

The Glass Castle

Discussion Questions #1 (pages 1-53)

Memoir: Account of one's own life or personal experiences.

Pages 1-28

A Woman on the Street:

1. From what person point of view is the story told, and why is this point of view an essential stylistic choice for a memoir?
2. What is the purpose of this opening chapter?
3. Why does Jeannette go into such detail to describe her apartment?

The Desert

4. How old is the author at the start of this section? Why is that significant?
5. Why does Jeannette like the hospital? How is it different from her home?
6. How does Jeannette leave the hospital? What does this tell us about Jeannette's father?
7. What leads up to Jeannette's mom saying, "Don't be so sentimental" (18).
8. What is the "skedaddle" and why is it done?
9. Why do Mom and Dad prefer the more desolate and isolated places?
10. What is the Glass Castle?
11. Why does Jeannette's mother say she married Jeannette's father? What does this tell us about her mother? What does this tell us about her father?
12. Who is Mary Charlene? How did she affect Jeannette's mother? How did she affect Jeannette's father?

Pages 28-53

13. How does Jeannette define "living somewhere"? How do you define "living somewhere"?
14. Why does Jeannette feel like Quixote? Why is this tragic?
15. What is the figurative (analytical) meaning of Jeannette saying, "...I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt into fire" (34).
16. What/whom does the Joshua tree symbolize? Explain
17. "It's the Joshua tree's struggle that gives it its beauty" (38). Analyze the meaning of this quote.
18. What does Jeannette's dad give her for Christmas this year? What does this tell us about him?
19. What, do you think, triggered the fight where Dad almost runs over Mom?
20. "It seemed like we'd have to ride it out" (49). Explain the literal and symbolic meanings of this quote.