

The Glass Castle Reading Journals

by Sydney Lorton

Reading Response (R.R.)/Dialectical Journal (D.J.)

Pages 1-53

Quotes:

“‘What the hell,’ Dad said, ‘It’s Christmas. You can have a planet if you want.’ And he gave me Venus.” - pg 40

“We laughed about all the kids who believed in the Santa myth and got nothing for Christmas but a bunch of cheap plastic toys. ‘Years from now, when all the junk they got is broken and long forgotten,’ Dad said, ‘you’ll still have your stars.’” - pg 41

Comments:

I love how much sentiment is in their words. Although their family doesn’t have much if anything, she is so happy and feels so blessed that her father could give her a planet, and that forever they would have their stars. To some that would mean nothing, but to them it meant everything, and it was much better than anything money could buy. Her family isn’t normal, and that is stated very clearly, but in her young mind they are a wonderful, and mostly normal family. It’s all she has ever known, and although the life she lives seems dangerous or unloving to some people, to her it is ideal or at least well known. There is a certain type of innocence in the violence and conflict in her life, mainly through her young brain telling the story from her view.

Response:

I love how Sydney wrote in sympathy, how she related to that little girl who was grateful for everything she had. I thought it was amazing how she realized their family was different but was thankful for their realistic views. -Angeline

Quote, Comment, Question (Q.C.Q.)
Pages 54-112

Quote:

“‘You know, Mountain Goat, I still feel bad about making you leave your rock collection back in Battle Mountain,’ he said. ‘But we had to travel light.’

‘I know,’ I said. ‘It was more than one thing, anyway.’

‘I’m not so sure,’ Dad said. ‘Every damn thing in the universe can be broken down into smaller things, even atoms, even protons, so theoretically speaking, I guess you had a winning case. A collection of things should be considered one thing. Unfortunately, theory don’t always carry the day.’” - pg. 99

Comment:

I think the dad, Rex Walls, is my favorite character. He is innovative, sensitive, and temperamental, and also has a sweet side which is shown through the interactions with his children. Although he’s considered a tyrant and not the typical family man to many around him, his children love him unconditionally and look up to him. He has given them the stars and looks out for them in his own Rex Walls way and takes their side when he thinks he should. He has promised them the world, but to the reader it may seem as though he has stolen it instead. He gives them a type of counterfeit happiness, but for them it works. He also seems generally pretty smart and innovative, and it makes me wonder why he has a hard time getting jobs when he seems eligible (based off of intelligence). I wonder what happened in his past and what stories he has to tell.

Question:

If her dad knows so much about physics or at least seems intelligent why is it that he has a hard time finding work? What happened to him that makes so many people ignore his amount of knowledge and prefer him gone? Why is he an alcoholic?

Got, Didn't Get, Question (G.G.Q.)
Pages 113-171

Got:

In this section of the book, they pick up and leave to head to Welch after staying in Arizona for a while and then losing work. The children become acquainted with their father’s parents, who at

the least are interesting people. It's difficult for them to get along with their grandma because she is harsh, racist, and overall cold. Their mother tells them their grandma was neglected as an orphan and endured a lot of pain when she was growing up, and all she has ever known is misery. She wallows in it, letting it control and consume her. She has a very short temper when it comes to her grandkids as well, and after an awkward mishap with Brian, the main character's younger brother, their grandma snapped and threw them out. Brian's pants needed mending, but since Grandma -- let's call her Erma, her real name -- wouldn't let him take them off and run wild naked, she had to fix them while he was wearing them. It then became an uncomfortable situation where the other children walked in on. They then accused Erma of inappropriate touching and got in a fight. After that, their family was kicked out and needed somewhere to stay. They ended up in a worn down cottage with barely any furniture, a kitchen with no ceiling, and no insulation. As the winter began, their house became so cold that their pet lizard froze to death. As school began, they started to be picked on by other kids, either for the fun of it, or because they were so skinny and their clothes were so worn out. Fighting became a large part of where they lived, whether it be for defence or to fit in. Some kids wanted to fight them because of how they looked or how their family was. In one fight with an annoying kid named Ernie, Jeanette and her brother had to come up with a plan to fight them with rocks. They ended up putting a bunch of stones on a mattress and loading it up by a tree so they could fling it at them next time they rode their bikes past their house. Living in Welch was tough for them. I now understand a bit more of her perspective throughout the story. As Jeanette gets older, she begins realizing how hard her life is, and how different it is than others. Like how in sixth grade, she would have nothing to eat, was very skinny, and had ruined old clothes. She started to understand why others were picking on her. She also is beginning to lose belief in her drunk father. She used to think he could do anything, that his missions and stories were real, but is now seeing his true identity and what he is really up to.

Didn't Get:

I don't understand how they get along, and how sickness or lack of hygiene hasn't caught up with them yet. I also find it interesting how in some ways, they are living life to the fullest. If you look on the bright side, they have traveled, gotten to know some interesting folks, and although they live off of scraps, they also have their adventures. It is unsafe and it is horrible for them sometimes, if not most of the time, but it's an adventure that not many people go on, and the love that they have in their family is true, yet confusing as well. It's not necessarily a

conventional love or way of growing up or raising a family, but it's the Walls way, and I think that's in an odd way, kind of spectacular.

Question:

How does she take care of herself and her siblings once they reach high school and need to move on from relying on their parent's advice and adventures? Will their past experiences help or hurt them as independent adults?

Habits of Heart and Mind Analysis (HOHAM Analysis) ***Pages 172-230***

Passage:

"After that man left, I was so furious that I ran up the hillside and started hurling rocks -- big rocks that it took two hands to lift -- into the garbage pit. Except for Erma, I had never hated anyone more than I hated that child-welfare man. Not even Ernie Goad. At least when Ernie and his gang came around yelling that we were trash, we could fight them off with rocks. But if the child-welfare man got it into his head that we were an unfit family, we'd have no way to drive him off. He'd launch an investigation and end up sending me and Brian and Lori and Maureen off to live with different families, even though we all got good grades and knew Morse code. I couldn't let that happen. No way was I going to lose Brian and Lori and Maureen." - pg. 194

HOHAM's:

Significance, **Perspective**, Evidence, **Connection**, Supposition, **Self Advocacy**, Intellectual Curiosity, Integrity, Cooperation, **Unlimited Potential**

Response:

I feel that in this passage, perspective is a HOHAM that can be easily applied because of the possible difference or similarity between the perspective of the reader and author. To some, it would be healthiest and in the family's best interest to find the children a comfortable and loving home. I believed that at first, and from my perspective it seemed at first as though she was doing a disservice to her family by refusing this offer. As continued to read the passage, I started to really understand why it wasn't an option she was leaping into or even considering. I thought about it from her perspective of her family being torn apart, and then applied it to my life. If I was living in a bad situation, but with a dysfunctional but overall loving family, I wouldn't want to be separated from them. It would tear me apart if I was taken away from my sister, my mom,

my dad. I understand that her parents have done some horrible things, or aren't the best role models. They had an unorthodox way of raising their kids, which later on her mother states she didn't really want, and consider only themselves without realizing the consequences or reality of the situation. But they also show them love, in their own way, and try their best to make their children strong and tough, so that they can be sure to survive in the real world. Although their approach to parenting isn't popular, it seemed to work overall in an odd way. By thirteen, Jeannette had a job, was saving money, budgeting, and becoming aware of what she wanted her future to be. She was able to make it in reality because she was forced into needing to make it, and had such determination to get out of the small town she felt trapped in. When I was thirteen, I was spending my allowance on candy, toys, and phone cases, didn't understand how to budget, and didn't know the first thing about my future or planning it. Honestly, I still don't know much of my future. She was farther ahead than most, and although she was in a rough spot most of her childhood, she became strong from it, and was her own advocate both growing up and in adulthood.

Talk to the Text
Pages 231-288

Passages:

"Two weeks later, Dad had a heart attack. When I got to the hospital, he was in bed in the emergency room, his eyes closed. Mom and Lori were standing next to him. 'It's just the machines keeping him alive at this point,' Mom said.

I knew Dad would have hated that, spending his final moments in a hospital hooked up to machines. He'd have wanted to be out in the wild somewhere. He always said that when he died, we should put him on a mountaintop and let the buzzards and coyotes tear his body apart. I had this crazy urge to scoop him up in my arms and charge through the doors -- to check out Rex Walls-style one last time.

Instead, I took his hand. It was warm and heavy. An hour later, they turned the machines off."
- pg. 280

"We started talking about some of Dad's greatest escapades: letting me pet the cheetah, taking us Demon Hunting, giving us stars for Christmas. 'We should drink a toast to Rex,' John said. Mom stared at the ceiling, miming perplexed thought. 'I've got it.' She held up her glass. 'Life with your father was never boring.'

We raised our glasses. I could almost hear Dad chuckling at Mom's comment in the way he always did when he was truly enjoying something." - pg. 288

Comments:

These passages are so bittersweet. The way they remember their father and his unique personality, the way he dreamt and spoke about the universe, gave them their own planets and stars, and talked about the Glass Castle and all of his plans. How they did the skedaddle and traveled to new places and got abstract experiences with him. Even though he was indeed a drunk, to them he was their dad, their father, one of the few people that was always known to them. I love how the children were able to make a name for themselves, and once they began to live their own lives, they were able to look at their family in a different way. They could appreciate their families without having to be surrounded by them all of the time. Their peculiar lifestyle gave them the chance to live a different kind of life, and fully enjoy every aspect of life, and when they struggled, it made the simple things so many people take for granted so much better and worth it to them.

Thoughts/Advice:

I would say that there isn't much advice I could give them. Honestly, I would say that they should remember their father for what good he did and what man he was when at his best and life wasn't dragging him down. They should also enjoy the lives they now have and always remember where they came from. But what from what I read, it seems that they have already taken this advice to heart. I find it spectacular and inspiring that they came from nothing and were still able to make lives for themselves, and not just lives, successful ones. I think I should be taking advice from them instead.