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Maus I & II
BY ART SPIEGELMAN



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ISBN 978-1-60389-263-6
Item No. 201585

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All references come from the Pantheon edition of *Maus I*, copyright 1986, and the Pantheon edition of *Maus II*, copyright 1991.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Pre-Reading

Historical Events

Objective: Understanding the use of personal testimony to comprehend historical events

Activity

To have experienced and survived the Holocaust is beyond ordinary human understanding. However, many Holocaust survivors have shared the story of their experiences for others to hear or read. While official written accounts of a historical event do not include individual experiences and feelings, testimonials give others a personal account of what happened to one individual. The first-hand account of the experience has authenticity; the fact that the speaker was actually there contributes to his or her authority. Testimonials usually have an intense, emotional impact and are used to help people imagine what it was like to experience the Holocaust.

Select one Holocaust testimonial to read and use as your source for your letter. [Visit the Holocaust Museum Website at www.ushmm.org to obtain information on people who survived the Holocaust.]

Use the following handout, Writing a Letter to a Holocaust Survivor, to help you plan your thoughts. Then write the survivor that you choose a letter that includes the following:

- An introduction that includes **who** you are, **why** you are writing, and a short summary of **what** you want to know about the person to whom you are writing.
- A main paragraph that explains your response to the person's testimony. If you have questions to ask the person, include an explanation of the reasons you are asking the questions.
- A conclusion that describes what you hope for this person.

Use the correct letter format with the following elements:

- heading
- inside address
- consistent use of the block or semi-block style
- correct spacing
- correct greeting and closing
- correct punctuation

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapter 1**Reading Check**

Objective: Understanding character values and motivations

Activity

As Vladek relates the story of how he met his wife Anna, he reveals things that are important to him. What are they? Support your responses with quotations from what Vladek says. Use the **Chapter 1 Reading Check Response Sheet** on the following page.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapter 3**Debate****Objective:** Relating ideas in the text to life**Activity**

Spiegelman gives his book the subtitle "A Survivor's Tale." When people discuss the Holocaust or any tragedy, a question often asked is why certain people survive and others die.

Debate:

1. Respond to the survey on the next page.
2. Form groups according to the survey. (All people who put a 4 beside "luck" are in a group, a 4 beside "faith" are another group, etc.)
3. Prepare your argument using examples both from *Maus I* and your own experience.
4. Present opinions to the class.

Survey

Rank the following statements on a scale of 1 – 4 with 4 being the most likely and 1 being the least likely and 4 being the most likely.

People survive horrible circumstances primarily because:

- ___ A. they have good luck.
- ___ B. they have more faith, they pray, and they are given divine protection.
- ___ C. they have inherent strength, in terms of endurance, perseverance, or ingenuity.
- ___ D. they have a positive attitude, are willing to work hard, and refuse to give up.
- ___ E. they are able to adjust, adapt, or do whatever they must in order to survive.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus II: Chapters 1 – 2

Imagery and Theme

Objective: Understanding the way visual images combine with words to create thematic ideas

Activity

Discuss the ideas and feelings that come to mind when you look at the details of the image and read the conversation around it. On the **Images and Ideas Sheet**, record the ideas that you decide the images suggests. Include an explanation of the details that have led to this idea.

After completing the chart, state a few thematic ideas that are developed by some of the images. Each group should share its ideas with the class. We have supplied one example for you.

Images in Chapter 1:

- Pg. 29: The very last panel
- Pgs. 30 – 31: The kapo's cruelty contrasting with his treatment of Vladek
- Pg 32: The irony of the kapo's comment, "Otherwise I'd be a nothing like you..."
- Pgs. 33 – 34: The futility of helping a fellow prisoner
- Pg. 35: The randomness of death in the camp
- Pgs. 35, 37: The irony of Vladek's comment, "And I had it still happy there" on pg. 35 contrasted with his comment, "Was she happy" on pg. 37.

Images in Chapter 2:

- Pgs. 41 – 41: Artie, men with business propositions, and Artie's psychiatrist, all wearing masks
- Pgs. 41 – 43: Flies around Artie at his drawing table, which is on top of a pile of dead bodies
- Pgs. 42 – 46: Artie getting smaller/younger/larger/smaller
- Pg. 43: The drawing of an actual dog and a framed photograph of a pet cat
- Pg. 70: The drawings of the crematoriums and the ovens
- Pg. 72: The drawings of open graves and burning bodies
- Pg. 72: The drawing of Artie and Françoise discussing Vladek's moans as he sleeps
- Pg. 41: The background, outside of Art's office, looking like the barbed wire of a concentration camp
- Pgs. 41 – 43: The visual pun of time flies
- Pgs. 41 – 43: The uncompleted cliché, "Time flies (when you're having fun)"
- Pg. 49: The difficulties of surviving