



# The Glass Castle

Jeannette Walls

Jeannette Walls's memoir of a chaotic, nomadic childhood is unforgettable, tender, and full of fierce family love. It is the kind of book that begs to be unpacked over warm mugs and second helpings.

**Reading level:** Easy

**Best for:** clubs who love true stories with heart, grit, and plenty to talk about over a slow dinner

## Discussion

### WARM-UP

1. What is a small comfort (a snack, a blanket, a song) you reached for while reading this one?
2. Was there a scene early on that made you want to call someone in your family? Who, and why?

### DIGGING IN

1. Jeannette finds wonder in the smallest things. What is a tiny, ordinary thing from your own childhood that felt magical at the time?
2. The Walls kids look out for each other in their own quiet ways. Who in your life has been a sibling-like protector, and how did that feel?
3. Rex's 'Glass Castle' promise stayed with many readers. What is a hopeful story or dream a grown-up in your life once told you, and how do you carry it now?
4. There are moments of real warmth tucked inside hard times. Which scene comforted you most, even unexpectedly?

### GOING DEEP

1. Jeannette writes about her parents with so much tenderness alongside the hurt. How did the book sit with you emotionally by the last pages, and what feelings lingered the next morning?
2. Memoir asks us to hold love and disappointment at the same time. Did reading this shift how you think about forgiving or understanding people in your own life? No need to share more than feels good.

## On the table

- 🍲 **Slow-simmered pot of chili with cornbread**  
Hearty, humble, Appalachian-leaning comfort that feeds a crowd with little fuss
- 🍪 **Buttered biscuits with honey and jam**  
A nod to the rural Southern stretches of Jeannette's childhood, warm and nurturing
- 🍷 **Skillet apple crisp with vanilla ice cream**  
Sweet, homey, and the kind of dessert that invites a second helping and a long conversation

## To sip

- 🍷 **Spiced apple cider, warm on the stove (no alcohol)**  
Cozy and crowd-friendly, evokes desert nights and mountain mornings
- 🍵 **Honey chamomile tea (no alcohol)**  
Gentle and soothing for a memoir that asks a lot of the heart
- 🍷 **Bourbon hot toddy**  
A grown-up wink to a story shadowed by Rex's drinking, kept warm and small

## Run of show

- 6:30**      **Soft landing**  
Cider on the stove, playlist low, blankets on the couch. No rush to start.
- 6:45**      **Bowls and biscuits**  
Serve chili and cornbread buffet-style so people can settle in with full plates.
- 7:10**      **Warm-up questions**  
Open with the two cozy warm-ups while everyone eats. Let it wander.
- 7:35**      **Heart of the conversation**  
Move into theme and deep questions. Pass a candle or a mug as a 'talking object' if it helps quieter voices.
- 8:20**      **Dessert break and trivia**  
Bring out the apple crisp and play a few rounds of trivia, low stakes.
- 8:45**      **Scorecards and slow goodbye**  
Fill out scorecards together, swap bookmarks, send leftovers home.

## HOST TIPS

- Tell guests ahead that the book touches on hardship and addiction, so people can opt in to deeper sharing as they wish.
- Have tissues nearby and keep the lighting soft. Lamps and candles over overhead lights.
- If conversation gets heavy, pivot to a food or childhood memory question to let the room breathe.

## Playlist

*warm Americana and acoustic folk, like a porch light left on for you*

- 01 Landslide - Fleetwood Mac
- 02 Wagon Wheel - Old Crow Medicine Show
- 03 Country Roads - John Denver
- 04 The House That Built Me - Miranda Lambert
- 05 Harvest Moon - Neil Young
- 06 Helplessly Hoping - Crosby, Stills & Nash
- 07 Carolina in My Mind - James Taylor
- 08 Cover Me Up - Jason Isbell

# Trivia

1. Who is the author of *The Glass Castle*? (Jeannette Walls)
2. In what year was *The Glass Castle* first published? (2005)
3. What genre is the book? (Memoir)
4. What career did Jeannette Walls have as an adult in New York? (Journalist (gossip columnist))
5. What are the first names of Jeannette's parents in the book? (Rex and Rose Mary)
6. Much of the family's later childhood takes place in what Appalachian state? (West Virginia)
7. What 2017 film adaptation shares the book's title, and who starred as Jeannette? (*The Glass Castle*, starring Brie Larson)
8. What follow-up novel did Jeannette Walls publish in 2009, inspired by her grandmother? (*Half Broke Horses*)

## Rate the book

|                       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Heart                 | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Coziness of the read  | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Stayed-with-me factor | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Made me call someone  | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Comfort food pairing  | ☆☆☆☆☆ |

One word for how this book left me: \_\_\_\_\_

A scene I will think about next time it rains: \_\_\_\_\_

Who I want to pass this book to next: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU'RE INVITED

## Come Curl Up With *The Glass Castle*

Bring your softest sweater and an open heart. We are simmering chili, warming cider, and talking about Jeannette Walls's unforgettable memoir.



**Plan your own book club night**

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