

# Southfield Public Library

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## *Maus: a survivor's tale (part 1) by Art Spiegelman*

*Discussion questions used at SPL August 9 & 10, 2016*

1. To what extent is Vladek's story typical of what Jews experienced during the Holocaust? In what ways is it not typical?
2. What do you think about the depictions of each ethnic/racial/religious group? Jewish people are Mice; Polish people are Pigs; and German people/Nazis are Cats. What do these portrayals convey about each group? Why did Art Spiegelman choose the animals he did to represent different nationalities? What stereotypes do they convey?
3. At the time of publication and Pulitzer Prize buzz some critics asked the author "Don't you think that a comic book about Auschwitz is in bad taste?" What do you think? Did you like or dislike the graphic visuals accompanying the narrative? Do they add or detract from the storyline?
4. Is this graphic novel about father (Vladek) or son (Art) or both (their relationship)? Consider the possibility that the subject matter might be the struggles of father and son laced with the legacy of being the son of a Holocaust survivor. Part 1 ends with entering the Auschwitz camp but begins with Art as a grown man in the USA. ...centered more on his father before Auschwitz and after his wife's death.
5. What themes are present in this book? Familial guilt; Race and class; Survivor's guilt; Survival; or Luck just to name a few. Which ones did you see?
6. What effects did the war have on Mr. Spiegelman? He already had tendencies of OCD and frugality but did the war exasperate (increase the intensity of) them?
7. Did you want to know more about Anja (Artie's mother)? Her story and the things that lead to her death as well as what was in her diaries/journals. Why do you think she killed herself?
8. Page 60—His dream comes true. Do you believe that Spiegelman was able to see the future? Do you believe in dreams? Have you ever had a dream or feeling come true?
9. Parental control or fatherly love. Which would you say Vladek feels towards his son? Does Artie see it the same way or is he more inclined to be passive and accepting because of his father surviving the Holocaust? Page 69. example of father throwing away Art's coat. Is this one reason Artie's relationship with his father is "strained"?

10. There is a comic strip within this graphic novel (comic strip) "Prisoner on the HELL Planet: a case study" Artie shares his mother's suicide. Why do you think the author does this?
11. Are there any panels that resonate with you? Which ones and why?
12. This book ends abruptly; will you continue the story by reading Part 2: *And Here My Troubles Begin*? Why or Why not?

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## *General discussion questions*

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author’s writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author’s use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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*Title:*

*Discussion questions taken from a website:*

*website address:*

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