; and she fills up gas tanks; Lily and Jim build a little house on Route 66.

- When Lily is eight and a half months pregnant, she still continues working in the garage. However, Jim considers it dangerous, and he insists she has to stay at home. At home Lily reads many books, and mends clothes. On a scorching-hot July day, Lily gives birth at home with the help of Granny Combs who gives Lily some advice about pain when in labor. When the baby comes out, Granny Combs says it is a girl. Granny Combs appears to have six senses because she can read minds and tell fortunes. She tears herself a plug of tobacco and lays out cards to see what the future of the baby is. Granny Combs says that the baby will have a long life, and it will be eventful. Also, she chews her tobacco and she sees a wanderer.
- Lily calls the baby Rosemary. When she is three months, she has a big smile that matches her green eyes. Lily thinks that the baby looks pretty much like Helen. One year and a half later, Lily is waiting for her second child. Lily goes to the hospital in Williams, forty miles to the east. When Lily wakes up the nurse tells her that she has a son. Lily and Jim named him Little Jim. Hard times hit the country because it is the Depression. At the beginning it only affects the big cities. Later it affects the cattle market, so the ranches in Arizona start going under. People cannot afford gas, and they begin to sell their tractors and cars.



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Lily takes her babies and starts helping Jim in the garage because they want to get some extra money. Mr. Lee, who sells bootleg liquor, agrees to provide Lily with two cases a month from his bootlegger if they split the profits. Jim does not like the idea because he does not want to see his wife wind up in jail for rum-running. Since everyone is looking to save pennies wherever they can, Lily sells liquor to people she knows or to those who come recommended.

- When Rosemary is three years old, the Camel brothers drive their huge flock of sheep past their house. The Camel brothers have bought a ranch west of Ash Fork in Yavapai County because they want to raise sheep for wool and mutton. The flock is so big that the Camel Brothers have separated the lambs from their mothers. After some hours, this idea is terrible because the lambs are hungry and they try to nurse from any ewe they can, but the ewes want to save the milk for their own babies. The ewes put their noses up to the lambs, and the ewes kick them away if the smell is unfamiliar. Jim helps to solve this problem by wiping the ewe's noses with a rag soaked in kerosene. So it blocks the ewes' sense of smell, and they let whatever lamb is at their side nurse their milk. Finally, there is a lamb that cannot find a ewe, and the Camel brothers tell Jim he can do whatever he wants with the animal. Jim gives the lamb to Rosemary, and she names the lamb Mei-Mei.
- Lily still sells liquor. But one day two lawmen are in her house because they have heard that liquor is being illegally sold in her house. While Jim is sleeping in his crib, Rosemary is running into the room with Mei Mei. The men want to



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check the house, but Lily does not let them in. Suddenly Rosemary screams so much that it wakes up Jim, so he is crying. Everything becomes a mess with so many screams and cries that the lawmen decide to leave and come back another day. Lily decides to stop selling liquor, but six months later the bank forecloses on them.

- Lily and Jim decide to auction off everything, their furniture, tools, tires, etc. because they want to go to California to work. One morning Blackie Camel comes to their house, and tells them that one of his brothers has sold the family ranch to a group of investors in England, and this group wants someone to manage the ranch, and Blackie has recommended Jim.
- Jim calls off the auction, and he keeps most of his tools. The family puts their furniture in a truck and goes to Seligman, the town nearest the ranch where Jim is going to work. When they arrive at the ranch, Old Jake, a grizzled and crippled man, greets them, and he shows them around. There is a main house with a long porch, a huge barn, a toolshed, chicken coop, bunkhouse, and a garage. There is nothing fancy about the place, but everything is in the right place, tidy and neat.
- The ranch is a big place, almost 160 acres. But there is a problem. The water has disappeared during dry spells; so there is not enough water on the ranch. The ranch has no natural source of water. The only water on this land comes from the sky. So Jim decides to rent a bulldozer in order to build a big hole to



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trap rainwater. The water courses through the gullies when the rains come in December; in this way the ranch has water all during the year.

- The official name of the ranch is the Arizona Incorporated Cattle Ranch, but the family calls it the AIC. During the Depression most people are selling rather than buying cattle. Jim travels around Arizona and he gets entire herds at low prices. When Rosemary is a little girl, she looks like a half-broke horse because she loves to run around out of doors when she is naked; she climbs the cedar trees, splashes in the horse trough, and pees in the yard. She spends hours riding her mule called Jenny. Rosemary is not afraid of any critter, coyotes or wolves. She hates to see any animal caged or tied.
- Lily cleans her house once every few months; she washes the clothes after they get completely dirty. The family does not wash their pants at all. Levi's are only washed when they are saturated with mud, manure, tallow, axle grease, or hoof oil. Lily's recipes are very simple and basic, nothing of fancy dishes such as soufflés or sauces. Her specialty is beans that usually last two to five days. When they do not have beans, there is steak. Lily just fries the steak on both sides, and serves it with some potatoes. For dessert, they have canned peaches. When Rosemary is three, her mother teaches her the numbers. Also, if the little girl wants milk, she has to use the word. Rosemary is always living through dangerous situations, such as falling into draws and out of trees. Also, she loves to catch snakes and scorpions. One day, she is playing with fire and she gets burned; fortunately, the little girl is not seriously hurt.



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- In winter Jim and Lily buy a radio, but they use it rarely, only to listen to the news; instead they use the radio to hear the weather report. When a storm comes, Little Jim and Rosemary love to go out and dance in the rain. They like playing and rolling around in the mud.
- In April, August, and December the rains usually arrive, but in their second year on the ranch they live through a serious drought. Jim is always concerned about the weather report to see if it will rain, but there is no chance. So, he starts selling off steers and heifers and keeping only the healthiest breeding cattle. The rains return the following August, but it looks like a terrific deluge. Jim goes out to check the water hole, and he reports back that it is holding, but an hour later, he realizes that if nothing is done, there will be big trouble. They have to dig four furrows off the sides of the wash that drain the rising water away from the reservoir.
- It is still raining furiously. The rains wash away some bridges and several miles of railroad track. People have lost cattle and outbuildings. After some hours the rain stops. The next day the AIC ranch is covered with a lot of flowers such as crimson, and orange California poppies, white mariposa poppies, goldenrod and blue lupines and pink and purple sweet peas flowers. Rosemary spends hours collecting flowers.



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CHAPTER VI. TEACHER LADY

- Jim purchases the Hackberry ranch. The AIC is now comprised of 180,000 acres. It takes a week to ride the property. Jim and Lily move into the house at Hackberry. Lily decorates the house with bright colors. Lily falls in love with the house and she wants to buy it. However, neither Lily nor Jim is willing to get a loan and go into debt. Lily devises a plan to save as much money as possible and to purchase the house. So she sells encyclopedias door to door, and she writes short stories about cowboys and gunslingers for pulp magazines. Also, Lily collects scrap metal and sells it by the pound. On weekends, Lily and her kids pick up bottles that people have thrown out their car windows.
- When Lily is closing in on her thirty-ninth birthday, she sees a sign for flying lessons. She asks Jim to stop. The pilot, Goggles, balks at giving a flying lesson to a woman. Finally, Lily is in the plane. Goggles explains to her about lift and tailwind, and he explains how to operate the co-pilot's stick. Shortly after she is flying and they are circling around. Lily can see the Arizona range rolling away in all directions, the Mogollon Rim to the east, and in the distant west, the Rockies.
- Lily wants to earn money, so she decides to teach again. Lily goes to Main Street. The town is so small that it does not appear on most maps. It has a general store, and one school. People are so poor, they live in chicken coops. People do not have cars; instead of this they ride horses. The women wear hats and children go to school barefoot. The religion of the town is Mormon; a man



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has at least eight women and many children. Uncle Eli, a Mormon, lives on Main Street; he comes to Lily's house because he is worried that Lily is teaching the children things their parents consider dangerous and even blasphemous. Lily tells her students about suffragettes and women flying airplanes. Uncle Eli thinks that Lily is not preparing the students for their lives; Lily is just upsetting and confusing them. But Lily answers him that she is giving them an education, and she is explaining to them what the world is really like. At the end, Uncle Eli is so upset that he tells Lily if she does not obey him, all the townspeople will shun her as the devil.

- The next day, Lily is teaching her students about political and religious freedom. That night when she is doing the dishes, Lily sees Uncle Eli standing in the yard looking at her. The next night he is in the same place with his arms crossed. The teacherage does not have curtains, so Lily decides to sew some feed sacks and tack them over the windows. That evening Uncle Eli is knocking on the door, but Lily does not want to open it. Lily is scared and she goes to bring her pearl-handled revolver. Lily opens the door and she sticks the gun in Uncle Eli's face. She pulls the trigger, and the shot rings out. So Uncle Eli barks in fright and Lily tells him that she does not want to see him again and the next time she won't aim to miss. Two days later, the county sheriff appears because he is investigating about what Lily has done. Lily continues teaching, but in the spring she gets a letter from the Mohave County superintendent saying that is not a good idea that she continue teaching in Main Street.



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- Fortunately, that summer Lily finds a job in Peach Springs, a tiny town on a Walapai reservation. She is going to earn fifty dollars a month teaching, but since she wants to earn some extra money she decides to cook the lunch for the kids, and to be the janitor and the bus driver. She will do everything for eighty dollars. The school is about sixty-five miles from the ranch, so Lily gets up around four in the morning because she has to make two trips to collect all the kids. Lily finds a dark blue hearse which is going to be the school bus. It is a used-car, so Lily takes some silver paint and writes "SCHOOL BUS" on both sides. Lily takes Rosemary, who is seven, and Jim, who is five, with her to the school. Rosemary hates being taught by Lily because her mother gives her paddlings in front of other students to set an example.
- One Saturday morning, Lily looks at the hearse parked next to the barn, and she realizes that she can get some money if she works as a taxi driver. The hearse has the tag of "SCHOOL BUS"; Lily decides to add "AND TAXI" on both sides of the hearse. She is an admirable driver, but she does not like city driving because she hates the stoplights and street signs and traffic cops.
- Lily buys some fancy new electric Christmas lights and a couple of small toys for her children. On Christmas morning Lily explains to her children that Saint Nick and his flying reindeer are visiting all the children in the world in order to bring them toys that Saint Nick and his elves in the North Pole have spent the year making. Rosemary does not believe anything and she says to her mother that reindeer cannot fly and it is impossible. After that, Lily explains to



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Rosemary that she is right, but everything is magic, even Santa Claus himself is magic. The family goes to the hills and cuts down a small pine; the pine is put in the front yard, and lights are put on its branches. The children are so excited that they dance around the tree all afternoon.

- Lily works at Peach Springs for two years, and she has twenty-five students. Six of them are the children of Deputy Johnson. One of his sons is Johnny Johnson, who is two years older than Rosemary. This boy has kissed Rosemary, but she never told her mother. Lily finds out from other girls. One day, Lily sees that Johnny has reached over and stuck his hands up the dress of Rosita, a Mexican girl. Lily thinks that this boy needs to be taught a lesson, so she walks up to him, and slaps him in the face. Suddenly, the boy slaps Lily in the face too. But Lily is so angry that she hauls him up and throws him against the wall, backhanding him again and again. Johnny Johnson does not want to say he is sorry, but Lily thinks that he needs to realize the consequences of mistreating girls.
- The next day, Deputy Johnson is at the school waiting for Lily. He says to Lily that she needs to keep her hands off his boy. But Lily only tells him that he needs discipline. A few months later, Lily receives a letter saying that her contract is not going to be renewed. Lily sits in the kitchen and starts crying; Rosemary walks up to her mother and caresses her face. Lily tells her that she is not crying; she has just gotten some dust in her eyes. Lily is worried that her daughter might think that her mother is a weak person.



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- The movie “Gone with the wind” is announced and Lily does not want to miss it. It is one of her favorite books. Women are expected to wear gowns and men to wear tuxedos. She decides to attend in the fanciest dress in the county. Since she never owned a gown, she decides to make a dress herself, like Scarlett did. Lily borrows a sewing machine from her neighbor, Mrs. Hutter, and she starts making her gown. She uses the living room curtains for her dress and the curtain sash for a belt. When Rosemary sees her mother wearing the red gown, the girl says that Lily looks like a movie star. After that, Lily and Jim go to the premiere in their hearse.

CHAPTER VII. THE GARDEN OF EDEN

- Lily starts teaching again. But Lily tells her children not to make friends with the other school kids because she wants to discourage any type of favoritism. Rosemary and Little Jim love to hike, ride horses, and race trains. One day, in the middle of the summer, Lily and Rosemary are driving off-road across the Colorado Plateau. Lily notices a herd of wild horses grazing, so she decides to catch a horse. Rosemary is impressed when Lily catches a wild half broke mare without even a rope. It is a red one with black legs. They ride home. Rosemary wants to keep the mare but Lily says it has to be set free. When Rosemary opens the gate, the horse just stands there.
- Lily and Jim decide to send the kids to boarding school. Lily wants to get her degree while their children are studying because she desires to have a permanent teaching job. Little Jim, who is eight, goes to a boy’s school in



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Flagstaff; Rosemary, who is nine, goes to a Catholic girl's school in Prescott. Little Jim and Rosemary hate being in school. Little Jim runs away as often as he can manage and is given the name "Little Houdini." Rosemary is crass and undisciplined. The Mother Superior wants her to leave the Academy because Rosemary's grades are poor and her behavior is disruptive. Although Rosemary is studying in her second year, her grades and rowdiness get even worse, so the Mother Superior thinks that the school and Rosemary are not a good fit. Finally, Lily gets her college degree and takes Rosemary and Little Jim with her back to the ranch. When they arrive at home, the children are so happy that they run around hugging everything, horses, cowboys, and trees.

- Lily gets a job in Big Sandy, another little town with a one-room school. Rosemary does not want to return to the Academy. Instead she wants to live on the ranch and be an artist. When Lily is studying in Phoenix, her mother dies. Adam Casey, her father, has written her a letter. Adam is alone on the ranch, so he wants to be with his family. Lily and Rosemary decide to get down to Tucson, Arizona, to pick up Lily's father.
- Lily has not seen her father in several years. When Lily sees Adam, he is thin, with jaundiced skin, and his eyes have sunken deeply. Lily tells her father that she is there because she wants to take him home. Adam Casey only says that he is too sick to move and he wants to be buried in the KC. That night Adam dies. The next morning some of the other men in the boardinghouse help Lily carry her father's body out to the hearse and put it in the back.



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- Lily buries her father in the small stone-fenced cemetery. At Adam's request, he was laid to rest wearing his hundred-dollar Stetson. Lily discovers that Adam Casey owes a thousand dollars in back taxes on the Texas property. So she considers two choices: one is that she must sell the land to pay off the taxes; the other is to keep the land and pay the taxes by digging into the money they have saved to buy Hackberry. When Lily returns to the ranch, Jim and she sit down to figure out what they should do about the west Texas land. Finally, they decide to choose the second option to pay off the taxes. Lily chooses this option because she thinks the west Texas land calls to her for a deeper reason. For the first time in her life, she has the opportunity to own some land outright.
- Rosemary loves the roundups, except for one thing; she secretly roots for the cattle. She thinks they are kind and wise animals. Lily realizes that Rosemary helps the odd steer escape. One day, Lily is sent to bring back a lost steer, but Lily does not bring anything back; she says that she found nothing. After that, Jim sends Fidel Hanna, a Havasu cowhand, to find the steer. In fact, he is coming back driving the steer in front of him. Fidel says the steer was hiding way up a gulch.
- Lily receives a letter from Clarice Pearl, who works with the Arizona Department of Education. Marion Finch is a nurse. Clarice and Marion want to investigate the living conditions of the children of the Havasupai. Clarice asks Lily to drive the two ladies to the canyon and arrange for horses and a guide to get them down the long trail to the Havasupai village. The trail to the village is eight miles



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long. Lily and Rosemary help Miss Pearl and Miss Finch to find the village. The Havasupai live in a narrow valley on the banks of the Colorado River. When everybody arrives at the village, Miss Pearl and Miss Finch are so tired that they decide to rest. But Rosemary and Lily set out on a tour in the valley. The next day Miss Finch gives medical exams to the Havasupai children while Miss Pearl discusses their education with their parents, using Fidel as the interpreter.

- Fidel is tired of interpreting. He sits down next to Rosemary and Lily. He says that the two ladies think they are rescuing the children, but it is not true because the only thing they are doing is just making them unfit for both the valley and the world outside. The next day there is a long ride back to the canyon rim.
- Lily decides to send Rosemary to the Academy. Lily writes to the Mother Superior at the Academy in Prescott, telling her that Rosemary has matured and is eager to try boarding school once more. The Poms, the owners of the ranch, write a letter saying that they are going to sell the ranch to put their money in the munitions industry. Late on January morning, a big black car pulls up in front of the ranch house, and three men get out: Suit, he is the Poms' lawyer; Gaiters, he is a movie director who wants to buy a ranch; Boots, he is a rodeo cowboy who ends up running the ranch. Jim and Lily show them around the ranch. Jim says that his family has lived on the ranch for eleven years, and they love the place. Also, they know each and every one of those 180,000 acres. The new owner of the ranch is Gaiters. The family has to move to Phoenix and make a fresh start. Jim Smith sells all the horses to Gaiters except



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Patches. Jim gives her to the Havasupai. When Lily calls Rosemary to tell her they are leaving the ranch, she becomes hysterical because she will never return to the ranch.

CHAPTER VIII. GUMSHOES

- Lily and Jim are getting dentures. Lily is so pleased with her dentures that she shows them off at every opportunity. Lily begins to splurge on things that others might view as necessities. Lily and Jim buy a house on North Street, a dining room table, and a car to replace the hearse. It is a maroon Kaiser, a new kind of sedan made in California.
- Little Jim and Rosemary hate Phoenix. Both want to be back on the ranch. After a few months, Lily starts feeling a little penned in herself. The traffic drives her crazy because there are stoplights, cops with whistles, yellow lines, and white lines. In contrast, in Yavapai County, everyone drives wherever they want at whatever speed they want. Lily decides to take up flying lessons. She continues to work toward her pilot's license. One important thing about Phoenix is that there are a lot of jobs available, more than in Yavapai County. Jim gets a new job in a warehouse stocking airplane parts. The family has some money left that they decide to use to buy a few other small houses that they then rent out.
- When the family is living in Phoenix, people are worried about bombs. Every Saturday at noon, the air-raid siren is tested. If the siren sounds at any other time that means an attack is under way and you are supposed to run to the



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bomb shelters. One morning Rosemary and Lily are walking down Van Buren Street, when they see a bunch of people gathered there, gawking at an automatic donut-making machine. Next to it is a newsstand. When Lily glances down at the headlines, she first learns about the atom bomb falling on Hiroshima. Lily tries to explain to Rosemary about the bomb, but Rosemary cannot believe a single bomb has obliterated an entire city. Rosemary enrolls at St. Mary's, a Catholic school a few blocks from the house.

- Rosemary is fully focused on her art. For the first time, Lily suggests that Rosemary try modeling or beauty pageants. Lily signs Rosemary up for violin and piano lessons, but her instructor says she lacks the discipline to practice. After that, Lily enrolls her daughter in modeling school, where she learns how to walk with a book on her head and get out of a car without showing her underpants. But what Rosemary really wants to do is be an artist. Lily does not like that idea because she thinks that an artist never makes any money. Finally, Lily arranges for some lessons with Ernestine, an art teacher. Lily is enjoying her job, she is teaching math and English at a large high school. Also there are more rules for teachers than for students. Once, when Lily opens her purse in the teacher's lounge, one of the other teachers sees her little piston. Lily gets in trouble for having a gun at school. Lily begins to hate Phoenix.
- Jim is very bored with his job because he is not a desk man. He prefers to be at the ranch doing all his chores. That winter is hard in Phoenix. The school is closed and most businesses fold. The National Guard is called out to rescue



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people stranded in remote parts of the state. On the third day of the storm, a man from the Arizona Department of Agriculture asks for help because cattle are dying across the state. So ranchers need help. Jim is called out to help during a major blizzard. When he arrives back home two weeks later, he has lost twenty pounds. His face and hands are raw. But he is happy because he has been out doing what he is meant to do. A few days after Jim returns, he gets a call from Gaiters. He offers Jim his old job as a ranch manager. Jim discusses the idea with Lily and they decide not to return to work for someone else again.

- The next month Lily reads an article in the newspaper about the work Jim has done saving herds during a blizzard. Lily goes to see her husband in the warehouse, where Glenda, the floozy bookkeeper, is standing in her doorway, talking to him. When Glenda sees Lily, instead of seeming contrite, she gives her bosoms a little jiggle and looks at Jim and says that they are in trouble. After that, Lily is furious, but she does not want her husband to notice how she is feeling. Jim and Lily go to a cafeteria for lunch, and Lily does not say anything about Glenda. Lily wants to know if her husband has something going on with Glenda, but she does not want to confront him. Lily talks with Rosemary and explains to her everything about what she thinks is going on between Jim and Glenda. Lily explains that it is not spying, it is only investigating. Lily figures that if something is going on between Jim and Glenda, the odds favor lunchtime assignations. The first day of their investigation, Rosemary is hidden in the alley across the street and follows Jim when he comes out at lunch time. He has



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gone into a grocery store; he comes out with his lunch and he eats it. The second day, Rosemary goes to the same place, but some minutes later Rosemary talks to Jim. He asks her what is going on. Lily answers that she is trying to prove to herself and to Rosemary that Jim is a faithful husband. After that, all of them go to have lunch. But that night, Jim tells Lily that she does not need to be jealous. In a city it is normal that men have the company of women who are not their wives. She begins to trust him. Finally, Lily thinks that it is a good idea if all the family leaves. It is time to find a new place to go.

CHAPTER IX. THE FLYBOY

- One day in July, all the family move to Horse Mesa because it needs a teacher. It is a camp built for the men who work at Horse Mesa, which holds back the waters of the Salt River. Only thirteen families live over there. The family drives by massive cliffs of red and gold sandstone. After several miles on the Apache Trail, they come to an even narrower dirt road leading off to the north. In the town there is a truck which brings groceries twice a week from the commissary at Roosevelt Dam. There is one telephone in the community center. The town is safe and Rosemary and Little Jim spend the entire day at the lake. Jim gets a job driving a gravel truck with the Bureau of Land Reclamation. He fills potholes and rebuilds eroded washes along the entire length of the Apache Trail.
- The school at Horse Mesa goes through the eighth grade, so Lily has to send Rosemary and Little Jim off to boarding school. Rosemary enrolls at St. Joseph school in Tucson. There is a one-room school house so Lily can teach the way



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she is always meant to teach without the bureaucrats hanging over her shoulder. Lily begins to become involved in politics. She becomes the Democratic precinct captain in Horse Mesa and registers all 13 families in Horse Mesa to vote. Lily and Jim also take up a new hobby, hunting for uranium. They find a lot of uranium near a place called Frenchman's Flat. When Rosemary and Little Jim finish high school, they are enrolled in Arizona State University. Rosemary insists on studying art. Lily says that Rosemary can study art but she insists that Rosemary needs a teaching degree. After the first year in college, Little Jim meets Diane. After that, they get married, and Little Jim drops out of school in order to become a police officer.

- When Rosemary is in her third year in college, she and her friends start driving over to Fish Creek Canyon to swim. Rosemary always tells her mother about her funny stories. The new story is about a young air force pilot who she has met at the canyon, and he has told Rosemary that he is going to marry her. His name is Rex Walls, and he has grown up in West Virginia. Rosemary really likes Rex because he is the first man who takes her seriously as an artist.
- By the end of the summer, Rex and Rosemary are dating regularly. Rex always has interesting themes to talk about. He always talks about new energy sources such as solar energy, thermal energy, and wind energy. The most interesting thing about Rex is that he makes everything into an adventure. Jim confesses that he has never been astride a horse, so Rosemary teaches him all the things that she has learned about horses. Rosemary is a terrible poker player, and Jim



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explains to her the rules and how to play. While they are playing, Rex is drinking alcohol. Rosemary is worried because he is drunk, and he wants to drive. At the end, he turns the engine on, and drives into the darkness, down the mountainside on Agnes Weeps.

- Lily does not like Rex because Lily thinks he is a scalawag. And he is a danger to himself and others. Rosemary says that nobody is perfect. Later that day there is a knock on the door. Lily opens the door and sees that Rex is standing outside with a big bouquet of white lilies in his hand, and holds it out to Lily. Rex wants to apologize about the last night when he was drunk. He admits that it was inexcusable. Rex asks Lily if she likes to fly. If she wants he can take her up for a spin.
- Lily has not been up in a plane for years, so the idea thrills her, and she agrees to fly with Rex. The following Sunday, Rex goes to pick up Lily. Rosemary wants to go too, but Rex explains to her that his plane only has two seats. Rex introduces Lily to an old air force buddy called Gus. Rex says that the lady is the mother of his future bride. Finally, an orange plane appears; a single-engine two-seater with a glass canopy that Rex has shoved back. Rex has Lily sit in the front while he gets in the back. When they gain altitude, Lily has the sensation that she is an angel. They flow toward Horse Mesa, and then they follow the spine of the mountains to Fish Creek Canyon.
- One evening after dinner while Lily and Rosemary are doing the dishes, Rosemary tells her mother that Rex and Rosemary have decided to get



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married. Lily tells Rex and Rosemary that she will pay for everything only if they get married in a Catholic church, and they accept the idea. They rent a banquet hall at the Sands Hotel, in Phoenix. Lily helps Rosemary to pick out a wedding dress. Lily invites everyone she knows to the wedding. And she is going to wear her “Gone with the Wind” gown, but Jim says that he does not want her upstaging the bride. At the reception, Rex gives a big speech. Everyone starts dancing and enjoying the party. At the end, when the newlywed couple comes out of the hotel, all the guests are on the steps to wave good-bye. While Rex and Rosemary are getting in the car, Jim puts his arm around Lily and they watch the new couple take off up the street.

3.2.2. Setting

The setting helps the reader to understand about the time and location in which the story takes place. In this case, the setting of *Half Broke Horses* is going to be analyzed.

3.2.2.1. Place

The story takes place in numerous towns and cities such as Red Lake, Chicago, Ash Fork, Peach Spring, Phoenix, and others. But the main place of *Half Broke Horses* is located in western Texas. The Casey family lived on Salt Draw, which flowed into the Pecos River of West Texas.

3.2.2.2. Time

The story takes place from approximately 1911 to 1954. The story begins when Lily is ten, and it ends when Rosemary gets married, approximately in 1954.



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3.2.2.3. Weather conditions

The region in High Lonesome has its share of tornadoes, droughts and flash floods.

3.2.2.4. Social conditions

Lily and her siblings have a difficult childhood. They suffer discrimination because their father has a speech impediment. His accent is Irish and people have a problem understanding him. Children in the town make fun of his speech.

It is difficult to survive during the Great Depression, and Lily's husband does not earn enough money for the family. The family is constantly short on cash and food; Lily decides to earn extra money by playing poker, selling bootleg liquor, and riding in horse races.

3.2.2.5. Mood or atmosphere

Women living in the West in the early XX century are really complicated. Lily is a survivor, never giving up no matter how difficult her life becomes. She is a woman who is not afraid of working hard and searching for the impossible.

3.2.3. Plot

The plot is the way writers organize events to develop their basic idea; it is the logical sequence of events. It has a beginning, middle and end.

Lily Casey Smith was born in 1901 on Salt Draw. She is the main character in the novel *Half Broke Horses*. From a young age, Lily is a hard-



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working girl because she takes care of her siblings, trains horses, does every farm chore that needs to be done, and learns how to break horses. When she is fifteen, she travels alone, 500 miles across the rugged western territory, to be a schoolteacher. Later, she decides to move to Chicago where she finds her true love, until she figures out he has another wife. Finally, Lily meets Jim, her second husband, and they have two kids, Rosemary and Little Jim. Lily engages in activities that occasionally defy early twentieth century notions of womanhood; she learns to drive a car and takes airplane lessons. The novel ends when Rosemary and Rex get married at the Sands Hotel, in Phoenix.

Half Broke Horses has a different writing style from Jeannette Walls' memoir, *The Glass Castle*. The former is a type of extended prose narrative. It is a book that involves a great story, with fascinating details about the American Southwest at the turn of the twentieth century when Jeannette's grandmother lived. The stories were handed down from generation to generation, but Jeannette Walls was unable to substantiate everything.

Jeannette confesses in the Author's note of *Half Broke Horses* that she had to use her imagination to fill in some of the gaps that neither she, her mother nor her relatives could recall. *Half Broke Horses*, is not fiction, Jeannette says,

I didn't think of the book as fiction. Lily Casey Smith was a very real woman, and to say that I created her or the events of her life is giving me more credit than I'm due. However, since I don't have the words from Lily



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herself, and since I have also drawn on my imagination to fill in details that are hazy or missing—and I've changed a few names to protect people's privacy—the only honest thing to do is call the book a novel. (*Half Broke Horses* 272)

Half Broke Horses is a historical novel because this work centers on events from the past; in this case Jeannette's grandmother, Lily, from the time she was a child. This work relates a rich and fascinating history from the early twentieth century to the post-WWII era. This Historical novel is combined with fictional characterizations in order to protect the privacy of the people involved. Also, this work is a historical novel because it has a fascinating setting in a significant period of history and it attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age when Jeannette's grandmother lived.

3.2.3.1. The Author's style

Jeannette Walls, in the novel *Half Broke Horses*, uses descriptive writing. For example, when the writer makes place descriptions, she focuses attention on details in order to evoke images and create scenes in small towns and cities.

When the train pulled into Chicago, I took down my little suitcase and walked through the station into the street. I'd been in crowds before--county fairs, livestock auctions--but I'd never seen such a mass of people, all moving together like a herd, jostling and elbowing, nor had my ears been assaulted by such a ferocious din, with cars honking, trolleys clanging, and hydraulic jackhammers blasting away.



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I walked around, gawking at the skyscrapers going up everywhere, then I made my way over to the lake--deep blue, flat, and as endless as the range, only it was water, fresh and flowing and cold even in the summer. Coming from a place where people measured water by the pailful, where they fought and sometimes killed each other over water, it was hard to imagine, even though I was looking at it, that billions of gallons of fresh water--I figured it had to be billions or even trillions--could be sitting there undrunk, unused, and uncontested. (*Half Broke Horses* 69)

3.2.3.2. Rising Action

The rising action begins when Lily is outside with her little brother, Buster, and her little sister, Helen. They are finishing their chores for the day. Lily realizes that a flash flood is coming, so they decide to go to a large cottonwood tree just before the flood hits.

3.2.3.3. Falling Action

The falling action occurs when Rosemary and Rex have decided to get married at the Sands Hotel, in Phoenix. At the end, when the newlywed couple comes out of the hotel, all the guests are on the steps to wave good-bye. While Rex and Rosemary are getting in the car, Jim puts his arm around Lily and they watch the new couple take off up the street.



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3.2.4. Conflict

3.2.4.1. Protagonist

The protagonist of the novel *Half Broke Horses* is Lily Casey Smith who is growing up on a cattle ranch in Arizona. The novel narrates Lily's life from her rural childhood to her adulthood, putting a great emphasis on her self-reliance, and a desire to do the right thing even in the face of adversity.

3.2.4.2. Antagonist

The greatest antagonists in this novel are the different stereotypes of the day. During those times women had hard times and they had only one particular role, raising children. Lily enjoys her freedom doing activities, and what she really likes is to occasionally defy early twentieth century notions of womanhood; some people do not allow her to do that. Lily takes airplane lessons. Also, she learns to train horses, break horses, and drive a car.

3.2.4.3. Climax

The climax of this plot is when the protagonist tries to resolve the conflict. When Lily is in Chicago, she finds what she thinks is her true love, Ted Conover, who becomes Lily's husband, until she figures out he has another wife. Lily desires to do the right thing, so she moves back to the ranch where she starts a new life even though she does not believe in love anymore.



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3.2.4.4. Outcome

The outcome is the final resolution of the story or the end. Rosemary and Rex get married at the Sands Hotel, in Phoenix. At the end, all the guests are on the steps to say good-bye to the new couple.

3.2.5. Characters

Major Characters

- **Lily Casey Smith.** She is the protagonist, who was born in 1901 on Salt Draw. During her early years her mother tells her that she may have problems marrying her off because she doesn't have the makings of a lady. She is a little bowlegged because she rides horses all the time. Lily's teeth jut out, so she covers her mouth with a red silk fan that her mother has bought for her.
- **Helen.** She is Lily's sister. Helen has inherited her mother's constitution. She has tiny hands and her feet are small. The sisters read poetry to each other.
- **Buster.** He is Lily's little brother. He has an irresistible smile, and he is one of the fastest and smoothest talkers in the country.
- **Daisy.** She is Lily's mother. She is dainty, only four and a half feet tall, and her feet are so small that she has to wear button-up boots made for girls. She keeps her hands neatly white by rubbing them with pastes made from honey, lemon juice and borax. She wears a tight corset in order to give her a teeny waist.



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- **Adam Casey.** He is Lily's father. His primary occupation is the carriage horses, breeding them and training them.
- **Robert Casey.** He is Adam's father. He has come over from Ireland during a potato blight. He joins the Second Dragoons, one of the first cavalry units of the U.S. Army, where he serves under Colonel Robert E. Lee, and is stationed on the Texas frontier, fighting Comanches, Apaches, and Kiowas.

Minor Characters

- **Apache.** He is the ranch hand. He is not an Indian. When he is six, he is captured by the Apaches. He serves the U.S. Cavalry as a scout; Robert Casey serves too. Apache runs away from the Cavalry and goes home with Robert Casey to live with his family.
- **Lupe.** She is the household helper who has gotten pregnant and she is forced to leave her village outside Juarez after the baby is born. Because she has brought shame on her family, no one can marry her.
- **Mr. Clutterbuck.** He is a man who buys and sells eggs. He pays a penny per egg, and then he sells them for two cents each.
- **Mother Albertina.** She is the Mother Superior at the Santa Fe Academy Lily attends. She is tall and wrinkled, has walnut colored skin and thick black brows forming a single line above her eyes. She appears calm, never raises her voice or loses her temper. She always calls the students, "my girls".



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- **Zachary Clemens.** He and his dirt-poor family live in an outbuilding on a corner of the Casey's property.
- **Dorothy Clemens.** She is Zachary's daughter. She is a big boned young woman with ample curves. She knows how to skin a cow and trap rabbits, and she cultivates the vegetable garden.
- **Old Man Pucket.** He is a stumpy little guy. He is the man who shoots the Great Danes.
- **Patches.** It is Lily's favorite horse. She travels to Red Lake, Arizona, on Patches.
- **Priscilla Loosefoot.** She is a half-Navajo woman. She wears a cowboy hat, and her thick black hair spills out. Her mother has traded her to a settler family for two mules, but they have beaten her and treated her like animal, so she has decided to run away. She collects and sells herbs.
- **Mr. MacIntosh.** He is the county superintendent at Red Lake. He is a slight man with a very narrow head. He wears a fedora and a stiff white paper collar.
- **Minnie Hanagan.** She is Lily's roommate in Chicago. She is a spunky Irish girl with green eyes and luxurious black hair who works in a beer-bottling plant.
- **Ted Conover.** He has been a boxer, but he works as a vacuum-cleaner salesman for the Electric Suction Sweeper Company. He has gray eyes and a lumpy nose. Also, he becomes Lily's husband in Chicago.



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- **Margaret.** She is Ted's real wife. She seems tired; she has gray hair and a careworn smile.
- **Rooster.** His real name is Orville Stubbs. He is Lily's friend in Red Lake.
- **Jim Smith.** He is a Mormon who becomes Lily's husband. He teaches Lily how to drive.
- **Lot Smith.** He is a soldier, pioneer, and ranger who has been one of Brigham Young's chief lieutenants when the Mormons went to war with the U.S. government. He is Jim Smith's father, he has 8 wives and 52 kids.
- **Father Cavanaugh.** He is a gaunt, humorless man who is the priest in Red Lake.
- **Granny Combs.** She is the midwife who delivered Rosemary.
- **Rosemary.** She is Lily and Jim's daughter. Lily calls her first daughter Rosemary because roses are her favorite flower, and Lily thinks Mary is a good Catholic girl's name. Also, it is a useful herb.
- **Little Jim.** He is Lily and Jim's son.
- **Mr. Lee.** He is a Chinese neighbor and bootlegger.
- **Camel Brothers.** They are from Scotland and they know a lot about sheep. They are the sheep owners who get Lily and Jim a place running a ranch.
- **Mei-Mei.** It is Rosemary's lamb. Mei-Mei in Chinese means little sister.



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- **Blackie Camel.** He is the oldest of the Camel brothers. He is a swag-bellied man with a bushy black beard.
- **Old Jake.** He is the helper at New Ranch in Seligman.
- **Uncle Eli:** He is a Mormon elder and he is no fan of Lily's.
- **Deputy Johnson:** He is a rawboned chain-smoker who wears an old fedora and has a droopy mustache. He is the father of Johnny Johnson.
- **Johnny Johnson:** He is one of the classmates of Rosemary at Peach Springs.
- **Fidel Hanna:** a young Havasupai. He is a tall, good looking boy with an angular face.
- **Clarice Pearl and Marion Finch:** they investigate living conditions of Havasu kids.
- **Ernestine:** She is Rosemary's art teacher.
- **Rex Walls:** He is the man who marries Rosemary. He is a rangy fellow with narrow dark eyes, a devilish grin, and slicked-back black hair.
- **Gus:** He is an old Air Force friend of Rex.
- **Diane:** She is Little Jim's wife.

3.2.5.1. Point of View

Half Broke Horses is written in the first person. Jeannette Walls narrates from the point of view of her grandmother, Lily Casey Smith, who is the main



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character. The book relates Lily's life from the time she was ten. Also, Jeannette says, "I wrote the story in the first person because I want to capture Lily's distinctive voice, which I clearly recall." (*Half Broke Horses* 272)

3.2.5.2. Theme

There is one important theme that is going to be analyzed.

- **Self-reliance**

Lily is a courageous, resourceful and wonderful woman who overcomes poverty and tragedy with a positive attitude. These personal characteristics help her to confront difficult situations. Lily Casey's actions are different from those of many of the stereotypes of her day. This makes us wonder what the changes or similarities are in the lifestyles of women today, especially in the workforce. Also, this novel teaches us to stay loyal to our loved ones, be strong with respect to unpredictability of life, no matter what time period we live in. In addition, the novel teaches us that the different things that motivate people are the things that they really enjoy; we all just have to believe in ourselves.



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4. Chapter IV: Analysis of the selected works and Wall's influence on American Literature

Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury in their book, *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, affirm that American literature has changed from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. American literature has changed in different ways from the early period, from 1776 to contemporary times; also, from 1946 to the present. At the beginning, writers only described the new continent and Puritans, and others focused on topics such as patriotism. Later, people preferred a romantic type of thought in which the imagination and fantasy dominated literature.

During the XX century the development of literature was influenced by different movements that led to the emergence of new styles and new literary types. In the early XX century, modernism was determined by the development of new technologies, and scientific discoveries.

In the late XX – early XXI century this movement produced the emergence of postmodernism which is motivated by constant change in society. In some ways, this movement returned to the dominance of spiritual values, which incorporate the concept of God, in contrast to material values and science, such as, the two authors affirm in their book.

The history of literary ideas in America has not been predominantly philosophical but rather social, political, “ a search for some new and



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imperative moral order," as Alfred Kazin wrote," to unite American culture in the service of one imperative ideal or another. (417)

As well the authors stress that postmodernism ends on the wane, and this period is known as the age of no style because its writing is based generally on a deep-rooted search for a late Modern form and style in an age of cultural glut. (392)

In this respect, Jeannette Walls' literary works, *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses*, describe her life and her grandmother's life. These books have two stories that raise very important ethical issues that appeal to a return to moral values in modern society.

Jeannette Walls relates in her memoir, *The Glass Castle*, a story of a girl who grows up in a very dysfunctional family in which her parents pay little attention to their children. In fact, the little girl is growing up on her own, taking on the responsibilities of adulthood, while the parents are only focused on their own lives. *Half Broke Horses*, by the same author, is written after *The Glass Castle*, but it is a novel. It is the story of the author's maternal grandmother, Lily Casey. She is a courageous, resourceful and wonderful woman who overcomes poverty and tragedy with a positive attitude. Lily Casey's actions are against many of the stereotypes of her day.

Nowadays, writers can write about themselves instead of creating something imaginary. People want to know about each other, so Jeannette Walls in her books, *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses*, is relating true events of her



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life to produce extraordinary literary works. The writer invites the reader into a different world while describing amazing places and making anecdotes.

Thus, taking into account all of the above mentioned, it is possible to conclude that Jeannette Walls has created two remarkable pieces of literature, *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses*, which may be viewed as great contributions to American literature.



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Conclusions

After having finished the analysis of Jeannette Walls' works, I can state that Jeannette, who is now a famous author, was reflecting on her past in her books. She is the author of the *The Glass Castle* and *Half Broke Horses*, which contain amazing revelations to help people to discover how to overcome adversity; it is important to understand that these works, which have been written with honesty and love, can enrich our understanding of humanity and increase our knowledge because they portray human experiences.

Each person's history is reflected according to the memories or experiences that each has lived. Literature helps us to maintain alive memories through different genres such as memoirs and novels.

A memoir is the most personal form of the written word, and gives a great opportunity to the writer to produce the best quality work. *The Glass Castle* is an example of great quality work; it is an international bestseller and has been translated into twenty-three languages.

On the other hand, a historical novel centers on individuals or events from the past. It helps people to remember significant events which have marked relevance in the past that can be used as examples now. *Half Broke Horses* is a book that relates the story of a spirited woman, a passionate teacher and talker. However, Jeannette tells her grandmother's story without historical accuracy. She says, "I saw the book more in the vein of an oral history, a retelling of



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stories handed down by my family through the years, and undertaken with the storyteller's traditional liberties." (272)

To create a memoir is a great challenge because the writer must hook the reader to a true story. Jeannette is not just telling a story, she is relaying the story of her life and she feels it is important to get the reader interested in her telling the story as if it were happening as it is being read.

All the events and happenings Jeannette and her grandmother have to undergo, such as the marriages, the loss of someone in their family, or of their friends, the unfaithfulness of some men, the Great Depression, and poverty, play a significant role in Jeannette Walls' literary work because these events are profound and traumatic. Walls encourages her readers by her example of fortitude, and leaves the reader astonished at all she has been through, amazed at how she still maintains loyalty to her family.

In addition, the writer suggests a return to traditional values because she apparently views family values as fundamental values of society. Modern society has dehumanized people. Therefore, it is only a return to traditional family values that can save modern society from total degradation.

However, it is obvious that without everything that Jeannette Walls went through in her life, she would not have become the successful woman she is today, and consequently her memoir teaches readers that every experience in life shapes the person you become. These works give us an opportunity to



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understand literature as a record of human experience and examples of human fortitude in the face of life's problems.

Finally, to end my thesis, I want to present some major phrases from the books of Jeannette Walls.

- “Life's too short to care about what other people think. Besides, they should accept us for who we are.” (*The Glass Castle*)
- “No child is born a delinquent. They only became that way if nobody loved them when they were kids. Unloved children grow up to be serial murderers or alcoholics.” (*The Glass Castle*)
- “Most important thing in life is learning how to fall.”(*Half Broke Horses*)
- “I realized that you can get so used to certain luxuries that you start to think they're necessities, but when you have to forgo them, you come to see that you don't need them after all. There was a big difference between needing things and wanting things—though a lot of people had trouble telling the two apart—and at the ranch, I could see, we'd have pretty much everything we'd need but precious little else.” (*Half Broke Horses*)

Readers can use this thesis as an important tool for classes in order to help students gain intimate understanding of literature texts. The author recommends *The Glass Castle* or *Half Broke Horses* for Middle School and High School from 7th to 12th grades because these novels can be analyzed



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and understood by the age groups in these levels. Also, the vocabulary used in the novels requires only a medium level of understanding.

To analyze *The Glass Castle* or *Half Broke Horses* teachers can use a variety of teaching materials to help students to comprehend the texts, and keep students interested and engaged in real-life issues or moral themes. Some of these activities are multiple choice questions, short answer questions, essays, journals, role plays, comprehension questions, quotes, and fun activities, such as group projects, games, critical thinking activities, character descriptions, brainstorming, etc. These activities will help teachers to evaluate how well the students have grasped the material. Also, these activities will help students to understand the text in fun and entertaining ways. Finally, these activities will encourage students to interact with each other, to be creative and to think openly.

Character Descriptions: The aim of this activity is to provide a short description of all the major characters of the memoir, *The Glass Castle*. This activity can be done as a “Before Reading Activity” in order to engage students in reading the book. This can be printed out as a study guide for students, used as a key for leading a role play, and finally to have a class discussion.

Main characters: Jeannette Walls, Rex Walls, Rose Mary Walls, Lori Walls, Lilly Ruth Maureen Walls (Maureen), Mary Charlene Walls, and Brian Walls. Readers can use the complete descriptions of each character from *The*



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Glass Castle detailed in this thesis on pages 110-112. After having dramatized the scenes, students can work with the following questions:

- Which character do you identify most with and why?
- Can you identify physical characteristics and personality characteristics, such as strengths, flaws, the greatest need or want, greatest fear?
- What do you think about parenting?
- What do you consider to be the characteristics of a good parent?
- What is the meaning of the title?

Quotes: Another activity can be to read page 5 of *The Glass Castle*. After that, students have to respond to the following quotes from page 5 of the text: Identify the specific characters that are talking in this section of the memoir. Identify what they are talking about, and discuss any significance this conversation or statement might have with respect to the plot of the story:

- “I’m fine. You’re the one...”
- “You’re too easily embarrassed...”

Journal: Students have to read a paragraph, analyze it, answer some questions and finally make a journal. Students have to read the first paragraph



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on page 9. After that, students have to answer some questions in order to create their journal:

- What do we learn within this first paragraph?
- List 4 things we learn about the character and her life as a child.
- How can pride damage the relationship between parents and children?
- Can having too much pride cause a problem within a family?

Short answer questions: These activities are just an example of a great variety of tasks that teachers can apply in their classrooms. While students are reading, teacher can ask them some questions. As an example teacher can ask questions from pages 9-14.

- What do you think about Jeannette´s parents?
- How is Jeannette treated in the hospital?

I really like the beginning of the memoir, *The Glass Castle*, because it can help people to overcome adversity; it is important to understand that *The Glass Castle* can enrich our understanding of humanity and increase our knowledge because it portrays human experiences.

That is why I decided to work with 9th level from Ausubel High School. It is located in San Jose de Balzay, Cuenca. I was working with 20 students on



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the next activity in order to prove that *The Glass Castle* can help them to find moral lessons. The activity is based on the first chapter called “Woman on the Street”, from pages three to five.

“You want to help me change my life?” Mom asked. “I’m fine. You’re the one who needs help. Your values are all confused.” (5)

Jeannette Walls, the author of *The Glass Castle*, begins her memoir by relating a time when she is in a taxi and unexpectedly sees her mother scavenging. Jeannette fears that her mother, Rose Mary, might see her, call her name, or that someone that is going to the same party will discover the secrets about Jeannette’s family. Suddenly, Jeannette asks the driver to take her back home to Park Avenue. When she arrives home, she worries about the situation that she has experienced with her mother. She cannot enjoy living in a luxury apartment if she worries all the time about her parents living on the streets. She worries about them, but she is also embarrassed by them. She has tried to help them many times, but both of them always say that they are living the way they want to. Jeannette doesn't feel well, so she decides to call a friend of her mother’s, and leave a message. A few days later, Jeannette and Rose Mary meet each other in a Chinese restaurant.

While they are waiting for the food, Jeannette tells her mother she is worried about her and she wants to know if there is anything she can do for her, and her mother answers that she needs an electrolysis treatment. Jeannette thinks her mother is not serious, so she tells her that she was embarrassed to



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see her picking through trash in the East Village the other day. Her mother, Rose Mary, tells her that she cannot change her life; Rose Mary is happy being who she is. If Jeannette sees her mother near a dumpster it is because Rose Mary is recycling because people are too wasteful. Jeannette`s mother tells her that she should accept her mother and her father for who they are. Finally, Rose Mary encourages her daughter by answering that Jeannette should just tell people the truth about them.

Questions

- What feelings does Jeannette have when she first sees her mother?
- Compare and contrast Jeannette`s apartment with where Rose Mary lives.
- What is the meaning of the above quotation? Is Rose Mary right or wrong?
- Why does the writer open with this incident?

After students have read the above pages and have answered the questions, I can conclude that their answers have something in common. Values are the good habits that people have to keep. Today, society is seeing a terrible lack of values; because of this, everybody is discriminating and being discriminated against. Society needs a mindset change because people are forgetting the values of extreme importance in order to live in a better way. In addition, students agree with Rose Mary because she lives her life quietly



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focusing on what she really wants. While Jeannette does not know what her priorities are, or she does not accept her reality. Rose Mary teaches Jeannette that she needs to be honest in order to accept herself for what she is, and to be able to accept her mother for what Rose Mary is, not what Jeannette can do for her. If a person becomes famous, it is important to remember how that person was some time ago. Besides, being a successful person does not mean that their past life has had no problems. Finally, the past teaches people to be better since we learn from our experiences. The students' answers are in the annexes from pages 191-194.

Another activity is a class discussion where students have to read the third chapter called "WELCH" from pages 222 to 241. Students conclude that Jeannette and Lori have had many troubles with their parents, but the girls never lost faith in order to achieve one of their dreams, to travel to New York. Also, Jeannette has to endure a hard life because her parents are not a good influence on her; an alcoholic father and a mother engaged in painting had forgotten about children. Rex, Jeannette's father, does not show good values to his children, making mistakes like stealing money from Lori and Jeannette. Also, Rex gets drunk and goes missing for three days. This is an example of a dysfunctional family, but if a person wants to move on, that person must believe in herself like Jeannette does and work hard in order to study and be better each day. Jeannette teaches us how everybody should confront life with optimism and earnestness no matter how many problems we have over us.



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Jeannette had to make some mature decisions in order to be the successful person she is today.

After the analysis of *The Glass Castle* students can realize that literary texts can be used in a didactic way. Students may consider that it is interesting to finish reading the book. In addition, students may want to learn and understand how the author could survive with so many of sad experiences. Students can become really engaged in *The Glass Castle*.

Finally, I would like to say that the objectives of these activities have actually been reached to a certain extent effectively because students presented with the material were able to find moral messages. Moreover, students contributed with their ideas and they were able to accept the ideas from their classmates concerning respect and tolerance.



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Annexes

These photographs were from the novels, and were touched up by Cristina Espinel R.



Figure 5. Jeannette Walls, age two



Figure 6. Lily Casey Smith, Ashfork, Arizona, 1934



Figure 7. The KC Ranch on the Rio Hondo



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Figure 8. Lily Casey, age thirteen, at the Sisters of Loretto



Figure 9. Lily Casey with Patches

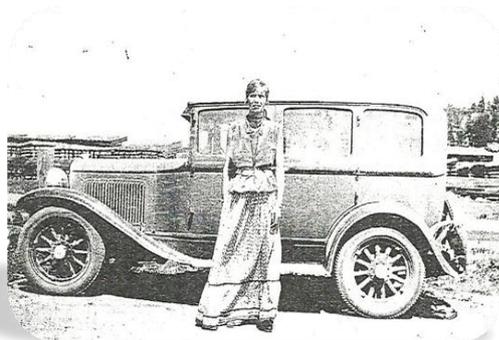


Figure 10. Helen Casey, Red Lake



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Figure 11. Big Jim holding Rosemary



Figure 12. Lily Casey Smith before a flying lesson



Figure 13. Rosemary and Little Jim on Old Buck



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Figure 14. Rosemary, age sixteen, Horse Mesa



Figure 15. Rosemary and Rex Walls, on their wedding day, 1956



Figure 16. Rex and Rosemary after their wedding



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Group 1

1. What feelings does Jeannette have when she first sees her mother?

She was embarrassed. She thought about the people of the party she was going to. So she hid in the taxi and she told the driver to leave; then she felt angry with herself and hated her clothes and stuff because of the way she treated her mom.

2. Compare and contrast Jeannette's apartment with where Rose Mary lives.

It was elegant and had a lot of books and paints; had a nice sofa and a nice place to read; Rose Mary's place was messy and didn't have many things because she was poor.

3. What is the meaning of the above quotation? Is Rose Mary right or wrong?

She said that she might not have a lot of money but her morals were right and she accepted the way she was, while her daughter was ashamed of the way her parents were. I think she's right.

4. Why does the writer open with this incident?

Because it is the start of the story, I mean, it's when she started to feel wrong and bad about herself, and decided that she had to change the way she felt.



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Group 2

1. What feelings does Jeannette have when she first sees her mother?

Jeannette was ashamed and she didn't want her mom to be like that. Jeannette wanted to forget her past and her problems. She tried to hide her past and her family because she had an excellent life without her parents.

2. Compare and contrast Jeannette's apartment with where Rose Mary lives.

Jeannette's apartment was amazing with all kind of things, and Rose Mary lived in the street, in the Dumpster, eating trash. Jeannette thought that her life was better than her mother life.

3. What is the meaning of the above quotation? Is Rose Mary right or wrong?

Rose Mary was right because Jeannette was forgetting her values and love for her mom. Jeannette had to accept her mom like she was. Values are important to have a good life in all kinds of situations. Also it is important to be tolerant with different people every day.

4. Why does the writer open with this incident?

Because she wants to teach us how to be a good person and accept all people the way they really are.



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Group 3

1. What feelings does Jeannette have when she first sees her mother?

She feels shame, deception, and sadness because her mom is poor and nobody knows her past and she really is ashamed.

2. Compare and contrast Jeannette's apartment with where Rose Mary lives.

Jeannette lives in a luxury apartment and her mom lives in the street. Jeannette's apartment has a beautiful living room and Rose Mary doesn't have anything.

3. What is the meaning of the above quotation? Is Rose Mary right or wrong?

Rose Mary is right because Jeannette shouldn't be ashamed about her parents. Jeannette has to remember that her mom gave her life and Jeannette doesn't accept her mother at all.

4. Why does the writer open with this incident?

Because she wants to teach us the truth about reality; some people desire to change their past but they can't.



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Group 4

1. What feelings does Jeannette have when she first sees her mother?

She felt shamed because she didn't want to see her mom in those conditions.

2. Compare and contrast Jeannette's apartment with where Rose Mary lives.

She had a lot of luxuries like Persian rugs, silver things and more. Her mom didn't have a bed. Rose Mary had to survive with the things that she had found in the garbage.

3. What is the meaning of the above quotation? Is Rose Mary right or wrong?

She was right because Jeannette was confused about what she really wanted. Rose Mary's priorities were values because she thought she was doing something good for the world, recycling. Rose Mary wanted to teach Jeannette that she was supposed to be proud of her past.

4. Why does the writer open with this incident?

Because she wants to express how she really feels; it is an important fact. Also, she wants to teach us a moral lesson.



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