AP LANGUAGE & COMPOSITION

2026-2027 - Summer Reading Assignment

Clarence High School

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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Welcome to AP Language and Composition! You have chosen to spend your junior year working hard to become a better reader, writer, and thinker. Registering to take an AP class in high school proves that you are a dedicated learner and eager for a challenge. Because AP classes are designed to simulate college-level courses, the expectations and workload are heavier than in the traditional English classes you have experienced so far. Diligence and hard work in this course will lead you toward earning college credit on the AP exam in May. We look forward to a wonderful year together!

Your summer assignment:

- Read and annotate *The Glass Castle*, by Jeannette Walls;
- Be ready to take an MCQ test on *The Glass Castle* during the first week of school.
- Be ready to complete a timed writing task on *The Glass Castle* during the second week of school.

We strongly recommend that you purchase your own copy of this text so that you can easily annotate within the pages. You may also borrow a book from school and use post-its to take your notes.

In order to prepare for the tests the first week of school (and to prepare yourself for the style of analysis and discussion), consider the following questions as you read:

AUTHOR'S CRAFT

1. How does Walls use the nonlinear structure of *The Glass Castle* to shape the reader's perception of her childhood and family? What effect does starting the memoir with the scene of her seeing her mother on the street have?

2. Identify a passage where Walls describes a difficult or traumatic event. How does her tone and choice of words influence your emotional response? What does she do to maintain a matter-of-fact or even humorous tone?

3. The glass castle itself becomes a recurring symbol throughout the memoir. What does it come to represent for Jeannette, and how does its meaning evolve as the story progresses?

4. How does Walls use juxtaposition (e.g., between her parents' ideals and their reality, or between poverty and joy) to reveal the complexity of her family life?

5. Walls often invites readers to trust her perspective, feel empathy for her experiences, and understand the logic behind her family's choices. Choose a passage where she does this particularly well. What strategies does she use to shape how the audience thinks or feels—and why do you think they are effective?

PLOT & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

6. How do Rex and Rose Mary Walls both empower and endanger their children? Cite specific examples where their parenting choices have both positive and negative effects.

7. What moments in the memoir mark turning points for Jeannette's personal growth or sense of self? How do these moments reflect broader themes of independence, resilience, or survival?

8. How does the memoir challenge or complicate typical narratives about poverty? How do the Walls children respond differently to their circumstances?

9. Explore the relationship between Jeannette and one of her siblings (e.g., Lori, Brian, or Maureen). How do these relationships shift over time, and what do they reveal about family loyalty and individual agency?

10. In the memoir's conclusion, how does Walls portray her relationship with her family in adulthood? Has her perspective changed? What does this suggest about the nature of forgiveness, acceptance, or unresolved conflict?

(You d**o not need to respond to the questions in writing** - use them to help you focus, analyze, and annotate as you read.)