The Glass Castle

# Mini Socratic Seminar

**Directions**: Answer the following questions in three or more complete sentences. Be thoughtful and thorough. For each question, refer to at least one example from the book. **All answers must be handwritten.**

**Each question is worth ten points, but you only get the credit if you meet the above expectations.**

1. Jeannette Walls has said, “We didn’t have food, but at the same time, we were luckier than other kids.” In what ways do you think they were “luckier?” Do you think if you were Jeannette, you would be able to say the same thing?

2. Jeannette has said, “Some people think my parents were absolute monsters and should’ve had their children taken away from them. Some think they were these great free-spirited creatures who had a lot of wisdom that a lot of parents don’t [have.]” What do you think? Should the kids have been taken away? What then? What would they have lost?

3. Jeannette has said that people in all walks of life have written to her to say that even though her story is “so weird and so bizarre,” they can relate to it in some way. What does this say about families? In what ways did each of you relate to the story? If you could not relate to the story, explain why not.

4. Make two lists of as many adjectives you can think of--one that describes Rex and the other that describes Rose Mary. You must have an equal number of positive and negative adjectives for each. Did you attitude towards either parent change as you read the book? Ultimately, what is your opinion of each?

5. In interviews, Jeannette has discussed scenes in the book in which she did something that could have gotten her in serious trouble. She said, “I was very lucky, I was lucky that I didn’t kill them and I didn’t actually shoot Billy Dean and I didn’t shoplift…All kids get into trouble, but for kids from my socio-economic group, if you get into trouble it is so hard to get back on track.” Do you think that is true in our society? What do you think kept the Walls children from getting into serious trouble?

6. Jeannette claims that “despite our economic standing, Mom was a bit of a snob and always made us feel superior  to everyone else. She would never describe us as poor. She would say we just had a very serious cash-flow problem.” Is her mother’s optimistic outlook admirable or not? Why?

7. Jeannette has said, “If I had lost my belief in my father, I would have lost my belief in the future.” What do you think she means? Why do you think she defended her father longer than anyone else in the family? Did he deserve this loyalty? Why or why not?

8. One anonymous reviewer of the book said, “The true purpose of this compelling tale is to remind us that no one is doomed by the accident of his or her birth.” Do you think this is true? If not, how would you change the quote to accurately reflect reality? How does the book reflect the idea?

9. Is there value in **nonconformity** (look this word up if you are unfamiliar with it)? Do we live in a society that encourages being different? Make a list of the ways in which Rex and Rose Mary did the unexpected. Which of these moments were positive and which were negative?

10. Bob Dylan once wrote, “A man is a success if he gets up in the morning and gets to bed at night and in between does what he wants to do.” Although it seems a stretch to use the word “success” in any discussion of the Walls’ lifestyle, using Dylan’s definition, in what ways could we say Rex and Rose Mary were a success? Based on the conclusion, how do you think Jeannette would define success?

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