

Family communication | 'the glass castle'



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In "The Glass Castle" Jeanette tells us about the story of her life as she had lived it. She and her siblings had lived a life that she describes as having a lot of stressors. Her story has memoir in which she proves to the reader that living with bad parents and poverty do not really determine that the kids will lead a miserable future just as their parents. In this book, Walls reveals her life as difficult during her bringing up but yet love existed within the family. In this paper, we are therefore going to look at those stressors that the family went through;

Jeanette sees her mother coming out of a dumpster with some ragged clothes tied around her neck. Her mother looks for a home to live in and this leaves her with no choice but to look for any place that she can lay her head and also find something that can fill her stomach. It is very sad for Jeanette to see her mother this way as it would feel for anyone to watch their mothers go through this type of embarrassments.

Back in her childhood life, Jeanette suffers some serious burns as she boils hotdogs and her dress catches fire from the stove she is using. This leaves her to spend many days in a local hospital near her home area in Arizona. Her parents prove to be so irresponsible as they don't take as much care as it would be imagined even by the hospital staff. The rumor goes throughout the hospital but Jeanette does not discuss this issue with the parents.

Her father takes the risk of grabbing and sneaking his little daughter out of the hospital escaping all the bills that he was intended to pay for the hospital to release the daughter. This happens even before she heals completely. The escape leaves the family with no choice but running away from their

hometown for they would highly deal with the low. They have to travel long distance and through hot deserts. They later settle in several towns in which the father is unable to pay house rent and this makes them keep on vacating.

The father becomes a drunkard and cannot hold onto his job despite his intelligence and talent on mechanical background. This makes the families life a living hell full of poverty and problems that never come to an end. His promise to his children to build a good house for the family fails as he cannot raise the amount to put up such a house. The father's behavior and failure lives the children helpless and end up begging their mother to work and bring food to the table.

Luckily, the mother holds a degree in teaching but cannot get herself a job for she is lazy and the children have to drag her out of bed. This behavior has severally made her loose her job despite the fact that her residential area lucks qualified teachers. She later secures a job but her salary does not fully help the family. The father demands for her paycheck and spends the money on his drink and his own benefits.

This miserable state keeps on taking place for a long time living the children to go on sleeping on uncomfortable hard boxes and watching their parents fight in daily bases. The children's bellies rumble every time due to hanger. They feed on anything that would fill their bellies and not for the sake of having a balanced diet meal like in other families. For this case, the mother has to teach them how to take rotten food down their throat while they hold the noses. The family went through these stressors and it affects their

relationship since the kids see the father as irresponsible and harsh as they fear him. It also affects the husband-wife relationship since the mother has to fight her husband daily. The communication is on its negative side for the mother does not hold any ability to fight for her right to manage the salary she earns. The children also suffer silently as they have to spend their nights on hard boxes but cannot communicate to the father and express their grievances.

Despite all poverty and stressors that they experience, the family has a genuine and strong love towards each other. They remain loyal and the family's father Rex is very encouraging, tender and wise when handling his children and wife whenever he is sober. As Jeanette gives the reader her memoir, she explains her life so well to ensure that she gives the real story that has experienced in her growing up.

Jeanette and her siblings grow in the worst conditions that no one can ever deserve or think of but it does not change their feelings towards their parents. They continue loving them without realizing how cruel they have been until when they grow up and mature (Jeanette, p134). Jeanette spends her teenage life in the west side of Virginia where the father is forced to retreat to their home area after experiencing a miserable life in Arizona.

Here, the life of this family does not get better but continues to hit its worst points as they live under a roof that leaks. Rex tries to mend the roof but it does not do them any good either. In fact, they also have to face challenges as they have nowhere to dispose their rubbish and waste. The family is

forced to put up with a smelly condition as they dispose the wastes in small holes that they dig.

Food also continues to be another problem for they cannot afford to buy any and they almost go without it. Jean is forced to go to high school and dig leftovers from the garbage as her father continues to drink irresponsibly as usual. As their lives get worse and miserable, Jeanette's mother ends up doing the most awful things one can ever imagine. Jeanette and her siblings find a ring made of diamond and decide to sell it so that they could buy food. The mother does not agree with this idea since she wants to maintain her dignity. This action leaves the family in the some state of lacking food and starving.

When Jeanette or her siblings go out playing with other kids, they are mocked and addressed as kids who are health epidemic for they live in garbage places. Her family and their neighbors always fight for they keep on picking on their perverted situation. Hours spent in school are also not favoring to her either; she has to steal other kid's food or hide in the bathroom at lunch hours while the others take their food. After lunch, she comes out and collects the leftovers and eats them for she has no choice over it.

She later gets tired of this life and decides to go to New York where she gets further studies. She leaves her family with the aim of getting knowledge that will secure her a good job and enable her to take care of her family. While she is in New York, her father gets ill and is admitted to the hospital suffering

from Tuberculosis. She visits him and pleads with him not to leave the hospital before he fully recovers.

Later, she receives a call from her parents that they were homeless and had no place to go. She decides to move in with them for she still has great love for them despite the life they had offered in during her child life (Jeannette, p100). People around Jeanette discourage her about this idea saying that it was not good to give the homeless a place to stay for it makes them lazy and reluctant on finding their own home; his pisses her off but she does not show it to them.

Jeanette is forced to change the idea of attending a private school while her parents have no home. Instead, she opts to stay and take care of them but her brothers go against her decision telling her that her mother owned a whole lot of jewelry she could sell and that she has a land in Texas where her husband and her could go and live. Her husband behavior does not change and she is forced to live him. She has although kept a secret land away from her family and when Jeanette discovers this; she is really annoyed with her.

After her brother's death, Mary then goes to live in his land her in which her life does not change. She continues living miserably especially now that her communication with her children and husband had been disturbed. It is true to say that the love of the daughter towards the mother by now has changed unlike before when she was still a young girl and innocent to place judgment on her parents' treatment towards them.

Jeanette later marries Eric whom she has dated for five years. She moves in with him to a better house since Eric came from a rich family. She tries her

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best to take care of her younger sister who tends to take the wrong direction in her life. Jeanette's life has changed and she feels that her siblings should follow her steps for they have faced the same miserable lives.

Her mother cannot hold on to the problems she is facing and goes ahead to borrow money from Jeanette's husband a step that annoys her to a great extent. What annoys her most is the fact that she has kept the land that she owns away from the family despite all the poverty and problems that they went through during their earlier life. As if this is not enough, she goes ahead to borrow money from Jeanette's new husband so that she could purchase the other half of the land.

Later, Jeanette visits her father who tells her that she is suffering from a disease that he contracted while fighting with a Nigerian who happened to be a drug dealer. He later suffers from a heart attack and is placed in a machine that supports his life. He spends his last moments with Jeanette who holds his arm recalling of how he had told them that he would prefer his body placed on a mountain when he dies- he later dies after an hour and the machine turned off. Jeanette grieves her father's death and in one year, she leaves her husband as she saw him as not the right man for her.

Work cited

Jeanette Walls. *The Glass Castle: A Memoir*. Scribner, 2006: 45-250