INSIDE STORIES

The Complete Maus

By Art Spiegelman

Teaching notes prepared by Jan May

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Victorian Association for the Teaching of English

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Inside Stories

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Edited by Tony Thompson

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INTRODUCTION

The VCAA is to be congratulated for listing a multimodal text such as *Maus* on the VCE list. *Maus* is already studied in some forward thinking schools in Victoria, as well being listed interstate and commonly taught overseas. However, there may still be arguments from those who claim *Maus* is simply a comic book and therefore unworthy of study at senior secondary levels. The same people may argue comic strips are a confined and narrowly defined way of telling a story. But they are missing the richness and sophistication of the genre. Texts take many forms and individual authors employ their own strategies to create their narratives. Reading a graphic text is a different experience to reading a novel and yes, does require students to develop a different skill set as part of their study but the same can be said about their studies of plays, films, poetry, autobiographies, biographies and other multimodal texts.

An excellent starting point to familiarise yourself with the graphic text genre is to read the article by Catherine Beavis published on the VCAA website. In her discussion, 'The literary and artistic merit of the graphic text as new textual genre and hybrid literary/artistic form', Beavis unpacks the many reasons why such texts are a sophisticated literary and artistic form worthy of close study. 'As a genre, it combines visual and verbal modes to create rich and complex narratives, managing sequence, space and time in ways that require significantly different forms of 'reading' than do primarily verbal forms, such as the novel.'[1] Her analysis also reveals and explains some of the metalanguage needed by students studying *Maus*, as well as recommending a number of resources, including the excellent publication by Scott McLeod, *Understanding Comics: the invisible art,* itself a comic book that should be obtained by any school teaching *Maus*, along with the absolutely vital *MetaMaus,* in which Art Spiegelman records the entire journey on which the creation of *Maus* took him.

Art Spiegelman invested thirteen years of his life creating *The Complete Maus*; a long journey that originated in a three-page comic strip created in 1971 for an underground comic book, *Funny Aminals* (sic). The brief was for submissions telling a story using anthropomorphic characters. Spiegelman was inspired when shown a collection of old racist animated cartoons in a cinema class. At first he planned to draw an animated cartoon style story about the black experience in America called 'Ku Klux Kats' but became intrigued after further research about the cat-mouse metaphor and its links to his own childhood story—the persecution of Jews in Hitler's Germany. Spiegelman found examples of Nazi propaganda portraying Jews as vermin. He relates this anecdote in *MetaMaus*:

> *'The most shockingly relevant anti-Semitic work I found was "The Eternal Jew", a 1940 German 'documentary' that portrayed Jews in a ghetto swarming in tight quarters, bearded caftaned creatures, and then a cut to Jews as mice—or rather rats—swarming in a sewer, with a title card that said "Jews are the rats" or the "vermin of mankind". This made it clear to me that this dehumanisation was at the very heart of the killing project.'* [2]

[1] Beavis, Catherine Griffith University 'The literary and artistic merit of the graphic text as new textual genre and hybrid literary/artistic form' *VCAA, 2013*

[2] p. 115 Spiegelman, Art *MetaMaus: A look inside a modern classic, Maus*, Pantheon, 2013

The Complete Maus was originally published in two volumes. The first, *My Father Bleeds History* was published in 1986 to great critical acclaim. *And Here My Troubles Began* followed in 1991 and in 1992, Spiegelman was awarded a prestigious Pulitzer Prize for his work. He is also the creator of a number of other graphic texts, as well as having drawn many covers for *The New Yorker* magazine. Spiegelman is a long-time resident of New York City, living very close to where the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre took place in 2001. He records his experiences of this terrible event in a graphic text, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, recalling the utter panic he and his wife felt, both as parents and New Yorkers, as they witnessed the collapse of the two towers. Their daughter was attending school in the vicinity of the attack, and the text graphically recalls the overwhelming fear and horror as events unfolded. Spiegelman once again drew with brutal honesty on his own experiences in the autobiographical *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!*

It is now time to let Art Spiegelman to directly tell you himself about the creation of *Maus*:
<http://www.pbs.org/pov/inheritance/photo_gallery_special_maus.php#.UoF2kKVhopE>.
This link, along with the film *The Art of Spiegelman* and *MetaMaus* make excellent starting points for your exploration of this astonishing text.

WAYS INTO THE TEXT

- A suggested starting point is to discuss with your students what they know about the Holocaust. Find out what books they have read, films and television programs they have seen. What do they know about World War II in general? Playing the film trailer for *The Book Thief*, reading an excerpt from books such as *The Diary of Anne Frank, If This is a Man* or *Moments of Reprieve* by Primo Levi, *Night* by Elie Wiesel could help start the discussion.
- Some historical context is necessary for a full understanding of *Maus,* especially as the Holocaust is the overarching connector of the text*;* however, this should not be overdone at the expense of the time needed in class to appreciate the many other elements of such a multi-layered text. It is also worth remembering that Vladek—and Art—teach the reader much throughout the text. Maps, diagrams, statistics and other details are laid out for us. An excellent site for students to visit is that of Yad Vashem, located in Jerusalem. Get students to explore the website, particularly the Holocaust Resource Centre, the Photo Archive, the Shoah Names Database and the Remembrance links <http://www.yadvashem.org>.
- The link below will take you straight to Richieu, Spiegelman's page on the Yad Vashem website. Students can discuss what they see and then search themselves for other people, named in *Maus*, who perished in the Holocaust. (A hint: when searching for surnames such as 'Spiegelman' or 'Zylberberg', enter 'Sosnowiec' or 'Czestochowa' as the place name to narrow the results.) <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/nameDetails.html?itemId=8123043&language=en>.
- Other good websites are the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—<http://www.ushmm.org> and the Jewish Holocaust Museum in Melbourne—<http://www.jhc.org.au>.
- Susanne Haake has created a magnificent website at www.maustale.com. This is a project she undertook after being granted a Pauline Glass Memorial scholarship to study at Yad Vashem in 2012. As well as providing other useful resources on *Maus*, Susanne's site (although set up as a Year 11 unit of work) also offers a range of written and visual information about the Holocaust. Just click on the 'Supplementary Material' link at the side.
- Remember the suggestion in the introduction to purchase *MetaMaus*! It comes with a hyperlinked DVD that contains enough material to teach the text for a whole year. Play students some of Art's recorded interviews with Vladek and let them develop a feel for his real voice. Discuss whether the way Art has written a nuanced form of his father's voice matches what is heard on the recordings. Hook-up to a data projector and look at the family photographs, Art's notebooks and drawings, as well as other material important to the creation of *The Complete Maus*. But wait there's more…the *MetaMaus* DVD also includes a digital file of the whole of the text. Students can view the pages on a larger screen.
- A map of Europe on the classroom wall can provide an easy backdrop to understand distances; particularly Vladek's march from Auschwitz to Gross-

Rosen and his long journey back to Sosnowiec when the war ends. Use different coloured pins for the important towns and the various concentration camp locations.

- Art Spiegelman, through the various online and print resources about his work, will himself provide much information about the actual process of creating a comic. Students will need the right vocabulary to use when writing responses to *Maus*; frame, panel, gutter, bleeding, speech balloons or bubbles, narrative boxes, splash panel, angles, borders, thought balloons or bubbles, and borderless panels. This link provides a worksheet with basic terminology for comics: <http://www.readingwithpictures.org/wpcontent/uploads/2008/03/Basic-Comics-Terminology.pdf>.
- Tell students a story, or ask them to write their own, and break it down into 8–10 panels. The aim is to minimise words, to include only what is necessary. Drawings could also be included or if lacking in artistic confidence, students could tell their classmates what they imagine drawing.
- Discuss anthropomorphism and encourage students to start confidently using the term in a sentence. As part of this activity, consider the various animals used by Spiegelman and why he has matched certain animals to certain ethnicities.
- Spend a lesson simply examining Spiegelman's use of black and white and the various shades in between. Ask students to choose a page or panel that catches their attention and explain why.
- Ask students what they have noticed about the actual writing after their initial reading of the text. Whose narration or dialogue is in uppercase? Whose is in lowercase? When is '**bold'** used?
- Another lesson can be valuably spent examining the use of masks, facial expressions and gestures. These stylistic devices will be examined in greater detail in the Style and Language section of this document but students need a working understanding before they head into detailed analysis.
- How does Spiegelman show breaks in chronology? What signals does he provide?
- Get students to look at how each chapter starts and finishes. What pattern can they see? (For example, Art's strained relationship with his father.)
- Have a class discussion titled 'What is *Maus*?' This link provides some ideas and guiding questions for students. <http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/maus/whatismaus.htm>.
- Students will end up understanding the different ways in which *Maus* can be read as a graphic memoir, an oral history, the story of one concentration camp survivor, the story of a historical genocide, a study of memory, a story of generations and a story of conflict.

RUNNING SHEET AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The Complete Maus or *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* consists of two sections. Part 1: My Father Bleeds History and Part 2: And Here My Troubles Began. Each is divided into distinct chapters.

	MAUS I
	Part 1: My Father Bleeds History
	Maus graphic
	Acknowledgement page, including appreciation to Mala
5	Prologue
8	Dedication to Anja
9	My Father Bleeds History
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	***MAUS* II**
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164	Quote about Mickey Mouse
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Timeline for *Maus*

October 11 1906	Vladek Spiegelman born.
March 15 1912	Anja Zylberberg born.
1922	Vladek completes military service.
1933	Vladek in relationship with Lucia.
1935 December	Vladek meets Anja for first time.
Late 1936	Engaged to Anja.
February 14 1937	Married to Anja.
October 1937	Richieu born.
Early 1938	Anja accompanied by Vladek to sanatorium in Czechoslovakia. They see their first swastikas.
1939	Uncle Herman and Hela go to America for the World Fair.
August 24 1939	Vladek receives draft notice from Polish government. Captured by Germans and placed in a POW camp near Nuremberg. Jewish POWs treated badly.
September 1 1939	World War II starts.
Late 1939	Jews have property confiscated and must wear armbands.
September 28 1939	Poland surrenders.
February 1940	Vladek returns from POW camp.
Late 1941	Violent roundups.
December 1941	Notice of relocation of all Jews.
January 1 1942	All Sosnowiec Jews relocated.
May 10 1942	All Jews aged over 70 transferred to Theresienstadt.
Wednesday August 12 1942	All Jews ordered to register at Dienst Stadium (25,000-30,000 people). Vladek's father, sister and four children sent to deaths.
1943	Order that all Jews left to live in Srodula village.
1943	Family living in ghetto. Tosha takes Lonia and Richieu with her family to

	Zawiercie.
June 1943	Judenrat, the Jewish Council arrested. Vladek and family are moved to a different house.
August 26 1943	Tosha poisons the children and herself to avoid deportation.
Late July 1943	10,000 Jews taken in one week as ghetto liquidated. Family hiding in bunker.
End 1943	Vans to Auschwitz every Wednesday. Recently learned of Richieu's death.
Early 1944	Hiding at Kawka's farm.
	Move in with Mrs Motonowa and son.
March 1944	Betrayed by smugglers and taken to Auschwitz.
Spring 1944	Vladek working as tinman in Auschwitz.
Summer 1944	Vladek sees Anja in Birkenau.
	Vladek working in Auschwitz shoe shop.
October 1944	Vladek pays bribe to bring Anja to Auschwitz.
January and February 1945	Can hear fighting in distance. Prisoners marched from Auschwitz to Gross-Rosen.
	Prisoners sent by train to Dachau.
April	Vladek evacuated from Dachau.
April 29	Dachau liberated. Vladek in German countryside.
May 7	Germany surrenders.
	Vladek in US Displaced Persons Camp at Garmisch-Partenkirchen.
	Vladek goes to Bergen-Belsen in search of Anja. Returns to Sosnowiec to be reunited with her.
Late 1945	Vladek returns to Srodula to retrieve hidden valuables.
1946	Vladek and Anja catch plane to Sweden.
February 15 1948	Art born in Stockholm.
1950	Vladek, Anja and Art migrate to America from Stockholm. They live in Queens.
1964	Uncle Herman killed in hit-run accident.
1968	Art in mental hospital after nervous breakdown.
May 21 1968	Anja suicides when Art aged 20.

1970	Art publishes 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet'.
1978	Art starts drawing *Maus*.
1978-1982	Vladek tells Art his story during visits at Rego Park and the Catskills.
August 18 1982	Vladek dies of heart failure.
September 1986	First part of *Maus* published after 8 years of work.
February 1987	Art working on the drawing of him surrounded by flies. He is suffering from depression.
May 1987	Art and Françoise's first baby due.
May 5 1987	Nadja Mouly Spiegelman born.
1991	*Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* published.

Chapter One—The Sheik

The story starts in the early 1980s as Art Spiegelman visits his father at his Rego Park house. The opening line, 'I hadn't seen him in a long time—we weren't that close' immediately sets up the problematic relationship Art has with his father (p. 13). The use of 'Uh—Huh' implies Art's hesitation and discomfort. His father has suffered greatly from his wife's suicide and two heart attacks. These first panels establish the setting, relationship and some background information for the reader. Vladek has remarried to Mala, a Polish woman who is 'a survivor too, like most of my parents' friends' (p. 13). Vladek's speech indicates his non-American background; 'A **wire** hanger you give him!' (p. 13). Other nuances of the author's style are introduced such as the use of capitalisation, exclamation marks, bolded words, variation in print size, and of course, the simplicity of the mouse faces. The tension between Vladek and Mala is also established; 'They didn't get along' is inserted in a narrative box at the bottom of the page. Art is visiting, with his writing pad and pen, to find out about his father's life in Poland and his experiences in the war with the intention of drawing the story in comic book form. Although he thinks no one wants to hear such stories, Vladek, whilst pedalling away on his 'exerbike', starts recalling his life as a young man, a well-dressed Valentino lookalike who worked in textiles in Czestochowa.

He is introduced to the pushy Lucia Greenberg with whom he has an intimate relationship for several years until she demands an engagement, a commitment Vladek doesn't want, as her family can't afford a dowry. Art interrupts, expecting the story to include his mother, Anna (Anja) Zylberberg. These interruptions and shifts between past and present are something the reader will quickly become used to. Vladek's cousin introduces him to Anja, a clever and 'very good girl' from a rich family. Impressed by Vladek's ability to speak English, learned as he dreamed of going to America, she communicates with him through letters and occasional visits. Anja sends Vladek a photo that he frames and infuriates Lucia when she sees it. Lucia is further upset at Vladek's news of his engagement to Anja. Vladek tells Art of how his love for Anja grew as they spent more time talking; however, her old-fashioned mother wouldn't let her visit a bachelor's apartment. Vladek is also

impressed by Anja's millionaire family as well as Anja's house-keeping skills which he checks by peeking in her closet. Whilst doing this, he notices Anja's pills and records their names. Later he is told Anja takes the pills because she is 'skinny and nervous'. After their engagement at the end of 1936, Vladek moves to Sosnowiec where the Zylberberg family live. Lucia reacts badly to the engagement, becoming hysterical and also sending Anja a letter signed 'your secret friend' in which she writes awful things about Vladek. Anja is persuaded these things aren't true and they are married on February 14, 1937. Their wedding present is part-ownership of an apartment and the family business, as well as a beautiful old watch for Vladek. Vladek does not want the story of Lucia in the book; he wants his story to only be about the Holocaust. However, Art argues that including Lucia 'makes everything more **real**—more human' (p. 25). He gives into Vladek's argument that Lucia is a private story, agreeing not to mention it. But of course, he has used it as the reader has just found out.

Chapter Two: The Honeymoon

The swastika in the background of the first drawing foreshadows the looming Holocaust that will soon engulf Vladek, Anja and their families. Art is visiting his father regularly over the next few months 'to hear his story', but also records his father's health difficulties and somewhat obsessive behaviour such as counting his pills and consuming quantities of vitamins in his fight 'to save himself'. Vladek reveals Anja had a previous boyfriend, a communist for whom she had been translating messages into German and passing them on. Anja, warned of an impending police search, hides the documents with a neighbouring seamstress. The police, drawn wearing pig masks, find the documents but Anja is safe. Vladek is ready to break the marriage after the search, telling Anja, 'If you want me you have to go **my** way…' (p. 31). She agrees to stop such activities whilst her father pays the seamstress's legal fees when she is jailed for three months. His father-in-law provides Vladek with sufficient money and credit to start a textile factory in nearby Bielsko where he lives, returning to visit Anja every weekend.

The factory is now operating but Vladek reveals that Richieu's birth in October 1937 was not easy for Anja who only weighed 39 kilograms at the time. Vladek reminds Art that Richieu didn't survive the war whilst Art is more concerned with calculating that Richieu was born less than nine months after his parents' marriage. Vladek claims Richieu was premature although not as premature as Art himself, who needed specialist assistance to survive. Vladek knocks over his pills joking about baby Art's arm jumping into a 'Heil Hitler' salute. He blames Art for the pills spilling, refusing offers of assistance to recount them. 'I'll do it after…I'm an **expert** for this' (p. 32). Vladek's obsessive counting recurs throughout the text.

Anja stays with her family whilst Vladek runs the factory; however, she becomes severely depressed, crying constantly and losing the will to live. A period of recovery at a sanatorium is prescribed to help Anja recover from her nervous breakdown. Richieu is left with a governess, his father-in-law looks after Vladek's factory and the two of them catch a train to Czechoslovakia. Vladek sees a swastika for the first time as the train passes through a village. Every Jewish passenger is frightened as they see the Nazi flag hanging high over the centre of the town. Fellow passengers tell rumours of a pogrom going on in Germany where Jews are being forced to sell businesses, leave the country or even disappear. Synagogues have been burned,

Jews beaten and humiliated in public, and towns have declared themselves ‘Jew Free’. The drawings, with the swastika highlighted in a circle in the background, cast a darkness as the train passengers pray the Nazis get thrown out of power and don’t start a war. Pages 34-35 ominously foreshadow what is to come.

The period at the beautiful and expensive sanatorium is quiet and peaceful. Anja gradually recovers with Vladek’s support and the care of doctors and nurses. There are theatres, cafes and dances for entertainment and Vladek and Anja also enjoy telling each other stories from their younger years. Their love blossoms, Vladek remembering how Anja '…was so laughing and so happy, so happy **that** she approached each time and kissed me, so happy she was’ as they danced (p. 37). Three months later they returned, Anja completely different from when she left. However, the Bielsko factory has been robbed in Vladek’s absence and everything stolen. Art asks if the robbery was anti-Semitic activity but Vladek thinks not as he remembers how his father-in-law once again helped him establish another business. He and Anja quickly become quite well off, employing a Polish nanny and a maid. Anti-Jewish sentiment rises in Bielsko, something they believe the Nazis are stirring up amongst the Poles. Janina, the Polish nanny is quite hurt when Anja comments, 'When it comes to Jews, the Poles don’t **need** much stirring up!' (p. 39). Janina thinks of them as part of her own family. But the seeds of concern are planted, as Anja and Vladek consider moving back to Sosnowiec. Art questions why that city would be safer, Vladek explaining they thought then that Hitler only wanted back the parts of Poland that were German prior to World War I.

Vladek receives a letter from the government on August 24, 1939, drafting him, as an army reservist, into the Polish Army. Everyone now expects a war and Anja hurriedly packs to return to Sosnowiec with Richieu and the governess. She doesn’t want to take her ‘knick-knacks’ saying they’re not important but Vladek persuades her, telling Art, 'I was right. When things went worst later, she was able to sell such things' (p. 40). Vladek was one of the first soldiers at the front when war was declared on September 1, 1939. The recollections have distressed him as the pills are once again spilled and further health issues are revealed; he has lost an eye to glaucoma and has a cataract on the remaining one. The chapter ends with Vladek complaining about doctors and ready to count his pills. Art suffers a sore hand from writing down his father’s story.

Chapter Three: Prisoner of War

The chapter title with its accompanying drawing of Vladek (a mouse) being captured by two fierce cats wearing uniforms stamped with the swastika, lets the reader know what will happen next. It’s the first time the cat mask has been seen.

Art visits more often as he pursues information for his story, this time drawing a meal with Mala and Vladek. As Vladek tells Art to finish everything on his plate, Art remembers his mother offering to cook something he liked better in contrast to his father’s insistence the food be eaten or even saved to be served again later. Vladek says Anja was always too easy on Art. Whilst Art thanks Mala for a delicious dinner, Vladek complains the chicken was too dry. The words and drawings highlight the tension between Vladek and Mala; however, Art doesn’t want to hear more complaints. He simply wants to get back to the story.

Art lies on the floor making notes (his mouse tail evident) as Vladek tells how he was sent to the front in 1939 with only a few days training. He reveals how his own father pulled out fourteen of his own teeth to escape the Russian army. If twelve teeth were missing, soldiers were let go. Vladek's older brother, Markus, was starved in order to fail the army medical and similar tactics are used on Vladek, as well as sleep deprivation, so that he is rejected. The thought of being starved again is too much for Vladek a year later and he completes his military service in 1922. Art returns his father's attention to 1939. Vladek is told off for not shooting even though he can't see what to shoot. When bullets come in his direction, he fires at a moving tree, later finding out that he'd shot dead a German soldier. The Nazis capture the Polish soldiers and Vladek avoids a beating by speaking in German to his captors. At a POW camp near Nuremberg, the Jews are made to stand separately and told the war is their fault. 'We should **hang** you right here on this spot!' (p. 53). The Germans notice Vladek has more money to handover than the others, as well as his 'delicate' hands. 'Well, Jew, don't worry. We'll find work for you...And they did' (p. 53). Vladek interrupts his story to tell Art off for dropping cigarette ash, also taking the opportunity to complain about Mala's untidiness. The prisoners are moving to another camp where Polish soldiers are given heated cabins whilst Jewish prisoners get tents and less food during a period of freezing weather. Vladek looks after himself by bathing in the river to avoid infected wounds and doing gymnastics to keep fit. The men turn to their faith through prayer and also pass time playing chess with a set Vladek makes from stones and breadcrumbs. A letter gets to his family via the Red Cross and he subsequently receives a package of chocolate bars, cigarettes and jam, a sign his family are safe. He is able to trade the cigarettes for food. In response to a sign calling for labour volunteers, Vladek registers. 'I'm not going to die and I won't die here! I want to be treated like a human being!' (p. 56). They are taken to a big German company, fed, and allowed a day of rest in heated cabins containing beds with sheets and pillows. However, the work is extremely harsh as the men use picks and shovels to level out hilly ground. Some can't manage the work and return to the tents but Vladek stays, preferring food and a warm bed.

He dreams of his dead grandfather, hearing his voice say: 'You will come out of this place—**Free!** …on the day of Parshas Truma' (p. 59). Vladek has to explain to Art what this day means to the Jewish. (This lets us know that Art is not a practising Jew) He asks a rabbi when they'll be reading Parshas Truma; the answer is in the middle of February, three months hence. One day in February, as the Gestapo and Wehrmacht line up the prisoners, the Rabbi tells Vladek it is Parshas Truma. Amazingly, it is the day of their release. Each of the POWs gets a Red Cross package, as they are loaded on a train to Poland. However, the Nazis have divided Poland into two sections, the Protectorate and the Reich with a guarded border in between as shown in the map on page 62. The train passes Sosnowiec and the POWs are unloaded at Lubin where Jewish authorities warn them the POW group before were marched into the forest and shot. Art expresses surprise that this could occur. His father explains: 'International laws protected us a little as Polish war prisoners but a Jew of the Reich, anyone could kill in the streets' (p. 63). Vladek is able to bribe the German guards to release him as a 'relative' of his friend, Orbach, although he is shot at during the night when he goes outside to urinate. Orbach is apologetic about the poor quality meal served up in his home but Vladek produces the chocolate from the Red Cross package to everyone's delight. He tells Art he sent them food packages once he got home to Sosnowiec but '…then they wrote that the Germans were **keeping** the packages. And then they stopped to write. Finished' (p.

65). It proves tricky finding trains back to Sosnowiec but Vladek pretends to be an escaped Polish POW, his army uniform and negative comments about the Germans helping him gain assistance from a Polish train man. Spiegelman draws Vladek wearing a pig mask on this page. One key frame shows Vladek, holding his pig mask, hiding behind a door whilst the Polish trainman protects him from the German 'cats'.

Vladek finally makes it to his parents' house. They are safe but his mother is ill with cancer. 'She never knew how terrible everything would soon be' (p. 67). He is astonished to see his religious father without his traditional beard but learns that his father and other Jews were grabbed by German soldiers who made them pray, beat them and then cut their beards off. His factory has been seized as well. Vladek is taken home to nearby Sosnowiec before the newly imposed 7pm curfew for Jews. 'And I don't need to tell you how big the joy was in our house', as he is reunited with Anja and Richieu (p. 68). We come back to the present where Art, holding his notebook titled 'Maus Notes' is again lying on the floor listening to his father who bemoans that he and Mala are not happy as he and Anja were. Art's departure is tense when he discovers his father has thrown out his coat with the garbage. 'Such an old shabby coat. It's a **shame** my son would wear such a coat!' 'But I like it!' replies Art. Vladek gives him a supposedly better, warmer coat and the final frame of the chapter sees Art walking away muttering, 'I just can't believe it!' (p. 71).

Chapter Four: The Noose Tightens

The opening drawing of mice hanging from nooses and Spiegelman's emphasis on the Jewish star and the agonised expression of one mouse, clearly indicate that Vladek's story is about to become much worse. The story resumes with Art and Vladek arguing, as well as an arrow in the corner of the frame ironically pointing to Art's new trench coat. He doesn't want to help fix the drainpipe leak, even offering to pay someone when Vladek complains that money doesn't grow on trees. Even Art's new tape recorder comes under Vladek's thrifty scrutiny as he continues to deliberately emphasise his father's obsession with money and frugality.

A large frame, that has us looking through an angled, barred window, is of a big family dinner. The older Vladek, drawn in a small box, recalls that life at his father-in-law's house was still luxurious even though twelve family members are living there. The household is made up of his parents-in-law, Anja's 90-year-old grandparents, Vladek, Anja and Richieu; Tosha (Anja's older sister), her husband Wolfe and little girl, Bibi; Lolek and Lonia (the children of Herman and Helen who were in America when war broke out). The family are subject to rations but father-in-law's donations to Gemeinde, the Jewish Community Organisation where Wolfe works, ensures they get more food. They also use the black market that will become vital to the survival of many. There is open concern about the Nazis as some people are taken off to 'work camps' never to be seen again. Vladek's factory has also been taken over by an Aryan manager so the family's source of income has been cut off, making it difficult for them to maintain their luxurious existence. Anja's father has withdrawn all his valuables from the bank safe, whilst Wolfe isn't overly concerned, preferring to concentrate on his card playing.

Vladek meets Ilzecki, a tailor, at the market who makes uniforms for the Nazis. When he can get cloth, Ilzecki makes suits on the side. He provides Vladek with a note to get past the guard in order to bring cloth. Vladek's initiative is highlighted as he calls

in old debts, obtains cloth without coupons and makes some zlotys to help support the family. What his pleased father-in-law doesn't know is that Vladek saves half of what he earns. Interestingly, Spiegelman draws the family and their associates as very well dressed at this stage; suits, coats, hats and pipes give them a smart look. When a lack of official papers makes it harder for Vladek to evade S.S. checks, his father-in-law bribes a tin shop overseer to get Vladek a priority work card. The skills learned at the tin shop later prove most useful.

As Vladek continues pedalling his exercycle, he recalls how the next year saw things always getting 'a little worse, a little worse' (p. 81). Some of the family furniture is hidden with a Polish neighbour as the Germans confiscate possessions for their own use. The family learn more about the harshness of the Nazis as father-in-law's attempts to save his sick wife's bed backfire. He is drawn looking 'so unhappy', as he realises that even money cannot prevent the increasing dangers for those who are Jewish. In late 1941, Ilzecki saves Vladek's life during a violent roundup of Jews near the train station and offers to see if a Polish friend who is going to look after his son could protect Richieu as well. This proposal brings strong objections from the family. Anja protests, 'I'll **never** give up my baby. **Never!'** (p. 83). Vladek reveals to Art that whilst Ilzecki and his wife didn't survive the war, their son did. Sadly, Richieu has to be hidden a year later and as we already know, did not survive. Vladek breaks the chronology of his story, jumping to 1943 in the ghetto when Tosha took all the children. However, Art stops his father's line of thought, bringing him back to 1941.

In late 1941, a notice is posted that all Jews in Sosnowiec are to be relocated by January 1, 1942 and their housing turned over to non-Jews. The family of twelve find themselves living in two and a half small rooms, ironically a larger space than most as father-in-law's influence has been used again. A sign drawn in the background of this scene announces a reward of 1kg of sugar for reporting an unregistered Jew. The family are still able to venture into other parts of the town before the night curfew so Vladek can still pursue his black market business. But a shocking event frightens Vladek from going out anymore. Father-in-law's friend, Nahum Cohn and his son are arrested for dealing goods without coupons and along with two others, are hanged in the main street. Their bodies hang for a week as a deterrent to others. The drawing on page 85 depicts an appalling scene; our eyes are immediately drawn to the well-dressed bodies, the Jewish star clearly drawn to stand out. The bottom two frames, deliberately drawn from a lower angle, highlight the dangling legs and shoes of the dead men, the sombre crowd of onlookers shaded in the background as Vladek tells Art that he traded with the men. In the next frame (p. 86), a terrified Vladek, in the same room as Anja and Richieu is haunted by the agonising image of the four hanged men. He is terrified one of them may have given his name to the Germans in an attempt to save himself. The recollection of these events brings the older Vladek to tears: 'When I think now of them, it still makes me cry…Look—even from my **dead** eye tears are coming out' (p. 86).

The first mention is made of Anja's diaries as Vladek describes Anja at this time as spending most of her time knitting and writing in her diaries. Art recollects seeing his mother's notebooks around the house as a kid but his father reveals the diaries from the war didn't survive but the later notebooks contained Anja's 'whole story from the start' (p. 86). Art wants to see them: 'I **need** those for this book.' Vladek continues his recollections, telling Art about his efforts to find another business. He starts

trading in gold and jewellery, finding them easy to conceal in a child's pram, as well as generating a few more zlotys from a food business. Szklarczyk, the grocer who recognises Vladek as Zylberberg's son-in-law, proposes that he sells some of the grocer's 'extra' items under the counter. It is dangerous work but as Vladek says, 'When somebody is hungry he looks for business' (p. 87). A close shave with the Nazis occurs when they want to know what he is carrying. Vladek pretends the sugar is for his shop, eluding arrest through boldness and good luck.

Life becomes harder as movement is more restricted in the ghetto. There is no room anymore for Vladek in the tin shop but he gains some work at a carpentry shop where father-in-law and Lolek work for very little money but the need for work papers is pressing. A notice comes from the Germans announcing 'All Jews over 70 years old will be transferred to Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia on May 10, 1942' (p. 88). Theresienstadt is made out to be a place where the elderly will be well cared for, but the family are suspicious and make a bunker with a false wall where the grandparents can be hidden. Art is intrigued when his father talks about the Jewish police who come to the house looking for Anja's grandparents. Vladek explains that the Gemeinde believed if they gave a few Jews to the Germans, they could save the rest, and of course themselves. Father-in-law is taken into custody in place of the concealed grandparents but after several days tells the family that the grandparents had to be given up to the Germans. If not, the rest of the family would be taken as well. Sadly, the 90-year-old couple are not taken to Theresienstadt; they go straight to Auschwitz and the gas chamber. Art is intrigued as to when Vladek first heard about Auschwitz. Vladek recalls how they didn't believe the stories people brought back 'from that other world' at first; however, as more and more reports came, they believed them and later saw for themselves. He returns to Sosnowiec and the events occurring a few months after the grandparents were taken. Spiegelman enlarges the text size as a Gemeinde member announces each of them must report for registration at the Dienst Stadium on Wednesday, August 12. The speaker assures them alarm isn't warranted, as it's only a matter of inspecting and stamping documents for their own protection. But some believe it's a Nazi trap assisted by the Jewish committee and the family discuss whether they should report to the stadium or not. The situation is complicated by a lack of legal papers if they don't attend. 'To go, it was no good. But, not to go—it was also no good' (p. 90). Vladek's 62-year-old father visits from the next village to seek his son's advice. He too is uncertain about whether or not to obey the instruction and is also worried for his daughter, Fela, and her four small children who live with him. Whereas Vladek, Lolek and father-in-law have work papers from their carpentry job, Vladek's father has nothing and wonders whether he should rely on his cousin, Mordecai, who will be working at one of the tables. In the end, all the family show up along with most of the Jews of Sosnowiec and surrounds, some 25-30,000 people. Vladek describes how everyone arrived in nice clothes in the hope they would look young and able to work, in order to get a good stamp on their passport. The drawing at the top of page 92 zooms out to highlight the enormous size of the crowd whilst the following frames focus closely on the family members as they nervously pass through the selection process. The cousin stamps Vladek and Anja's passports and sends them, along with Richieu, to the 'good' side of the stadium. Those sent to the left get no stamp. All make it through except Vladek's father, sister and her children. Later, Vladek is told how his father was sent to the good side but when he realised his daughter and grandchildren had been sent the other way, he climbed a fence to join them, believing Fela couldn't manage alone. 'And those on the bad side never came

anymore home' (p. 93). Vladek reveals one in three, maybe 10,000 people, were kept at the stadium. A tired and sad Vladek, still on his exerbike, has had enough for the day and heads for a nap. Mala tells Art how her mother too was taken at the Sosnowiec stadium then transported to horrendously overcrowded apartments with no food and no toilets. Some suffocated whilst others jumped out windows to end their misery more quickly. Mala's mother managed to survive that part as her brother, a member of the Jewish committee, hid her in a coal cellar until all the transports left. Sadly, both Mala's parents would later perish in Auschwitz. This is an important revelation as we learn that Mala has been through similar trauma to Vladek. Art remembers his mother's diaries and takes the opportunity to search his father's study. His shock at the useless objects kept by his father is complemented by Mala's complaints about Vladek's hoarding: 'He's more attached to things than to people!' (p. 95). Mala's stress is evident as she wonders how much longer she can take Vladek and tells Art to put everything back exactly as it was so she doesn't suffer. It's interesting to note how Spiegelman draws himself in these frames, cigarette hanging out of his mouth and disinterested in providing any reassurance or assistance for Mala despite her plea.

Chapter Five: Mouse Holes

The drawing of mice, wrapped in blankets, backgrounded by a large 'mouse hole', suggests life is to become more difficult as the family try to escape the clutches of the Germans. This chapter starts in Art's apartment and the reader is introduced to his wife, Françoise, for the first time. Mala phones in a panic to say Vladek has climbed the roof to fix the drainpipe (a task which he'd previously asked for Art's help), and become dizzy. Art's reaction is self-absorbed, rather than concerned, telling Mala they've had a late night and she should know they don't rise early. Vladek comes on the phone to beg for help: 'When I was young I could do by myself these things. But now, darling I need it your help for the drainpipe!' Art simply responds; 'Um—look, Pop…I'll call you back after I've had some coffee' (p. 98). He justifies his position to Françoise, recalling how he hated helping his father around the house as a kid as his father's criticism made him neurotic. 'One reason I became an artist was that he thought it was impractical—just a waste of time…It was an area where I wouldn't have to compete with him' (p. 99). Art is happy to feel guilty rather than help. He also argues he is busy and his father can afford to pay for help. As it turns out, Vladek has asked the neighbour for help, but leaves Art with a stinging rebuke: '…but at least **somebody** will help me!' (p. 99).

It's early afternoon, about a week later, and Art finds Vladek in his garage separating the long nails from the short ones. When Art asks his father if everything is okay, Vladek responds: 'Nu? With my life now, you know it **can't** be everything okay!' (p. 100). Mala takes fright when Art enters, her nerves frayed through living with Vladek. When Art comments that he seems depressed, Mala says it could be because of the comic strip Art made about his mother. This revelation shocks Art who believed his father would never see 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet', a comic he'd drawn years ago for an obscure underground comic book. The next four pages reveal to us the content of *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History* and also showcase a different comic drawing style of Spiegelman's. The most dramatic difference with *Maus* is the human faces given to the characters. A 1958 photo of a smiling young Art and his mother is followed by the dark and harrowing story of Anja's suicide. Art is drawn in prison garb, his face spotlighted, as he tells the reader: 'In 1968, when I was 20, my

mother killed herself. She left no note' (p. 102). Vladek arrived home to find her dead, her wrists slashed and an empty pill bottle nearby. Art has recently been released from the State mental hospital after his own depressive episodes. Arriving home after spending the night with his girlfriend (of whom his parents disapprove), he sees a crowd outside. A cousin ushers him away to Doctor Orens who bluntly tells Art of his mother's suicide. Narrow panels accentuate the feelings that overwhelm Art: 'I felt confused. I felt angry. I felt numb!...I didn't exactly feel like crying but figured I should!...' (p. 103). Vladek completely falls apart and Art tells of being expected to comfort him. Words in bold infer Art thinks his father should be comforting him: '**I** was expected to comfort **him**!' Vladek's grief stricken face is reminiscent of an Edvard Munch painting. Page 104 starts with a small frame of Vladek and Art, consumed by fear and grief, trying to sleep on the floor as required by an old Jewish custom. The comic strip becomes increasing bleak as the black and white drawings increase in size and intensity. Vladek lies on the coffin screaming '**Anna**' while Art, feels nauseous with guilt. A family friend tells him off for crying; '**Now you cry**! Better you cried when your mother was still alive.' (104) The comic ends as he remembers the last time he saw his mother. She'd come into his room asking if he still loved her. 'Sure, Ma' says Art, feeling resentful at his mother's tightening of the umbilical cord. Drawing himself now locked in a prison cell struggling with his emotions, Art congratulates his mother for committing the perfect crime; 'You **murdered** me. Mommy, and you left me here to take the rap!!!' (p. 105). This comic strip will become an important part of how the reader interprets the family dynamics, as well as Art's own struggles with depression.

Back in the kitchen, Art tells Mala that Vladek had never read his work before. Mala is shocked at the comic: 'It was so personal!' (p. 106). However, she goes on to tell Art how accurate and objective it was as well. Mala remembers being in the house after Anja's funeral and the atmosphere just as Art described. Vladek enters telling Art he saw the picture of Anja, read it and cried. Art apologises but his father tells him: 'It's good you got it outside your system. But for me it brought in my mind so much **memories** of Anja' (p. 106). Mala comments that Vladek's desk is like a shrine to Anja with all her photos. Art ignores the tension to ask his father whether he found the diaries. The question is side stepped as father and son walk to the bank. Art has his notebook at the ready as Vladek resumes his story in Sosnowiec, 1943.

An order arrives in 1943 for all remaining Jews in Sosnowiec to relocate to an old village called Srodula. The Jews also had to pay to move the people of Srodula to their houses. Srodula would become the Jewish ghetto and the last place the family lived before the concentration camps. The Zylberberg family get a small cottage although many other Jews have to live in the street. Each day they are marched one and half hours to work in town; Anja and Tosha in a clothing factory, Vladek and Lolek at the woodwork shop. Their guards are Jewish and responsible for marching the workers to and from town, counting them and locking them in the ghetto at night. Wolfe's Uncle Persis visits, wanting Wolfe, Tosha and Bibi to live with him in another town where he is head of its Jewish Council. Persis tells them about Auschwitz but Matka (Anja's mother) refuses to believe the stories are true. Vladek observes how Persis is different from Moniek Merin, the Jewish head of their ghetto who only looks out for himself. The family are eventually persuaded by Persis's arguments and his offer to get papers for Lonia and Richieu as well. Matka wants them all to stay together but in the end relents as her husband insists that she look at the facts. The next time Persis visits, he leaves with the five family members including Richieu. A

frame highlights his parents and grandparents waving goodbye through the barbed wire fence of the ghetto. 'It was the last time ever we saw them; but that we couldn't know' (p. 110). Vladek remembers how they consoled themselves that the children were safe each time life became more difficult in the ghetto. In spring, the Germans take over 1000 young children from the ghetto, brutally killing some. A shocking image is drawn of a German soldier smashing a young child by the legs against a wall. Art asks his father directly about what happened to Richieu. A few months after being sent to Zawiercie with Persis, the Gestapo shot Persis and the rest of the Jewish Council and cleared out that ghetto. Tosha refused to be sent to Auschwitz and using the poison she always carried around her neck, killed herself and the three children, Bibi, Lonia and Richieu. Vladek tells Art: 'I'm telling you, it was a tragedy among tragedies. He was such a happy, beautiful boy!' (p. 111). Wolfe was shot when he tried to escape from the train to Auschwitz but as Vladek says, they only learned what happened much later.

In Srodula Vladek and the remaining family make bunkers as hiding places to avoid the Germans who grab Jews from the street at random. Vladek creates a hiding spot in the cottage's coal cellar, using Art's pencil to draw a diagram whilst warning his son 'Such things it's good to know how was it– just in case' (p. 112). Spiegelman recreates the notebook diagram in order for the reader to understand the intricate process involved in creating the bunker. Vladek boasts that even when the Germans came with dogs to smell them out, they couldn't find the family. They stay in the worm-infested bunker with a small supply of food for a couple of days waiting for things to quiet down. The Jews without such good hiding places kept being taken away. In June, the Gestapo arrest Moniek Merin and the other highest officials of the Judenrat, the Jewish Council. The family are relocated to a different house and create another bunker in the attic but by the end of July, the Nazis decide to completely liquidate the ghetto. 10,000 Jews are taken away in one week. It becomes increasingly dangerous to venture outside and they are always hungry. One night they find a stranger in the house who they drag up to the bunker. The stranger claims he was just searching for scraps for his wife and starving baby. Despite their suspicions, and Vladek's initial reaction that the safest thing would be to kill him, the family give the man a little food and let him go. The Gestapo arrive that afternoon and take them to what Vladek describes as a ghetto within a ghetto. About 200 people are located there, dreading the arrival each Wednesday of a transport van to Auschwitz. Vladek spots his cousin, Jakov Spiegelman, outside and asks for help, indicating his willingness to pay. Jakov says another cousin, Haskel Spiegelman, will help them. Vladek has to explain to a surprised Art the necessity to pay for help: 'At that time it **wasn't** anymore families. It was everybody to take care for **himself**!' (p. 116). Haskel is a chief of the Jewish police and says he can get Vladek, Anja and Lolek out but not the in-laws. Vladek promises to make it worthwhile to get them out as well and a small image in the corner of page 117 shows a diamond ring being handed over. Lolek is helped to escape first, then Anja and Vladek. They pretend to be workers carrying empty food pails and make it past the guards. Vladek gives Haskel his father-in-law's gold watch and a diamond: 'Haskel took from me father-in-law's jewels. But, finally, he **didn't** help them' (p. 117). The final frame on the page depicts the older Vladek standing in front of his distressed father-in-law trapped behind a barred window. Anja and Vladek see him crying as the vans arrive on the Wednesday. 'He was a millionaire, but even this didn't save him his life' (p. 117).

Anja's parents are sent to the gas chamber straight away. Vladek calls Haskel a 'Kombinator'—a word for a schemer or crook. As his father stops to pick up a piece of telephone wire that might come in useful one day, Art wants to know what happened to Haskel. He registers Vladek and Anja at Braun Shoe Shop, able to use influence garnered by deliberately losing money in poker games with the Gestapo. Haskel has two brothers, Pesach who is also a 'Kombinator' and Miloch ('a fine fellow'), both of whom work in the shoe shop as well. One extra job given to Vladek is to bury the stranger who betrayed the family to the Gestapo after Haskel arranged for him to be killed. In the middle of telling Art that Haskel is still alive and living with a Polish woman judge who kept him hidden, Vladek suffers an angina attack. A nitrostat pill helps him recover and he continues the story. Art is shocked to hear his father sent Haskel packages when he sounded like a 'rotten guy'. Vladek obviously feels an obligation to his cousin though and tells Art that being a member of Haskel Spiegelman's extended family did save his life. One of the few light-hearted moments in *Maus* occurs when Pesach Spiegelman collects ingredients for his wife to bake a cake and sells slices 75 zlotys apiece. Vladek buys some but all those who eat the cake end up sick. Pesach had put laundry soap in the cake by mistake instead of flour. The last frame on page 121 shows the ghetto in agony from food poisoning. Pesach also came up with other schemes before the war when he managed a resort hotel. He accepts bribes to not register guests in order to avoid Polish taxes and on one occasion his wife hadn't made enough desserts for everyone in the dining room. Pesach ran in yelling that the inspectors were coming. Enough guests fled and there were even desserts left over for the next day. Pesach's brother, Miloch, survived the war with his wife and child, migrating to Australia. He recently died of a heart attack when he was caught on the street without his pills.

The story of Srodula continues. At the end of 1943, the vans that leave each Wednesday are taking more and more Jews to Auschwitz. Haskel hears that everyone else left is soon to be deported and makes plans to smuggle himself out of the ghetto. Pesach tells Vladek of the plans he and Miloch have made. They have created a bunker entered through a pile of shoes, storing enough food for 15 or 16 people to hide. Pesach warns Vladek to be prepared to bring Anja and Lolek at a moment's notice. However, fifteen-year-old Lolek refuses the offer of safety believing that his job as an electrician will get him work wherever he is taken. Anja's fears come true when Lolek is put on one of the next transports to Auschwitz. They've only recently heard about Tosha and Richieu, and Anja struggles to deal with the loss of all her family. She just wants to die too but Vladek encourages her: '**No,** darling! To die, it's easy…but you have to struggle for life!' (p. 124). He always tells her that they will struggle together and survive.

The ghetto is liquidated and the Spiegelmans and their families go into hiding in the shoe shop. The days were long and the food soon ran out. Anja fills in time writing in her notebook. One man manages to dig a small hole in the stone wall through which he sees soldiers who are trying to find anyone remaining in hiding. In desperation, Vladek and Anja chew on wood to appease their hunger. Pesach comes from his bunker to say he's not prepared to starve to death. He's bribing one of the guards to look the other way as they escape and asks if others want to join them. Vladek and Miloch decide not to trust the Germans, as well as a young man, Avram and his girlfriend, who place their faith in Vladek for advice (in return for 'only' a small watch). When Pesach and his group walk out the next morning, they pay the bribes, go past

the guard…and are shot. After being without lights in the guardhouse for two nights, the remaining Jews emerge into the empty ghetto, all wearing pig masks. Using clothes and ID papers organised ahead of time, they mingle with the Poles going to work. Avram and his girlfriend head to 'friends' who keep them until Avram's money runs out and they are reported. Miloch and his wife and child head off and as we already know, manage to survive the war. Anja and Vladek don't have anywhere to go and are drawn walking in the direction of Sosnowiec along a swastika shaped road.

We return to the present as Art and Vladek have arrived at the bank where the teller (a dog) offers assistance to Mr Spiegelman. Vladek has arranged to sign a key to his bank safety box over to Art, not wanting the contents to go to Mala or the taxman. Art feels uncomfortable talking about his father's estate, suggesting that Vladek just enjoy his savings whilst he still can. The safety box holds a 14 carat gold cigarette case and a lady's powder case, the valuables Vladek hid in the chimney of the Srodula bunker when the Gestapo caught them. After the war he sneaked back to Srodula and 'at night, while the people inside slept—I digged these things out from the bottom of the chimney' (p. 128). There's also a diamond ring bought for Anja when they first arrived in the USA, which Vladek wants Françoise to have. Vladek complains Mala has made him change his will three times. 'Why Artie? Why I ever remarried?' (p. 129). He pines for Anja and the last frame of the chapter depicts Art attempting to comfort his father as best he can.

Chapter Six: Mouse Trap

The drawing on the title page shows Vladek and Anja standing on a mousetrap poised to trigger at any moment. The reader is positioned to understand it won't be long before the Germans catch them.

Art is making another visit to his father but arrives to find the house unlocked and Mala crying in the kitchen. She is at her wit's end. 'Your father! He treats me as if I were just a maid or his nurse…**worse!'** (p. 132). Art tells her that Vladek hasn't changed. His mother had to plead and argue to get him new school supplies or clothes. When Mala argues with Vladek, he moans like he's going to have another heart attack and she's unsure whether he's faking or not. 'I feel like I'm in prison! I feel like I'm going to **burst**!' (p. 132). We are reminded here of Art's 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet' comic and the sense of entrapment he experienced. Mala continues to vent her frustrations to Art, including how Vladek, when she needed some new clothes, told her Anja's clothes were now hers. His pragmatic thriftiness makes her angry: '**Pragmatic? Cheap? It causes him physical pain to part with even a nickel!**' (p. 133). In this scene we see Art engaging in a more focused discussion with Mala and also supporting the way she views Vladek. 'I used to think the **war** made him that way…' to which Mala responds that she went through the camps as well, as did all their friends. '**Nobody** is like him!' (p. 133). Art expresses concern about how his father will appear in the book and encapsulates his father's behaviour: 'In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew.' Mala is in full agreement. Art wants to portray Vladek accurately, just wishing he had his mother's story to give the book more balance. Mala cannot understand how Anja could stand living with Vladek, a comment reminding the reader of Anja's suicide. Vladek walks in and Art shows him some sketches for the book, including the scene where the black-market Jews are hanged in Sosnowiec. Vladek observes the drawing still

makes him cry. Mala thinks the comic book will interest those who don't usually read such stories and even Vladek agrees with her: 'Yes. I don't read **ever** such comics, and even **I** am interested' (p. 135). Art makes fun of his father's comment that he could become as famous as Walt Disney, rushing off to fetch his pencil so he can record the conversation that's just taken place. Conversation returns to complaints about Vladek's behaviour as he criticises Mala for going to the hairdresser's. After she leaves, Vladek and Art head into the garden, Art suggesting to his father that maybe they should both see a marriage counsellor. 'With Mala, it's not to get along. Only it's the **money**!' (p. 137). Vladek doesn't want a stranger involved in his private stories; an ironic statement seeing his own son is writing his story, including the troubled relationship with Mala, for publication.

We return to 1944 after Vladek and Anja leave Srodula. They go to Janina's house near Sosnowiec where she loudly rejects them: 'You'll bring trouble! Go away! Quickly!' (p. 138). They are drawn donning pig masks; Vladek's coat allows him to fit in with the locals but he is concerned Anja's clothing looks more Jewish. Mr Lukowski, the janitor of her father's old house, recognises Anja and sends them to the shed with some food. An old lady spots her, yelling out '**There's a Jewess in the courtyard! Police!**' (p. 139) alerting Vladek and Mr Lukowski to the unsafeness of the shed and the likelihood someone will recognise them. Out on the street, Vladek hears someone following him. A man in a pig mask speaks the word 'Amcha' in Hebrew that means 'our nation'. He and his wife have been in hiding for over a year and he advises Vladek to go to the black market at Dekerta Street where food can be bought without coupons. Vladek returns to Anja with sausages, eggs, milk and chocolate and they share a happy breakfast together. He is able to change jewellery for marks at the black market and can now pay for food and somewhere to stay. He is recognised by some Jewish boys he knew before the war who suggest Mrs Kawka who has a small farm on the edge of town. Mrs Kawka is willing to hide them in her barn but warns that if they are found, she must say they sneaked in without her knowledge. Ironically, Vladek assures her they won't betray her. Anja is terrified when Vladek heads off to Dekerta, only partly reassured by the necessity that he locate food. He travels by streetcar, choosing to use the car meant for Germans and officials rather than the Polish car: 'The Germans paid no attention of me…in the **Polish** car they could **smell** if a Polish Jew came in' (p. 142). Vladek becomes friendly with a Polish woman who sells food at the black market, Mrs Motonowa. She suggests Anja and Vladek could move in with her and her little boy as her husband works in Germany and isn't often home. Mrs Motonowa helps appease Anja's fears about the journey to Szopienice by coming with her son to escort them. Vladek walks with Mrs Motonowa as his wife whilst Anja walks behind with the little boy like a governess. No-one takes any notice of them on the 20 kilometre journey. Life is more comfortable and Anja develops a close relationship with Mrs Motonowa's son. Art is interested in how much Vladek paid to stay there. He paid well, telling Art: 'What you think? Someone will risk their life for nothing?' (p. 144). When he is late with a few coins for bread, Mrs Motonowa says she has none; something Vladek knows is a lie. However, he tells Art: 'But still, she was a good woman' (p. 144). Her little boy's grades in German improve at school due to Anja's tutoring. Life isn't always smooth though. If anyone knocked at the door, Vladek and Anja had to hide immediately and one drawing shows Vladek struggling to suppress sneezes in the closet. When the Gestapo at the black market search Mrs Motonowa, she worries her house will be searched as well and tells Vladek and Anja they must leave immediately.

They are on the streets wearing their pig masks, Anja so afraid, she is shaking. They walk for hours speaking German to each other, Anja becoming more terrified when two men follow them for a distance. They hide in a construction site but again take to the snow-laden streets in daylight, mixing in with people. Vladek leads them back to Kawka's cowshed. Kawka is reluctant at first but when she sees Anja shivering, takes her into the house to warm up and provides some food. Vladek boasts to Art: 'In those days I was so strong I could sit even in the **snow** all night' (p. 147). Kawka tells Vladek of two people she knows who smuggled others into Hungary. He is interested to meet them. Art believed Hungary to be as dangerous as Poland but his father tells him it was better there until near the end of the war when Hungarian Jews were also sent to Auschwitz. Vladek remembers there wasn't enough room in the ovens at Auschwitz for the hundreds of thousands of Jews from Hungary. The next day at Dekerta, Mrs Motonowa appears relieved to see he is still alive; 'Praise Mary, you're safe! I couldn't sleep. I felt so guilty about chasing you and your wife out' (p. 148). She tells Vladek she panicked for nothing and wants them to come back again. They are only back with Mrs Motonowa for a short while when her husband writes he is coming home for a ten day vacation. Anja and Vladek hide in the cellar with rats, Vladek telling Anja they were just mice to make her feel easier. But, then Mrs Motonowa doesn't appear and after three days, Vladek and Anja are starving and Anja has developed a terrible rash. Finally Mrs Motonowa appears claiming her husband had become suspicious of her frequent visits to the cellar, even asking in jest if she were hiding Jews there. She reminds them that rats won't kill them whereas the Gestapo would. When the husband returns to work and they can emerge from the cellar, Vladek still doesn't feel safe, believing there are too many ways they could be found out and prefers the idea of Hungary. He has a narrow escape when a group of playing children call out '**A Jew! A Jew!'** (p. 151). Their screams bring their mothers running. Vladek tells Art how some Polish mothers had taught their children to be careful as Jews would catch them in a bag and eat them. 'If I ran away they would see: 'Yes, it **is** a Jew here.' Vladek's pig mask fools the mothers as he approaches, saying 'Heil Hitler'. The mothers apologise to Vladek but the experience unnerves him.

The smugglers meet at Kawka's house and Vladek is pleased to bump into Mandelbaum, a sweets shop owner before the war. He was an important member of the Jewish Council in the ghetto and is now trying to escape to Hungary with his nephew. Vladek is uncertain about the smugglers but Mandelbaum's nephew, Abraham, wants to go straight away, agreeing to send his uncle a 'good' letter if he makes it to Hungary. Anja begs Vladek to scrap the plan, preferring to stay with Mrs Motonowa. He presents her with a list of arguments as to why they should go but Mrs Motonowa agrees with Anja, telling Vladek it's not safe, as he doesn't know anything about the smugglers. She also reveals her awful nightmares about their proposed trip and begs them to stay. But Vladek is determined and heads off to find Miloch to suggest he could stay with Mrs Motonowa when he and Anja leave. He finds the situation where Miloch and his family are hiding precarious. The janitor has Polish guests who blackmail her into providing them with vodka, saying they'll tell the Gestapo about the Jews she is hiding. Vladek gives her the marks to buy another bottle to appease these aggressive men, having to wait until near midnight before they leave and he can safely speak to Miloch. Miloch, his wife and son are hiding in a tiny underground space in the courtyard garbage hole, but Miloch puts a positive spin on the situation, telling Vladek that the decomposing garbage gives them some heat. Vladek says he'll visit again when he has more news about Hungary. A few

days later Vladek meets the smugglers again. Mandelbaum is there with a letter from his nephew; it is written in Yiddish, signed by Abraham and convinces Vladek to make the arrangements. He is begged by Anja to call it off but says he's already paid half the money. 'No! No! No! It's some kind of trick!' argues Anja (p. 156). Finally, when Vladek recites the contents of Abraham's letter, she is convinced. But Vladek tells Art the great irony of the story; Miloch, his wife and son spent the rest of the war hiding with Mrs Motonowa and survived.

'But, for Anja and I, it was for us waiting **another** destiny…' (p. 156). They take a trolley car to the meeting point with the Mandelbaums and the smugglers, making the rest of the payment in exchange for their tickets. One smuggler leaves, worrying them; however, they are assured he is simply ringing ahead to the men who will be meeting them at the border. When the train reaches Bielsko-Biala where Vladek once owned a factory, the smugglers disappear. Gestapo board the train looking for 'Juden Raus', Vladek and the others realising the smugglers have betrayed them. They are marched to the prison where a Polish guard finds a gold watch in Vladek's tin of shoe polish: 'Well, well…a gold watch. You Jews **always** have gold' (p. 158). The watch was Vladek's last treasure, the one received on his wedding day from his father-in-law. Art interrupts, wanting to know what happened to Abraham, but Vladek says he'll tell Art later; he wants to finish telling about the prison first. Vladek helps a Polish prisoner write a letter in German and is rewarded with some eggs and cake from the prisoner's food parcel. The trucks soon arrive to transport them to Auschwitz but Vladek is able to share the precious food with Anja during the journey. 'And we came here to the concentration camp Auschwitz. And we knew that from here we will not come out anymore…' They have heard the stories about the gas and ovens, as it is now 1944: 'We knew everything. And here we were' (p. 159). Art is clearly shocked. Vladek continues to tell him how the men and women were separated on arrival, he and Anja not knowing if they would ever see each other again. Art says his mother's notebooks would be particularly useful here, as they would give him some idea of what she went through whilst apart from Vladek. Vladek assures him Anja went through the same terrible experiences as he did but Art, determined to find the notebooks, wants to go upstairs and search for them. Finally, Vladek admits what the reader already suspects: 'These notebooks, and other really nice things of mother…one time I had a very bad day…and all of these things I **destroyed**' (p. 160). Vladek burned everything as the papers had too many memories. Art is devastated: '**Christ!** You save **tons** of worthless shit, and you…!' Even Vladek is ashamed, telling Art he never read the notebooks, other than remembering Anja's words: 'I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this' (p. 161). Art is overwhelmed by anger, telling his father: 'God **damn** you! You—You **murderer**! How the hell could you do such a thing!!' Vladek tries to explain how depressed he was after Anja's suicide, not knowing whether he was coming or going, but Art just wants to get away quickly. Vladek begs him to visit or phone more often: 'Don't be such a stranger!' Art walks away muttering 'Murderer' (p. 161).

MAUS II

- Page 163, the title page, contains a small image of mice in concentration camp garb with Hitler's cat face superimposed on a swastika.

- Page 164 provides a quote about Mickey Mouse from a 1930s German newspaper article. It implies that mice are ‘filth-covered vermin’ just like the Jews.
- Page 165 is illustrated with an actual photo of Richieu, the author’s brother who died in the war. Art Spiegelman dedicates *Maus II* to Richieu and his own children, Nadja and Dashiell.
- Page 166 is a map of Auschwitz and Auschwitz II (Birkenau). Vladek, the prisoner, stands in the corner, a map of the New York region of the present behind him. Note the dark smoke rising from the crematorium in the bottom left corner. (The detail in this map will help students understand the layout of Auschwitz, particularly the way in which Vladek and Anja are separated.)
- Page 167 is the contents page of *Maus II* and Spiegelman provides another title for this second part of the story as well: ‘And Here My Troubles Began (From Mauschwitz to the Catskills and Beyond)'. Note the shift to ‘Mauschwitz' and the irony of the name, Catskill Mountains in New York state. A large guard tower, manned by a German (cat) guard, dominates the page. A heavily barbed wire fence bears a sign warning mice (Jews) to halt whilst the dark smoke plume of the previous page is repeated in the background. A different type of artwork can also be noticed in this picture.

Chapter One: Mauschwitz

We assume it is Vladek behind the barbed wire fence, his Jewish star and prisoner number highlighted on his concentration camp clothing.

The reader is not taken straight back into Vladek’s story but to Françoise and Art enjoying their summer vacation in Vermont. Art has been doodling on his notepad trying to work out how to represent Françoise in his book. Should she be a frog, a poodle, a moose or a rabbit? She insists on being a mouse, despite Art’s ‘joke’ about French anti-Semitism. Françoise converted to Judaism when she married Art and part of this back-story is revealed as Art imagines drawing Vladek falling from his exercycle in shock when he hears his son is marrying a frog. We learn that Françoise’s conversion was purely to make Vladek happy although Art points out: ‘Yeah. But **nothing** can make him happy’ (p. 172). Their friends (American dogs) rush to tell Art that his father has just phoned—he’s had a heart attack. Vladek is staying at his Catskills bungalow. Art phones his father to discover he’s not in hospital, hasn’t suffered a heart attack and only told the friends that to ensure Art phoned back. He is grief-stricken, claiming Mala has left him and taken money out of their account as well as the car. Vladek wants Art and Françoise to come and stay at the bungalow for a while with him. Reluctantly, they leave their friends, deliberately only taking a little luggage as an excuse not to stay away long. Their discussion during the drive centres on Art’s relationship with his parents and his ‘ghost-brother’. A clue about Art’s psychological wellbeing is also dropped when his wife asks if he is depressed again. Art wonders how he can make sense of his relationship with his father when he can’t make any sense out of the Holocaust and Auschwitz. As a child, he thought about which parent he would let the Nazis take to the gas chamber if he could only save one of them: ‘Usually I saved my mother. Do you think that’s normal?’ he asks his wife (p. 174). Françoise replies that nobody is normal. Art also reflects on Richieu, wondering if they would have got along as he tells of the large,

blurry photograph of his brother hanging in his parents' bedroom that seemed to constantly reproach him. We also learn that after the war, Vladek and Anja did everything possible to trace Richieu, refusing to believe he was dead. Art reflects; 'It's spooky, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot!' (p. 175). His nightmares are also revealed; SS men coming into class and dragging all the Jewish kids away, Zyklon B coming out of the shower rather than water. Art even wishes he'd been in Auschwitz just so he could really know what his parents lived through. He tells Françoise it's as if he suffers from guilt for having an easier life, as well as inadequacy at being able to reconstruct such a dark reality as a comic strip. 'There's so much I'll never be able to understand or visualise. I mean, reality is too complex for comics…so much has to be left out or distorted' (p. 176). 'Just keep it honest, honey', Françoise advises him. The joke about Françoise never letting him talk for that long in reality is a reminder to the reader about the power of the narrator and artist.

And so they arrive at the Catskills and Vladek's rented bungalow. An arrow points out his emergency oxygen unit suggesting that his health has worsened since the reader last saw him. Vladek complains about Mala leaving and seems to assume that the 'kids' will stay with him for the whole summer, a suggestion that shocks both Art and Françoise. Vladek straight away proves demanding, insisting they stop talking at night and then waking them early. He's even put away their clothes in the bureau. A tirade against Mala begins and Vladek claims his lawyer says he must take drastic steps against her. Apparently Mala has driven to Florida to claim the deposit they'd placed on a condo there. Art's lighting of a cigarette diverts Vladek's rage to him; the smoke is bad for all of them plus he doesn't want Art wasting wooden matches. One has already been used to make the coffee. He only wants the paper matches he takes from The Pines hotel lobby used. Art storms outside whilst Vladek tells Françoise: 'Always Artie is **nervous**—so like his mother—she was always nervous' (p. 180). Mrs Karp, the neighbour, comes to speak to Art whilst he smokes outside. She expresses surprise when Art thanks them for looking after Vladek; 'He said that?' (p. 181). Art is dragged into her house to be told by Mrs Karp and her husband Vladek is too sick to look after himself; they assume that Vladek will go and live with Art. They've also observed his obsessiveness about money, telling Art how Mala had to erase a hairbrush from a bill because he wouldn't pay for her personal items. She wonders how a couple could live like that. Françoise's voice outside rescues Art just as Mr Karp asks if Art's wife is Jewish. Françoise complains how claustrophobic it is being around Vladek whilst Art comments that even his friends, like the Karps, don't like him. They discuss why Vladek is so anxious compared to others who are 'survivors' as well. Art hypothesises that if they are 'whacked up' it's in a different way from his father. Vladek is also leaving a gas burner lit all day to save on matches; the gas in included in the rent. Art observes: 'If it wasn't so pathetic, it'd be kinda funny' (p. 182). Vladek drags them inside to help with his bank papers, an activity that leads to much tension. In the end, Art and Vladek go for a walk, leaving Françoise to find a mistake on the statement, as Vladek can't cope with it being out by less than a dollar. Art distracts his father from discussing living arrangements by asking what happened at Auschwitz when Vladek and Anja were separated. Vladek reminds Art that he and Anja were never separated: '**No!** The war put us apart, but always, before and after, we were together' (p. 185).

The first page of Vladek's continuing story is set out differently. A narrow panel of the present conversation runs down the left side, whilst the drawings of the prisoners

being harshly treated upon their arrival is on the right. The men are stripped of their papers, clothes and hair and sent to the bathhouse by a ferociously drawn guard/cat. The showers are cold but thankfully not gas. Next, the prisoners are randomly thrown clothes and shoes as they run through the snow. Vladek was lucky as everything fitted him well enough to get by. After registration, they are tattooed with a prisoner number and never referred to by name again by their captors. Vladek remembers a terrible sweet smell, like fat and rubber burning, permeating the air. Abraham, Mandelbaum's nephew, greets them telling the true story about the smugglers; they understood Yiddish so knew the others were waiting to receive a letter. In Bielsko, the Gestapo held a gun to his head whilst the Poles dictated the letter: 'What could I do? They'd have shot me then and there' (p. 187). Vladek never sees Abraham again but does see the Poles who betrayed them. The Germans didn't need them anymore so they were sent to Auschwitz as well. Vladek remembers how a Polish priest comforted him after he broke down and cried when old-timers pointed out the chimneys to the newcomers. The priest tells Vladek that the number on his arm starts with 17, a very good omen in Hebrew, and ends with 13, the age a Jewish boy becomes a man. When added together, the numbers total 18, the Hebrew number of life. He is certain Vladek will survive. Art comments that the guy was a saint. Vladek agrees but adds he never saw him again.

Mandelbaum copes badly in Auschwitz. His clothes don't fit and he has nothing to hold up his pants other than his hands. Only one shoe fits forcing him to hobble around with one foot on the snow. He loses his spoon, spills his soup and prays to God to help him find a piece of string and a shoe that fits. 'But here God didn't come. We were all on our own,' reflects Vladek (p. 189). He and Mandelbaum share a bed in barracks a fifteen-minute walk from the toilet. A visit at night involved walking over the unlucky prisoners sleeping on the floor. The Polish Kapo supervisor screams and kicks whenever he can. He makes the men stand up and lie down, repeating the order over and over, kicking, hitting, and yelling until some dropped dead. One time, the supervisor screams out for someone who knows English to raise their hand. At first Vladek hesitates, but after others are rejected as the supervisor wants someone who speaks English and Polish, he steps forward. His good English sees him kept aside and told to stand on the far left when the S.S. line all the prisoners up tomorrow to reduce the numbers in the barracks. Vladek keeps Mandelbaum by his side at the line up and avoids being chosen for work or taken away forever. The Kapo calls Vladek by name and leaves him in a room with a food-laden table. Vladek doesn't touch the food assuming it's the Kapo's breakfast but when the Kapo returns he tells Vladek to sit down and eat. The first lesson lasts a couple of hours. When Vladek asks why he wants to learn English, the answer is that it will be worth knowing English if the Allies win the war. Like Vladek, the Kapo knows the value of being able to speak several languages. He allows Vladek to select new clothes but reacts angrily when Vladek asks for extra shoes, a belt and a spoon for Mandelbaum. When Vladek explains the items are for his friend and thanks the Kapo for his kindness, he relents but insists the old shoes be returned the next day. 'I'm telling you—I was amazing well-off!' (p. 193). Mandelbaum is so happy when Vladek gives him the spoon and belt and shoes that fit, he starts crying: 'My God, my God. My God…It's a **miracle**, Vladek. God sent shoes through you' (p. 194). Vladek cries as well. He tells Art how the Kapo left Mandelbaum alone after this, as he knew he was Vladek's friend. But a few days later, the Germans choose Mandelbaum for the work detail and he is never seen again. Art asks what happened to him but Vladek can only imagine; a guard shooting him on the way to work, being killed for not

working fast enough, becoming sick and sent to the oven. Newcomers are afraid of Vladek and his closeness to the Kapo but he remains safe in the barracks for over two months whilst teaching him English. One day, when Vladek is the only remaining prisoner of the group who arrived together, the Kapo asks what profession he worked in before the war. He is unable to be kept in the quarantine block any longer but the Kapo is willing to help him be assigned to a work crew where he'll receive better treatment. Vladek's previous work as a tinsmith catches his attention. As he explains to Art, he wasn't really a tinman but knew a little from his time in the Sosnowiec shop. Just as Art asks about Anja, Vladek sees they are at The Pines and drags Art in to sit on the hotel patio. He often comes and takes advantage of the free activities offered (to paying guests!) A bingo game is underway, rather ironically reminding us of Vladek's lucky tattoo numbers. Art puts a new tape in his recorder ready for his father to continue his story.

Chapter Two: Auschwitz (Time Flies)

The chapter starts with a graphic image of screaming, skeletal mice in what we assume is the gas chamber. The mouths are startlingly drawn and scattered flies buzz around the edge of the drawing.

Time has elapsed. Art, now a human but wearing a mouse mask, sits at a desk, cigarette hanging from his mouth as flies gather around him. A gradual zooming out effect is used on page 201. Each frame shows more of Art, until the bottom drawing reveals a pile of dead Jewish mice surrounding his desk. Art tells us that Vladek died of congestive heart failure on August 18, 1982, three years after he and Françoise stayed with him in the Catskills.

Vladek started work as a tinman in Auschwitz in the spring of 1944 whilst Art started working on this page at the very end of February 1987. The declaration he and Françoise are expecting a baby in May is juxtaposed against the fact that in 8 days in 1944, over 100,000 Hungarian Jews were gassed. In September 1986, after 8 years of work, *Maus I* was published to critical and commercial success. 15 foreign editions have been published, 4 movie offers made (which Art has refused) and in May 1968, Art's mother killed herself and didn't leave a note. 'Lately I've been feeling depressed' says Art, a fact already made apparent to the reader through his words and drawings on this page. A voice breaks in telling Mr Spiegelman they are ready to shoot. Art is being interviewed about *Maus*. 'Tell our viewers what message you want them to get from your book' (p. 202). Art hasn't thought about reducing it to a message. He is cut off by another question from a cat masked interviewer about the book's translation into German. He asks why younger Germans should feel guilty about the Holocaust that happened before they were even born. Art replies that some of the German corporations that flourished in Nazi Germany are now richer than ever before saying that 'Maybe **everyone** has to feel guilty. **Everyone! Forever!'** (p. 202). The reader wonders if Art is referring to himself. The interview lapses into a farce as he is asked what animal he would use to depict Israeli Jews. 'I have no idea…porcupines?' Another character, holding a sign parodying an ad campaign: 'Maus. You've read the book. Now buy the vest!' proposes a licensing deal where Art would receive 50 per cent of the profits'. The sign surely indicates Art's thoughts on this topic. By the last frame on page 202, Art has reduced in size and wails for his 'mommy' as people wanting his attention surround him. 'Could you tell our audience if drawing *Maus* was cathartic? Do you feel better now?'

The next page depicts a child size Art now alone in the room. Sometimes he doesn't feel like a functioning adult, clearly worrying about forthcoming fatherhood and still feeling his own father's ghost hanging over him. The room is drawn in a way that highlights Art's overwhelmed senses; his child size body surrounded by barbed wire, bricks and the bodies of the dead. He heads off to see his 'shrink', Pavel, who sees patients at night. Pavel, a Czech Jew and survivor of Terezin and Auschwitz, keeps stray cats and dogs, an interesting point considering Spiegelman's artistic use of these animals. The author jokes; 'Can I mention this, or does it completely louse up my metaphor?' (p. 203). An arrow at the bottom of the page also highlights the irony: 'Framed photo of pet cat. Really!' Art confides in Pavel how he feels completely messed up; '…mostly I feel like crying. I can't work…' (p. 203). His arguments with his father have lost their urgency, Auschwitz just seems too scary and he lies on the couch for hours. Pavel wonders if Art is feeling remorse, believing that he exposed his father to ridicule in the book; 'Maybe. But I tried to be fair and still show how angry I felt.' (p. 204). Art's reply is revealing as we remember him setting out to tell his father's story. It has now become his story as well. A discussion about guilt ensues. Is Art feeling guilty about his success? Did Vladek feel guilt about surviving the Holocaust? Art asks Pavel whether he feels any guilt about surviving the camps. 'No, just sadness' replies Pavel, who then asks Art if he admired Vladek for surviving? 'Well…sure. I know there was a lot of luck involved, but he was amazingly present-minded and resourceful…' (p. 205). Pavel then cleverly twists his question; 'Then you think it's admirable to survive. Does that mean it's **not** admirable to **not** survive?' Art sees his meaning. If life equals winning, then does death equal losing? Pavel believes that somehow the victims are blamed when it wasn't the best that survived or the best who died; survival was purely random. He wonders that so many books have been written about the Holocaust, yet people haven't changed. Art again worries how he can't even begin to imagine what Auschwitz felt like, and then the next drawing shows Pavel jumping out of his chair: 'What Auschwitz felt like? Hmm—How can I explain?...BOO!' Art is startled from his chair but Pavel has made his point effectively: 'It felt a little like **that**. But **always**! From the moment you got to the gate until the very end' (p. 206). Pavel helps Art visualise how the tin shop where Vladek worked in the camp looked and Art walks home, his image gradually increasing back to normal size, reflecting that the sessions with Pavel always make him feel better. His mind is now back to focusing on *Maus II*.

Art is writing again, his tape recorder playing Vladek's voice and his usual complaints about Mala before he returns to his Auschwitz story. Yidl, a communist Russian Jew in charge of the tinmen, accuses Vladek of being a rich, exploitative capitalist incapable of doing an honest day's work. Vladek is afraid of Yidl, and the other tinmen suggest he give food to Yidl to keep on his good side. He manages to exchange valuables with some specialist Polish workers who live outside the camp for sausage and eggs. Vladek and his family, before the war, also knew the head of the laundry and he gives Vladek civilian clothing to smuggle. Yidl receives cheese but wants more: 'He was so greedy, Yidl, he wanted I risk only for him everything. I too had to eat' (p. 208). The men are given little to eat, learning tricks such as standing near the end of the food line to get solid matter rather than water from the soup pot; too near the end meant no food. The little piece of bread given out is made from flour mixed with sawdust and spoiled cheese, jam or tiny sausages constitute dinner. Vladek saves half of his bread for later but the fear of starvation is ever present as highlighted by the drawing of dead prisoners just around the corner from where Vladek is eating: 'If you ate how they gave you, it was just enough to die more

slowly' (p. 208). Each morning Appel is conducted so that the living and dead prisoners can be counted to check no one is missing. Sometimes the men are made to stand all night whilst they are counted again and again. One old man complains he doesn't belong there with Yids and Polacks, claiming to have medals from the Kaiser and a son who is a German soldier. Vladek doesn't know if this was the truth but the German guards finish the man off anyway. (Note how the man is a mouse in one frame then a cat in the next.) The story shifts to Anja and we learn she was in the Birkenau section of Auschwitz, approximately two miles away. Vladek explains Birkenau was a death camp, whereas in Auschwitz you were put to work and not 'finished' so fast. In the present, Vladek wants to go home for lunch but Art keeps his father talking. Mancie, a Hungarian girl, acts as a conduit between Vladek and Anja. She has a good position in Birkenau through her relationship with an S.S. man. Mancie refuses Vladek's bribe of food, agreeing to find out about Anja for him. She is able to let him know how a frail Anja started sobbing with joy when told her husband was still alive and also delivers a letter from Anja. Knowing Vladek is alive gives Anja hope, despite the bad treatment she receives from the Kapo in charge of her group. Vladek sends a loving letter in return, as well as bread, telling Art how Mancie was risking her life. Mancie simply says: 'If a couple is loving each other so much, I must help however I can' (p. 213). Art's research for *Maus* suggests an orchestra played as the men marched through the gate to work each day but Vladek has no memory of any music. Vladek's news that he saw Anja in Birkenau shocks Art. He manages to persuade Yidl to put him on a work detail to fix roofs in the women's camp in the summer of 1944, a time when thousands of Hungarians were arriving. The men call out the names of their loved ones as they work and Vladek is once again lucky; a woman he knows from Lodz fetches Anja for him. Mancie has found her jobs in the kitchen where Anja can scavenge scraps of food some of which she gives to friends. Vladek is cross at her: 'No! Save your scraps…Don't worry about friends. Believe me, they don't worry about you. They just worry about getting a bigger share of your food' (p. 216). He begs the skeletal Anja to keep herself strong for his sake. 'Just seeing you again gives me strength' is her reply.

On one occasion a guard hears Vladek calling out to Anja, beating him so violently he needs to be carried back to camp by other men. Vladek is relieved it was him rather than Anja, refusing to go to the camp hospital fearing he may not come out again. He tells Art how he was twice taken in front of Dr Mengele during the frequent 'selektions' where the weak were sent to the gas chambers. (The author doesn't explain whom this infamous Nazi is assuming his reader already knows.) Vladek tells of a young Belgian, Felix, whose number is written down at another selektion, and needs to be calmed during the night by Vladek before the inevitable happens and he is taken the next day. Yidl's demands for food continue to exert pressure on Vladek's resources. He complains when all he receives one day is a single apple. Vladek notices the shoemaker has gone, runs to the Kapo in charge of the shop and offers himself as an experienced shoemaker, convincing the Kapo of his abilities by repairing an old boot. A diagram on page 220 shows the process of repair as Vladek draws on skills he learned by watching his cousin, Miloch, in the ghetto. His work impresses the Kapo and Vladek now finds himself a shoemaker, not having to worry about Yidl anymore. Soon, officials prefer Vladek to personally fix their shoes; however, one Gestapo proves problematic, threatening Vladek if the boot doesn't look brand new by the next day. The ever-resourceful Vladek bribes a specialist shoemaker to do the work for a day's ration of bread, watching the process carefully so he can save himself bread the next time. The Gestapo is so impressed he gives

Vladek a whole sausage that is devoured so quickly, he is a little sick. Friends of this Gestapo also give food in return for repairs and Vladek is soon able to offer the Polish Kapo in charge an egg: 'If you want to live, it's good to be friendly' (p. 222). He learns some new munitions workshops are being built to utilise female labour from Birkenau, asking the Kapo if he could get his wife a job there. '**Hah!** Impossible! It would cost a **fortune** in bribes!' (p. 222). Never one to be deterred, Vladek asks for the Kapo's cheese wrapper, using it to write to Anja. He tells Art how paper was virtually impossible to obtain but managed to find bits here and there, as well as other various items, providing them to friends when they were needed. This revelation helps the reader view the older Vladek's obsessive hoarding of items more objectively. The letter is sent via Mancie to Anja who replies how much she would like to be in barracks nearer to her husband. Anja offers to send an unpleasant Kapo's worn out boots to her husband for repair, a gesture that earns a reprieve from carrying the heavy soup cans, Art's drawing at the end of page 223 emphasising the words 'very different'. Vladek has calculated the cost of getting Anja to the new factory to be over 100 cigarettes and a bottle of vodka (which is the equivalent of 200 cigarettes). One day's bread equals 3 cigarettes so Vladek starves himself to save the necessary bread. Sadly, his box is taken from under his mattress. 'I'm telling you I wanted to cry' (p. 224). Art can't understand how his father left the box of precious bread and cigarettes in the barracks: 'Yes, about Auschwitz, **nobody** can understand,' responds Vladek. He is forced to save a second time, finally managing the bribes to bring Anja closer to him in early October 1944. 'And with them was Anja. **This** I arranged. It was the only time I was happy in Auschwitz' (p. 224). Vladek takes risks to get food to Anja and on one occasion she comes dangerously close to being caught. A Kapo spots her with a package and chases her back to the barracks where the terrified Anja cowers under a blanket, helped by a friend. The Kapo storms the barracks for an hour then at evening appel insists the guilty woman step forward. No-one moves and even when the Kapo threatens and then metes out mass punishment, Anja is not given away. However, the danger means Vladek has to stop sending packages but as he tells Art, the workshop was closed soon after and he was sent for 'black work' that involved heavy physical labour. We see drawings of the men carrying heavy stones and Vladek recoiling from a ferocious guard dog. He survives because he is able to work hard: 'To me they never hit, because I worked all my muscles away' (p. 227). The physical labour and the lack of food have caused Vladek to become very skinny. He fears the next selektion, faking a stomach upset and hiding by spending the whole time sitting on the toilet.

Art frustrates his father when he adds together the time Vladek spent in his various jobs at Auschwitz. Vladek thinks he spent about 10 months in the camp but Art adds it up to 12, wanting everything he writes to be correct. His father reminds him they didn't wear watches in Auschwitz. Françoise has finished the bank papers (a neat irony as Art has questioned his father's arithmetic) and the drawings take us back to the kitchen of the Catskills bungalow. Whilst Vladek makes his tea, using the teabag he's saved from breakfast, Art asks how he got back to the tin shop again after the black work. As the Russians approached, the Germans use the tinmen to pull apart the machinery of the gas chambers in order to rebuild them within Germany, where the intention is to quietly finish off the Jewish prisoners. Vladek's words, 'For this I was an **eyewitness**', are carefully positioned under an image of a smoking crematorium chimney (p. 229).

Vladek's voice overlays a set of drawings and diagrams as he explains the gas chambers to Art. He finds it hard to believe that 'People believed **really** it was here a place for showers…' (p. 230), adopting a formal metalanguage to describe the operation of the place; 'hermetic', 'Zyklon B', 'It was between 3 and 30 minutes.' Vladek manages to suppress his emotions whilst describing what took place in a matter-of-fact tone. Art (and the reader) hear how the largest pile of bodies lay near the door, the way workers pulled the damaged bodies to the ovens and burned two or three at a time. His words, 'To **such** a place finished my father, my sister, my brothers, so many', remind how painful these recollections are for Vladek (p. 231). Mass graves are described, dug out when there were too many Hungarian Jews arriving for the crematoriums. A horrific drawing at the bottom of page 232 conveys the agonising deaths of those burned alive in the mass graves. Whilst Art and Françoise reel in shock at what Vladek has just described, he jumps from his seat, telling them there's still much to be done for the day. He has dishes to do, dinner to defrost and pills to count but keeps talking as Art wants a question answered: 'I don't get it…why didn't the Jews at least **try** to resist?' (p. 233). As Vladek explains the difficulty of believing what's in front of you when starving, frightened and tired, and also living in hope of rescue, he becomes upset when he drops a favourite plate. The broken pieces are retrieved to glue back together as he tries to tell Art that organised resistance, whilst it happened in some spots, was futile against such a powerful enemy. During the night, Art and Françoise listen as Vladek moans in his sleep, Art telling his wife that when he was a kid he thought all adults made such noises as they slept. They find it very difficult staying with Vladek, hoping Mala returns so he won't become their responsibility.

Chapter Three: …And Here My Troubles Began…

The first drawing on page 237 zooms in on the marching legs and feet of the camp inmates, assumedly on the move to another location. The chapter title and drawing imply Vladek's story is about to take a turn for the worse.

Vladek is counting crackers, having already counted his pills and defrosted the fridge whilst Art and Françoise sleep in. He is upset that Art and Françoise will only stay a few days: 'Then better if you **didn't** come, now I got used a little to **having** you together by me' (p. 237). Their refusal of his offers of leftover food also disturbs him and ends in a frustrated exchange: 'I cannot forget it…ever since Hitler I don't like to throw out even a crumb.' Art furiously replies: 'Then just **save** the damn Special K in case Hitler ever comes back!' (p. 238). The reader can empathise with Vladek's obsession after hearing his stories; however, Art's reaction is worth further discussion. He later apologises to his father, explaining whilst they are worried about Vladek now Mala has departed, he can't expect them to move in permanently. Vladek claims he only wants them to enjoy the summer with him and once back at Rego Park, will cope better without Mala there. Art has read about some Auschwitz gas chamber workers who revolted, killing three S.S. men and blowing up a crematorium. 'Yah. For this they all got killed,' responds Vladek (p. 239). He adds that four young girls who snuck out to steal ammunitions were hanged near his workshop. They were friends of Anja's from Sosnowiec. A drawing shows their car, as they head to the supermarket along a country road, passing the hanging bodies. This juxtaposition of the past and present emphasises how Vladek's story has enveloped them all. The story now shifts firmly back to Auschwitz as the end of the war draws closer. The front is no more than 25 miles away and the prisoners hope

they can stay alive until the Russians arrive. Rumours abound the Germans are worried and planning to take everybody to camps inside Germany. Vladek is part of a group of prisoners who plan to avoid the forced departure by hiding in an attic where clothes, ID papers and bread have been stored. They miss the last appels, hiding in the attic, whilst the Gestapo chase all the prisoners out the gate, ready to march. However, one member of the group brings news that the Germans are going to torch and bomb the camp, forcing them to flee with everyone else. 'Finally they **didn't** bomb, but this we couldn't know. We left behind everything, we were so afraid, even the civilian clothes we organised. And ran out!' (p. 241). Vladek and his friends are among the very last to leave Auschwitz, carrying a blanket and the small amount of food given to every prisoner as they pass under the infamous gate.

He hears shooting all night as they march. Those who fall by the wayside are shot. Vladek remembers how he saw a dog shot when a boy, its writhing and kicking the same as the shot men he now sees. An attempt by some to bribe a German guard to abet an escape ends in betrayal as they are shot. Vladek's instinct not to join them is proved right. A map on page 244 shows the long march from Auschwitz to Breslau, more than 200 miles by foot. Prisoners are flooding in from other camps; confusion reigns and guards are hitting out everywhere. Vladek gains an extra portion of soup for being strong enough to carry the pail but in the morning the guards march the prisoners out again, this time to a cattle train where they are pushed in until no room is left: 'We lay on top the others, like matches, like herrings' (p. 245). Using his thin blanket, Vladek uses the hooks on the roof to create a hammock; here, he can rest and breathe more easily. The train finally stops but conditions are appalling. People begin to die, faint and even resort to violence against each other in order to get more space. The men have to toilet where they stand. Vladek is able to reach through the barbed wired window to get handfuls of snow, a welcome source of water. He exchanges snow for sugar from those below: 'So I ate also sugar and saved their life' (p. 246). A week later, Germans open the carriage, wanting the dead thrown out and the filth cleaned. Those still alive keep the bread and better shoes of the dead: 'They didn't need anymore' (p. 247). Vladek sees other trains that weren't opened up; there was no need as the occupants were all dead. The cleanout gives the others more room to stand whilst each morning, the Germans ask 'How many dead?' as the latest bodies are thrown out. Soon there is even room to sit. Finally, after some stopping and starting, the doors are opened and the prisoners ejected to surprisingly see a Red Cross van: a little coffee and a piece of bread for everyone. Back on the train the prisoners find out they are bound for Dachau.

Concerns about Françoise's driving interrupt Vladek's storytelling as they reach the supermarket. They refuse to accompany Vladek into Shop-Rite where he intends to exchange the open boxes of food left by Mala. Françoise jokes that Anja must have written on both sides of her diary pages; if she'd left one side blank, Vladek wouldn't have wasted the paper by burning them. Art comments that he'd rather kill himself than live through the camps, finding it miraculous his father survived. As Françoise perceptively notes, 'But in some ways he didn't survive' even suggesting they ought to stay a few days longer (p. 250). Art ironically doesn't think they would survive a lengthier stay! Vladek's mission in the supermarket is surprisingly successful. He has told the manager all about his health, Mala leaving and how it was in the concentration camps, coming back with six dollars of new groceries for only one dollar. He is happy.

Art takes Vladek's mind back to Dachau. 'Yah—this was a camp—**Terrible!** I had a misery, I can't tell you…here, in Dachau, my troubles began' (p. 251). The prisoners are closed in barracks, waiting to die amid lice-filled straw. The lice carry typhoid, the men having to show their shirts are lice free or they get no soup. The atmosphere is so tense, just bumping someone and causing them to spill a drop of soup results in fighting: 'Like wild animals they would fight until there was blood. You can't know what it is, to be hungry' (p. 251). Vladek develops an infection in his hand, deliberately making it worse so he is taken to the infirmary. There he receives three meals a day and only two patients share each bed. His ploy to stay longer by further irritating the wound ends when he becomes afraid the hand will never heal; Vladek shows Art the remaining scar. The prisoners are made to stand outside all day with nothing to do, other than wait to die. However, Vladek chances upon a Frenchman (drawn as a frog) with whom he can converse in English. Their conversation makes time pass more quickly and also brings Vladek the added benefit of some food from the Frenchman's parcel sent by his family through the Red Cross, a benefit not allowed to Jews. 'He insisted to share with me, and it saved me my life' (p. 253). Vladek naturally saves some of this food and uses it to trade. He's able to obtain a better quality shirt for himself and the Frenchman, wash them free of lice and thus ensure they get the daily rations. But several weeks later, Vladek becomes ill with the typhus that is killing many of the prisoners. He has to walk over the dead and sick to get to the toilet, thinking, 'Now it's **my** time. Now I will be laying like this ones and somebody will step on me' (p. 255). The drawing accompanying these words interestingly shows a mix of bodies; German, Polish and Jewish. Vladek is taken to the infirmary and lies there too weak even to go to the toilet. Too sick to eat the bread and soup, he hoards it under his pillow until a Kapo finds it and is told to take it away: 'He'll never need it' (p. 256). Vladek, unable to scream, bangs his shoe loudly and the bread is returned. As he can't eat, he uses pieces to pay for help to go to the toilet. He starts improving and when the Germans tell anyone strong enough to travel to line up, ready to be exchanged as war prisoners at the Swiss border, Vladek is helped to walk by two friends. This time they are travelling on a real train in the direction of Switzerland.

Art interrupts to ask about the Frenchman. Vladek and he exchanged letters in English for years but the letters were burned as well with Anja's notebooks. 'All such things of the war, I tried to put out from my mind once for all…until you **rebuild** me all this from your questions' (p. 258). Françoise stops to pick up a hitchhiker, an action that sends Vladek into a fury as the man (dog) is coloured, or in Vladek's words, a '**shvartse**r'. He mutters in Polish (translated for the reader) as he is convinced the man will steal the groceries. Françoise confronts Vladek's racism: 'That's **outrageous**! How can you, of all people be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way the Nazis talked about the Jews!' (p. 259). But Vladek refuses to listen, blaming the theft of valuables when he first came to New York on 'shvartsers' and insisting 'It's not even to **compare** the Shvartsers and the Jews!' (p. 259).

Chapter Four: Saved

The opening drawing is of the older Vladek superimposed over his younger self, dressed in concentration camp garb labelled with the Jewish star. Time has once again elapsed. It is autumn and Art is visiting Vladek in his Rego Park house. His father is despondent, wondering what the point of saving for old age was to now find himself living with an oxygen tank, a heart condition and diabetes. Art refuses his

father's offer of free rent, telling him to employ a live-in nurse, something Vladek could easily afford. Vladek argues against every suggestion Art makes but asks for advice about Mala, whom he's offered $100,000 to come and live with him again. Vladek wants to fix the storm windows but Art insists on more of Anja's war story first. The recorder is turned on as Vladek tries to remember. Mancie, the Hungarian girl, kept Anja by her side as the women were marched from Auschwitz. Vladek tells of looking unsuccessfully for Mancie after the war in order to reward her. Art remembers his mother mentioning Ravensbrück but Vladek just recalls her coming free through the Russian side, returning to Sosnowiec before him. His liberation took longer.

The train left Dachau right as the war was ending, the prisoners receiving a 'treasure box' of food each from the Swiss Red Cross but the words, 'I went to be exchanged for German prisoners on the Swiss border but we never came', foreshadow that Vladek is doomed to more strife (p. 264). When the train stops, they are marched towards the frontier, rumours rife about what is happening. There is a joyful commotion when the prisoners realise the war is over but the Germans march them to an unguarded freight train that stops after half an hour. There are no Americans waiting so they head off in different directions, only to be rounded up by a Wehrmacht patrol and guarded by a lake. The realisation that machine guns are set up all around them causes panic. The only consolation for Vladek is finding his friend, Shivek, who shares his coffee. Morning comes and the Germans have disappeared, apparently because the head officer's girlfriend begged him to let the prisoners go. The good luck doesn't last long; another German patrol is rounding up Jews, closing them in a barn. But once again, when morning comes, the guards have fled. Vladek and Shivek ask a German mechanic to hide them until the Americans come but he quickly tries to betray them to some fleeing Wehrmacht soldiers: 'They were in so big a hurry to run, they didn't even **look** to us' (p. 269). A safer spot is found in an empty barn although an explosion triggered by the Wehrmacht blowing up a bridge to seal their trail almost brings the barn down on top of Vladek and Shivek. The owners have fled and in the empty house, they find milk, chickens and civilian clothes. The only problem is the diarrhoea they each suffer as their stomachs aren't used to so much food.

A few days later the Americans arrive and Vladek tells them his story. A drawing on page 272 shows a large American (dog), his arms draped around Vladek and Shivek, tell them 'Those Krauts can't hurt you anymore. The only ones left are dead or dying.' The Americans take over the house but they offer work including plenty of food and gifts, impressed by Vladek's English and nicknaming him 'Willie'. The house owner returns wanting Vladek and Shivek arrested as 'Jewish thieves' for stealing clothes. The American sergeant tells them to return the clothes but Vladek is unperturbed as they still have plenty more. We return to the present as Vladek wants to hurry with the storm windows, although he brings a box of snapshots, Art at first excited at the possibility they might be 'momma's diaries'. Art ignores his father's growing anxiety about the windows, immersing himself in the family photos. There's Uncle Herman and wife, Hela, who had escaped the war by being in America for the 1939 World Fair. They helped bring Vladek and Anja from Stockholm in 1950 when Art was a baby, providing them with accommodation. Vladek had started a good business in Sweden and would have preferred to stay but Anja wanted to be with surviving family. Unfortunately, when Herman dies in a hit-run accident in 1964, 'Anja started then also to die a little' (p. 274). Herman and Hela's daughter Lonia died with

Richieu but their son, Lolek, survived Auschwitz to become an engineering professor. There's a photo of Anja's brother, Josef, who killed himself after his girlfriend deserted him when the Germans took away his factory. Levek, the middle brother and his wife fled to Siberia. Vladek sent them money to get to Warsaw, telling Art that if they'd stayed in Russia they might still be alive. Take note of how the author deliberately piles the photos of all who perished at the bottom of the page: Anja's parents, grandparents, older sister Tosha, Bibi, Richieu. '**All** what is left, it's the photos' (p. 275).

Art asks about Vladek's side of the family. He loses his father, sister Fela and her four children in 1942. Younger sisters, Zosha and Yadja and each of their children perish in Auschwitz. His closest brother Marcus, and Moses are sent to Blechamer where Vladek sent them money and food via the Red Cross. After the war, Vladek meets a man who knew his brothers there but won't tell him how they died. Two other brothers survived the war. Leon and Pinek desert the Polish army and head to Russia where peasant Jews keep them safe. Pinek married one but unfortunately Leon died of appendicitis. 'So only my little brother, Pinek, came out from the war alive…from the rest of my family, it's nothing left, not even a snapshot' (p. 276). The photos of Anja's family are given to him by Richieu's governess after the war, although Vladek doesn't believe her claim that Nazis stole the family valuables left with her. Vladek, clearly stressed at recalling painful memories, suffers heart pain and needs a tablet. The reader feels sympathy for Vladek here; he's told Art the story but hasn't received the help he needs with the storm windows (which act as a motif). He shrugs off Art's apology: 'So never mind, darling. Always it's a pleasure when you visit' (p. 277) Vladek's words strike us as ironic. How could telling his story be a pleasure?

Chapter Five: The Second Honeymoon

The opening drawing suggests optimism from the start. A plane flies over a sunny landscape of palm trees and skyscrapers.

It is winter. Art and Françoise are in their apartment, Art listening to some of the 20 hours of Vladek's story he has recorded on tape. The story was just about finished when Vladek 'ran off' to Florida and nothing has since been heard from him. Art wonders if he and Mala have killed each other whereas Françoise hypothesises the battle keeps him going. 'He's been a bizarre combination of helplessness and maniacal energy ever since she left' (p. 280.) Art feels some guilt as he wonders what to do with his father, hoping Vladek and Mala patch up their relationship 'and make each other miserable again' (p. 280). The phone rings. It's Mala from Florida telling Art that Vladek is in hospital for the third time in a month. 'I'm back with him again, though God knows why!' she moans (p. 281). By the time Art contacts the hospital, Vladek has discharged himself, not trusting the doctors and decided he wants to come back to New York for treatment. Mala asks Art to come and help. 'Gulp' are the words written beside Art as he is forced to make a decision.

Upon arrival in Florida, Art finds they've already packed and that Vladek is weak. Oxygen is arranged on the plane and an ambulance to meet the flight at JFK. He wonders how Vladek and Mala got back together again, Mala responding that she felt sorry for him. 'I swore I'd never see him again, but I'm just a sucker' (p. 282). She believes 'Anja must have been a saint! No wonder she killed herself.' Art notices that Vladek has become more confused and dependent, even insisting Mala check his

stool before flushing. He also obsessively repacks and refolds their suitcases. When Vladek sees the plane, he recalls how a tiny plane took Anja and him from Poland to Sweden to 1946. They had been unable to get to the USA due to quotas but Herman helped get them a visa to Stockholm. Vladek worked hard, persuading the Jewish owner of a department store to employ him as a salesman. He sources nylon stockings from Herman to sell in Sweden where they are rationed. Soon Vladek becomes a partner in the business and financially well off. He bemoans the fact that he never achieved equivalent financial success as a diamond dealer in America. After a difficult flight from Florida, Vladek becomes embarrassed, as he is 'de-planed' first at JFK, holding up other passengers. Further stress occurs as the ambulance arrives late and Vladek needs to direct its crew to La Guardia Hospital. Art is greatly surprised when the hospital doctor, after checking Vladek, says he can go home. 'What?!' reacts Art who had assumed his father would be kept in hospital (p. 286). This suits Vladek who would rather be home at Rego Park near his health plan hospital. Note how Vladek is drawn easily walking out of the hospital, a contrast to the earlier drawing of him groaning on the bed.

Art visits about a month later, telling Mala he needed time to get over the Florida trip. He learns they are selling the Rego Park house and moving to Florida. Vladek has been listless, making life easier for Mala, but he has become confused, getting lost on the way home from the bank. He tells Art the move to Florida is for the sake of peace with Mala. Vladek's mind is more focused as he returns to telling Art what happened after the war: 'The war. Yah, this I still remember' (p. 288). He and Shivek are sent from the farm to a Displaced Persons Camp at Garmisch-Partenkirchen where they are given identity papers. Unfortunately, Vladek suffers a relapse of typhus as well as showing signs of what will be diagnosed as diabetes a year later. Life is easy in the DP camp. The drawing show more relaxed activities such as card playing and Vladek earning chocolate through his English skills. Once they leave the camp, they find the train system in chaos but the journey past Nuremberg and Warzburg reveals the devastation wrought by the war. Vladek and Shivek gain pleasure at seeing the Germans suffering from American damage. 'Let the Germans have a **little** what they did to the Jews' (p. 290). They arrive in Hannover where his German wife has protected Shivek's brother through the war. She is drawn as a friendly cat, the first seen by the reader. Vladek plans to head to Sosnowiec where the family arranged to meet if separated. He sends a letter to the Jewish Centre there hoping for news of Anja but holds doubts about her survival. He visits Belsen DP camp looking for information and meets two girls from Sosnowiec who tell him the Poles are still killing Jews there. They tell of a man coming home to find Poles have taken over his bakery. 'We thought Hitler had finished you off!' (p. 292). He is beaten and hanged in his own shed by the Poles: '…for **this** he survived' observes Vladek. The girls have seen Anja though and tell Vladek she is safe, as she hasn't tried to claim back property. We observe Vladek's joy at this miraculous news as the story shifts to Anja's perspective.

Anja checks the Jewish organisation daily in the hope of news from Vladek, even going to a gypsy (drawn as a ladybird) for a reading in desperation. The gypsy tells Anja her husband is ill but coming home and predicts a new life far away as well as a new baby boy. She becomes increasingly depressed as time passes but finally the letter arrives from Vladek. He is in Germany, still ill with typhus, but has sent a photo of himself with the letter. It is a photo Anja always kept and he still has it. The actual photo of Vladek stares out from page 294 in contrast to the mouse version of him

talking to Art in the drawings. Naturally, Art races to get the photo: 'I need that photo in my book' and so it is. The ever-entrepreneurial Vladek trades things to buy gifts for Anja, including a fur coat, as he and Shivek slowly make their way back to Poland by foot and train. Bad luck strikes when Vladek returns from filling their water canteen to find their train car has disappeared. He is left without Shivek, who returns to Hannover to find him, and his luggage. The final drawing on page 295 depicts Vladek heading on his lonely three or four week walk back to Poland.

The very last page of *The Complete Maus* sees Vladek arriving in Sosnowiec, a place where few Jews are to be seen. He is recognised immediately by people at the Jewish organisation who send someone to find Anja. 'It was such a moment that everybody around was crying together with us' (p. 296). Vladek and Anna are drawn embracing in front of a spotlight. Vladek tells Art there's nothing more to tell: 'More I don't need to tell you. We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after.' He's tired of the tape recorder and talking, starting to fall asleep but noticeably calling Art 'Richieu'. At the bottom of the page, the gravestone of Vladek and Anja is drawn, letting us know that Vladek passed away in August 1982. It took Art Spiegelman from 1978 to 1991 to finish *The Complete Maus,* thirteen years of his life.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE TEXT

My first introduction to *Maus* took place at least six years ago when some English teacher colleagues who book listed it for Year 11 at their schools, brought it up in a conversation about teaching graphic novels. The genre had already captured my attention through publications such as *A Contract With God and other Tenement Stories*, *When The Wind Blows* and *Dracula: A Symphony in Moonlight* as well as a childhood reading popular comics as well as the *Asterix* and *The Adventures of Tintin* series—after my father had read them first.

After reading *Maus I* in one sitting, the realisation struck that I'd picked up the wrong book. It wasn't *The Complete Maus*; so back to the bookshop for *Maus II*. Half a story wouldn't do. I also didn't realise at the time that five years elapsed between the publication of each (1986 and 1991) or that Spiegelman had been publishing small sections of *Maus* as inserts in *Raw* magazine since 1980. My understanding of just how important the graphic novel genre is to literature peaked during a visit to New York's Strand bookstore in October 2011. There were shelves of graphic novels (I'm using the generic term here as graphic texts of all sorts are stocked under this category) and sitting there was Art Spiegelman signing copies of the newly released *MetaMaus*.

I was haunted by *Maus*, returning frequently to examine parts of the text more thoroughly; each time spotting extra 'bits' in the drawings or making further connections between the written narrative and the drawings. I don't mean 'haunted' as in afraid; it was the sheer power of the graphic text genre keeping ideas and questions swirling around my brain. Why the mice? Why didn't Art visit his father very often? How could he treat his father in such a way? Was there any truth to Vladek's complaints about Mala? Was the marriage to Anja as happy as Vladek made out…considering she took her own life? Did Vladek exaggerate his stories of resourcefulness? The content about the Holocaust per se didn't raise any questions for me. Questions about the how and why such an act of genocide was perpetrated in the first place have puzzled me since a visit to Dachau thirty years ago, added to by further reading, films, Holocaust museum visits, teaching texts by authors such as Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, listening to stories of survivors living in Melbourne and reading personal histories of survivors in the *Memory Guide My Hand* volumes published by the Makor Library in Caulfield. I knew it was impossible for me to understand such horrific experiences but the reality of what took place could not be questioned. There was also the issue of how to categorise the text. *Maus* is a biography, an autobiography, a history, an allegory, a work of art and much more. It

is deeply personal, Spiegelman's willingness to expose his own strengths and weaknesses as well as his father's adding to the multi-layered nature of the text.

For Art Spiegelman the problem was creating this reality in the form of a comic book.

His conversation with Françoise on page 176 of *Maus* is central to understanding his dilemma. Here is an artist, a son of Holocaust survivors whose experiences permeated his childhood. He has a poor paternal relationship and a mother who took her own life, and is a sufferer of depression who has developed feelings of guilt about his perceived lack of understanding of what his parents went through in Auschwitz. Spiegelman is an artist and author oozing inadequacy and insecurity, initially surprising to readers who know him as a Pulitzer Prize winner and famous comic book creator. Perhaps, not so surprising by the time we finish reading *Maus*.

*'I guess it's **some** kind of guilt thing about having had an easier life than they did./Sigh. I feel so inadequate trying to reconstruct a reality that was worse than my darkest dreams./ And trying to do it as a **comic strip!** I guess I bit off more than I can chew. Maybe I ought to forget the whole thing./ There's so much I'll never be able to understand or visualise. I mean reality is too **complex** for comics…so much has to be left out or distorted.'* (p. 176).

Spiegelman's honesty in depicting himself making sense of his father's story provides a balance to the places in the text where he draws himself speaking and acting in a seemingly uncaring and self-absorbed manner to Vladek, and sometimes to Mala. Spiegelman 'gets' that his obsession with obtaining the story for his comic book comes at a cost, allowing the readers to develop their own judgements of him. He cleverly makes the drawings—and carefully selected words and conversations—tools that explicitly show his feelings. Art leaving Vladek's house at Rego Park, after learning his father has burned Anja's notebooks, muttering '**Murderer**', is a simple but powerful image. At a number of points in *Maus*, I wished Art would simply acknowledge his father's pain, not to Françoise in one of their chats, but directly to Vladek—just give his father a hug and thank him for remembering and sharing such dreadful events. It is sad that father and son were unable to enjoy a closer and more fulfilling relationship. Could it be that *Maus* is ultimately their gift to each other, although at great emotional and psychological cost? Art's battle to understand what Auschwitz was really like causes him much anxiety but ultimately he realises understanding is impossible. Pavel, his psychiatrist, possibly brings Art close to the nature of true fear: 'What Auschwitz felt like? Hmmm…How can I explain?...**BOO!'** (p. 206). Art draws himself—depicted as a small child at this point in the text—jumping with genuine fright. Pavel continues, 'It felt a little like ***that.*** But **ALWAYS!** From the moment you get to the gate until the very end' (p. 206).

The opening of Chapter Two—Auschwitz (Time Flies) is a part of *Maus* to which I most often return, and a part that elicits many comments and questions from students. We know Vladek suffers nightmares and other physical and psychological consequences from his war experiences. We expect this; how could one come out of Auschwitz alive but unscathed? Art has also told the reader how he grew up hearing his father's moans at night and is surprised to learn later that all parents didn't sleep like this. The graphic depiction of Vladek's experiences in Art's drawings enables us to visualise what happened, adding another dimension to the written words. Most students will have seen photos, old film footage or documentaries about Auschwitz but 'hearing' Vladek's voice overlay Art's carefully drawn maps of the camps,

diagrams of the gas chamber process, brutal treatment by cats and pigs, and those open mouthed, shrieking mice excruciatingly dying touches our senses in different ways. This takes me back to page 201 in 'Auschwitz (Time Flies)'. Why draw the flies? Why is Art now drawn as a man wearing a mouse mask? Why the juxtapositions between his personal story and the Holocaust? And what about the enormous pile of dead mice surrounding his work desk? The success of *Maus I* is overshadowed by the painful collision of past and present in Art's consciousness. He is unable to enjoy newfound fame and the forthcoming birth of his first child as Auschwitz permeates his every thought. The words, 'Lately I've been feeling depressed' (p. 201), take our minds back to 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet'. The reasons for Art's breakdown, aged twenty, are never explained whereas we can empathise with his state of mind as he fights writer's block at his desk and is overwhelmed by media asking questions that can't be easily answered. We see an agitated and claustrophobic Art shrinking to a child-like figure on his office chair, calling for his 'mommy'. He just doesn't feel like a functioning adult who is to soon become a father, with his own father's ghost still hanging over him. Art leaves the pile of mice bodies behind and heads to see Pavel whom the reader quickly perceives to be a wise old man, also a survivor of Auschwitz like Vladek. Art talks about feeling 'Completely messed up. I mean things couldn't be going better with my 'career' or at home, but mostly I feel like crying…I can't work…But even when I'm left alone I'm totally **BLOCKED**' (p. 203). Pavel and Art consider the core of the father/son relationship; they discuss emotions of remorse, anger and guilt. Art remembers his childhood: 'Mainly I remember **ARGUING** with him…and being told that I couldn't do anything as well as he could.' He continues: 'No matter what I accomplish, it doesn't seem much compared to surviving Auschwitz.' (p. 204). The ensuing discussion in Pavel's apartment is a key scene in *Maus* as it is the only time we see and hear Art away from his father, Mala or Françoise. Including the session with Pavel is a clever technique, allowing Art to be uncomfortably honest about his feelings and anxieties. Pavel also appears to have emerged from the camps with a different mindset to Vladek; his is a voice of calmness and wisdom allowing Art to leave with a clearer outlook and able to resume his comic book.

The artwork in *Maus* is meticulous and an exciting element for students returning to the graphics at different stages of their study. On one level, a mouse mask seems a simple artistic ploy but when we give *Maus* a reading based only on masks, we see more than just the use of different animals to represent different ethnicities. They represent concealment, betrayal, and confusion as well. Vladek and Anja don pig masks to conceal their Jewish identity, although the drawing of Anja's flowing mouse tale on page 138 shows her difficulty in hiding her Jewish appearance. In contrast, Vladek confidently rides in the German section of trams wearing his mask. Art and Pavel are drawn as men wearing masks in their consultation, the media frenzy after the success of *Maus I* depicts reporters and TV crew wearing an assortment of masks, implying Art finds them confusing and hard to trust. Also worth perusing are the various faces. Whilst the mice have very simply drawn faces: their mouths, eyes and eyebrows, and shading or lines, contributing to our reading of their emotions, other animals are drawn quite differently by Spiegelman. More detail is drawn in to emphasise their menacing nature. Many of his German cats are ferocious with emphasis placed on their whiskers and teeth. Polish Kapos are similarly drawn and close ups employed as well to highlight their vindictiveness and cruelty. The prisoner who claims he is German, not Jewish, on page 210 is drawn twice, as a mouse and a cat highlighting the difficulties of knowing people's true identities. Students will also

be able to explore the many motifs, Spiegelman's methods of shifting between past and present, the insertion of photos and signs, Art's constant cigarette smoking, the deliberate physical setting out of each page, the exercycle and other idiosyncrasies of Vladek. *Maus* is rich with possibilities for the classroom. It is deeply ironic that Art Spiegelman struggled so much with a face-to-face relationship with his father but is able to do justice to Vladek's story with a pen.

CHARACTERS

Art Spiegelman

Dealing with Art Spiegelman is a double-edged sword. On one hand he is the author, artist and narrator who has created *Maus* and to whom students will be referring as 'Spiegelman' in their text responses. On the other hand, he is 'Art', sometimes 'Artie' and christened 'Arthur', a character drawn and written into Spiegelman's comic book; a character who is a narrator, an active participant, an interviewer who also has his own story to tell; a story that parallels and develops with the construction of Vladek's story.

Art was born in Stockholm in 1948 to Vladek and Anja Spiegelman after the Holocaust, migrating to America with his parents at the age of two and growing up in the Rego Park area of Queens, a largely Jewish area of New York City. He remembers his childhood as closely associated with the Holocaust, always aware of his dead brother Richieu's photo reproaching him from his parents' bedroom wall, and interpreting his father's nightmares as normal adult behaviour. Cynical about his parents' Jewish 'survivor' friends and clearly influenced by a fractious relationship with his demanding father, Art has shunned the Jewish faith and studied art, a profession deemed unsuitable by his parents. His nervous breakdown at twenty is not explored in *Maus*, other than the reader discovering Art had been recently released from a mental institution when his mother commits suicide. There are several clues in 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History' suggesting Art's relationship with his parents is difficult. He has 'agreed' to live with his parents upon release from hospital, they don't like his girlfriend and Art is angry that he is expected to comfort his father, not the other way around, after Anja's suicide. His parents' friends also treat him with hostility; the implication being that Art has in some way contributed to his mother's death, hence the exacerbation of his feelings of guilt. 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet' depicts possible difficulties in his relationship with Anja as well. Art is resentful of 'the way she tightened the umbilical cord' as he remembers his mother questioning his love of her in their very last exchange.

The adult Art, married to Françoise, is an artist specialising in comic books and sets out to record his father's story in comic book form. Art, although living relatively close to Vladek's home in Rego Park, has been an infrequent visitor, finding Vladek a difficult, obsessive personality whom he cannot please and is scarred by events in his younger years. Art is a difficult person to fathom, especially in *Maus I*. Despite the listening and creative skills he brings to the construction of Vladek's story, Art is not always a good listener himself. He doesn't like Vladek's digressions, often bringing his father back to a particular place in the story or ignoring requests for practical help around the house. There always seem to be excuses. Mala's pleas for assistance or her need for someone in whom to confide her difficulties are sometimes washed away by Art. This creates a complex relationship between the reader and Art: how do we react to his self-absorption and indifference, and sometimes even contempt, towards the problems of his father and step-mother but still admire his ability to interview, research and create his book? *Maus II* exposes the inner turmoil Art faces in greater detail. The success of the first book has brought him fame but he is depressed, feels like crying all the time, unable to work and is tangled in a very complex relationship of his own with the Holocaust and Auschwitz.

Art feels guilty that he finds Vladek's behaviour, shaped by his Holocaust experiences, irritating and also angry his own life and upbringing has been affected by the trauma suffered by his parents. As he starts work on the 'Auschwitz: Time Flies' section of *Maus II*, Art finds himself haunted by the victims of the death camps and feelings of inadequacy as he fights to understand the reality of Auschwitz. Pavel, his psychiatrist, is able to help Art understand he needs to stop feeling remorseful and guilty that he's experienced an 'easier' life than his parents.

Art's honesty in depicting himself in a less than flattering style is admirable. He feels guilty about neglecting his father, his lack of practical assistance as he aged, as well as taking so much from his father in terms of the story, but not reciprocating love and care in return. But ultimately, the book is testament to Art's love and appreciation of what his father went through. It is Vladek's story, beautifully crafted by his son, and ironically, most readers will agree Art does do justice to his father through the book's honesty.

Vladek Spiegelman

Vladek, from the first time we meet him, is depicted as a grumpy old man who constantly complains about Mala, his second wife, hoards useless items and frets about money and wastage. He would dearly like to see more of Art, for both company and practical assistance around the house. Vladek has shown no interest in Art's artistic career, clearly disappointed with his choice of profession. He is hyper manic at times, depicted as furiously pedalling away on his exercycle as Art records his story. He obsessively counts and recounts his pills, takes partly used packets of food back to the supermarket, leaves the gas burner going to save matches and is basically reluctant to spend money in any way. Incident after incident depicts Vladek's thriftiness.

However, the gradual revelation of his war experiences and the loss of Anja position the reader to start viewing Vladek in a different way. The constant struggle for the basic essentials of survival has scarred Vladek. His resourcefulness and present-mindedness during the Holocaust has affected his behaviour; money and valuables vital for obtaining food whilst in the ghetto, in hiding and in Auschwitz have now become something from which he can't bear to be parted. Vladek has a fear something dreadful might happen again, as highlighted when he draws Art a diagram of a bunker, telling him the knowledge could come in useful some day. He has been left with an innate distrust of other people and is ironically a racist himself. Mala is treated badly and Françoise and Art find it a test of patience staying with Vladek at the Catskills bungalow. Vladek's destruction of Anja's notebooks and other letters related to the war, intensely angers Art, but his poignant admission of how the burning came about, is better understood by the reader who lacks Art's close proximity to the situation. There are also glimpses of a Vladek who was more generous in the past. He sent money and packages to various people during and after the war out of a sense of responsibility and gratitude. Art is surprised to learn that his father sent assistance to the 'Kombinator', Haskel Spiegelman, who failed to save his parents-in-law. Another example of Vladek's contradictory nature is his warning to Anja not to share her food with 'friends' as they can't be trusted yet he shares with Mandelbaum and others.

The young Vladek is portrayed quite differently as a Valentino lookalike and shrewd businessman. Although he spurns Lucia as an unsuitable wife as she has no dowry,

and is very pleased to be marrying the daughter of a millionaire, Vladek is depicted as very much in love with Anja. He talks compassionately about her breakdown after Richieu's birth and the stay at the sanatorium in Czechoslovakia. He worries about Anja's safety when they are forced into hiding, and at Auschwitz he does everything possible to ensure her well-being. Their reunion at Sosnowiec after the war is drawn as a joyous scene. Vladek's Holocaust experiences, the loss of first-born Richieu and the tragic suicide of his beloved Anja leave him a sad figure. However, the recalling of the past for Art's book, although deeply painful, does allow him to spend precious time with his son. Sadly, the final words Vladek speaks to Art in *Maus II* highlight just how much his persona is melded to the Holocaust: he calls Art 'Richieu'.

Anja Spiegelman/Anna Zylberberg

Mala tells Art his mother must have been a 'saint' to put up with Vladek. It may have been that Anja was simply a more placid personality and of course knew Vladek as he was before the war. Although thin and nervous, Anja is strong minded enough to pass on messages for a communist friend before Vladek insists she stop such dangerous activities if she wants to stay married to him. Anja has been brought up in a wealthy family wanting for nothing. Vladek is given an excellent financial start by her father but even this security cannot save Anja from suffering a serious breakdown after the difficult birth of Richieu. It takes several months recuperation at a sanatorium to restore her health and her family looks after her when Vladek is drafted into the Polish army and then becomes a POW. Anja finds life in the ghetto and then in hiding challenging. She resists Vladek's efforts to send Richieu into hiding with Ilzecki's son but later is persuaded to let him go with Tosha, Wolfe and the other children. Anja senses something is amiss with the Polish smugglers who are meant to take them to safety in Hungary but Vladek tells her the arrangements are already made. Richieu's death shatters Anja and she questions whether she wants to keep living. Vladek also tells how Anja went into a depressive decline after the death of her only surviving family member on the Zylberberg side, her brother Herman in a hit-run accident in 1964. Sadly, Anja's death wish is fulfilled when she takes her own life in 1968.

Anja's survival at Birkenau and Auschwitz is miraculous. She is extremely frail and only survives because of Mancie's care and Vladek's resourcefulness in getting food to her and arranging her transfer to the new work camp. The reader doesn't find out any details about what happened to Anja after the liquidation of Auschwitz; we just know she returned to Sosnowiec from the Russian side, arriving back well before Vladek. The gaps in Anja's story fit with the loss of her notebooks that Art so craves. Her perspective of the Holocaust and also her story in later years was lost when Vladek, overwhelmed by grief, destroyed them. The little we know is that she spoiled Art as a child and did have negative experiences with Vladek's thriftiness. Art remembers the fuss Vladek made when he needed a new school uniform. He also recalls Anja's question about whether he loved her not long before her suicide. The reasons for Anja's suicide are not established; we can only speculate, as she left no note. Anja's presence lives on in the present of *Maus*. Vladek and Art constantly mention her and as Mala reminds Art, Anja's photos still take pride of place on Vladek's desk.

Richieu Spiegelman

Richieu, the 'ghost brother', is only three when he dies from poison administered by his aunt, who kills herself and the children rather than be transported to Auschwitz. He is much loved by his parents despite the depression and breakdown experienced by Anja after his birth. Art is reminded of Richieu on a number of occasions as Vladek's story unfolds, just as he was always reminded of his dead brother by the reproachful photo on the wall of his parents' bedroom. Art discusses Richieu in conversations with Françoise and Pavel, his 'ghost brother' having haunted his life. *Maus II* starts, not with one of Spiegelman's drawings, but a photograph of Richieu. This photograph of a blond, attractive boy humanises him in a way the anthropomorphic representation of Richieu does not.

Françoise

We first meet Françoise, Art's wife, in *Maus II* when she insists on being drawn as a mouse rather than a frog. She is an independent minded woman who is French by birth. She does convert to Judaism to please Vladek but is not afraid to speak candidly to her father-in-law or remind Art that his father is his responsibility. Françoise does show compassion as well as frustration towards Vladek. She understands he has endured much tragedy through the Holocaust and Anja's death, but still finds his obsessive behaviour a trial when they stay with Vladek at the Catskills bungalow. She helps balance his bank statements winning a rare compliment. Françoise is shown several times in conversation with Art about his father and the progress of the comic book. These conversations in the car, in bed and on the bungalow balcony are an effective creative device. They allow Art's feelings to be heard away from his father, similar to his session with Pavel. Spiegelman gives 'thanks to Françoise Mouly for her intelligence and integrity, for her editorial skills, and for her love' at the start of *Maus I*. (p. 4)

Mala Spiegelman

Mala has her own story. Her parents both die in Auschwitz after being taken from the stadium the same day as Vladek's father, sister and her children. Mala was also present at the stadium but was rescued by her brother, a member of the Jewish Council, who hid her in a coal cellar. She is herself a survivor of the camps and was a friend of Vladek and Anja in Queens. Mala supports Art's interpretation of his mother's funeral in 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet' recalling how he was treated badly by family friends. She appears to have married Vladek because she felt sorry for him; there is no apparent sign of love or great affection between them. Her despairing frustration at Vladek's obsessive and miserly behaviour is made evident in her conversations (mainly in the kitchen over coffee) with Art. The summer holiday in the Catskills proves too much for Mala and she drives to Florida leading to Vladek's accusations that she's stolen the car and money. She later reconciles with him in Florida and she rings to tell Art about Vladek's illness, begging him to fly down and assist her. The reader never finds out whether there is any credibility to Vladek's complaints against her. Art thanks Mala Spiegelman in the acknowledgements at the start of *Maus I*.

Anja's parents and grandparents

Anja's father, Mr Zylberberg, is a wealthy industrialist who provides a luxurious existence for the family in Sosnowiec. Vladek receives a gold watch from him as a wedding present and is also helped to buy a factory in a nearby town. Her father also gives them an apartment. The personality of Matka, Anja's mother, is not greatly developed but her father is an important character in *Maus I.* He believes in the power of money and influence and, for a time, this does work in his favour. Vladek brings in extra income to help maintain the family's lifestyle but as life becomes more difficult, father-in-law finds it harder and harder to cope with life under the Nazi regime. He tries bribery to keep some family furniture when it is confiscated, including fighting hard to keep his sick wife's bed, but realises he has no power over the Germans. He is also unable to save the 90-year-old grandparents, Mr and Mrs Karmio, despite spending several days in prison as the Nazis punish him for hiding them. Finally he tells the family the grandparents will have to go or all of them will be taken to Auschwitz. When Haskel Spiegelman arranges the escape of Vladek, Anja and Lolek, father-in-law pays extra for him and his wife to escape as well but is ultimately betrayed. They perish in Auschwitz in 1943. Father-in-law is always drawn looking sharp in a suit, white shirt and bow-tie to the very end but as Vladek reflects: 'He was a millionaire, but even this didn't save his life.' (p. 117)

Mrs Motonowa

Vladek meets Mrs Motonowa at the black market. She is a Polish woman whose husband spends most of his time away in Germany. She trades food in exchange for money and valuables. As a Pole, she is entitled to ration coupons. Vladek and Anja stay with Mrs Motonowa for several months, paying her good money, but being well treated. Anja tutors the son in German, his grades at school noticeably improving, but he is smart enough to tell his teacher it has been his mother's assistance. After a Gestapo search at the black market, Mrs Motonowa tells Vladek and Anja to leave, but later she realises she panicked and asks them to return. When her husband returns for ten days, they are forced to hide in the rat-infested cellar. Mrs Motonowa is depicted as a good, kind person even though Vladek has to pay for her protection. She begs them not to trust the smugglers and also successfully hides Miloch Spiegelman, his wife and son for the duration of the war. Mrs Motonowa is an example of a Polish non-Jew who resists the Nazis in her own way.

Mrs Kawka

Mrs Kawka is also a Pole who lives on a farm out of Sosnowiec. She allows Vladek and Anja to hide in her cow barn but says that if they are discovered, she doesn't know them. They later return to Kawka's barn when Mrs Motonowa panics after the Gestapo search at the black market. She shows kindness by inviting the shivering Anja into the warmth of her house and feeding her. It is also Kawka who introduces Vladek to the smugglers who ultimately betray them to the Gestapo. It is unclear if Kawka is linked to the smugglers' scheme or not.

Mandelbaum

It is Mandelbaum's nephew, Abraham, who is forced by the smugglers to fake a letter to his uncle saying he has made it to safety in Hungary. The Gestapo arrests

Mandelbaum on the train too, and he and Vladek stick together in Auschwitz. However, Mandelbaum does not cope well. He has been issued pants that are far too big for him and mismatched shoe sizes. As a result, he walks around holding up his pants and can only wear one shoe on the snowy ground. He also loses his spoon and wishes for a miracle to occur, bringing him a piece of string to tie his pants and shoes that fit. Vladek, having gained the protection of a Kapo, is able to provide Mandelbaum with clothes and shoes that fit as well as a new spoon. Mandelbaum is overwhelmed at this gesture and cries. Vladek is able to protect Mandelbaum for a little longer but he is sent on a work detail and never returns.

Mancie

Mancie is a Polish Jew who protects Anja in Birkenau and acts as a go-between for Vladek and Anja. She is motivated only by kindness and the couple's obvious love for each other, one of the few characters we see who doesn't expect payment of some sort. Mancie helps Anja get an easier job in the Birkenau kitchen and when Auschwitz is cleared of prisoners, it is Mancie who helps Anja survive the rest of the war. Vladek tries to locate her after the war to 'reward' her but fails in his efforts.

Pavel

Pavel is Art's 'shrink'. He is a survivor of Auschwitz and his regular evening sessions with Art help him recover from the overwhelming depression he experiences after the publication of *Maus I*. He discusses survivor guilt with Art and helps him to understand that it is impossible to truly understand what Auschwitz was like. Ironically, Pavel's house is full of stray cats and dogs, something that Art creatively notes in his drawings.

Lucia Greenberg

Lucia is Vladek's girlfriend until he meets Anja. They have an intimate relationship for several years but Vladek never sees Lucia as a potential wife. She is devastated and jealous when Vladek becomes engaged to Anja, sending a lie-filled letter to Anja that nearly ends the engagement.

Shivek

Shivek is a friend of Vladek's from before the war and they meet up after their release from Dachau. They take refuge in a house that is taken over by American soldiers who treat them well and provide food and lodging until being sent to a Displaced Persons Camp. Once they have new identity papers, they make their way together to Hannover where Shivek's brother lives. Both entrepreneurial characters, they manage to gather some goods together and aim for Sosnowiec. They are separated by bad luck but the reader assumes they do meet up again later.

Minor characters

- Janina, the Polish governess, who early in the war says they are like family but shuts the door in Vladek and Anja's faces when they seek refuge. After the war she returns the family photos left in her possession but not the other valuable items.

- The seamstress who hides secret communist documents for Anja and subsequently spends three months in jail.
- Orlach is a friend who helps release Vladek from the POW camp.
- Marcus and Moses are Vladek's brothers who perish in Blechamer concentration camp. His sisters, Zosha and Yadja and their children died in Auschwitz. His other brothers, Leon and Pinek were kept safe by Russian Jews. Leon died of typhus whilst Pinek and his wife, Sarah, migrated to Israel.
- Fela is Vladek's sister. She perishes in Auschwitz with her four children and Vladek's father.
- Tosha and Wolfe are Anja's sister and brother-in-law. Bibi is their daughter. Tosha poisons the children and herself rather than be sent to Auschwitz. Wolfe is shot escaping from the train to Auschwitz.
- Herman is Anja's brother who survives the war as he and his wife, Helen, were visiting America in 1939 when war broke out. Their son, Lolek, survived Auschwitz but daughter, Lonia, died with Richieu.
- Josef is Anja's brother who took his own life when his girlfriend left him after the Germans took away his factory.
- Levek, another brother of Anja's, fled to Russia with his wife but returned to his wife's family in Warsaw using money Vladek sent him. They would have lived if they had stayed in Russia.
- Ilzecki the tailor buys cloth from Vladek and also saves him from arrest. He offers to hide Richieu with his son. Ilzecki and his wife don't survive the war but their son does.
- Nahum Cohn and his son are hanged in the town square for dealing goods without coupons.
- Ssklarczyk is the grocer lets Vladek sell items under counter.
- Doctor Orens is the doctor who tells Art his mother has killed herself.
- Uncle Persis is a member of the Jewish Council who arranges for Wolfe, Tosha, Bibi, Richieu and Lonia to live in his ghetto. The Gestapo shoots him along with other members of the Jewish Council when their usefulness runs out.
- A Stranger who betrays the family hiding in their attic bunker to the Gestapo.
- Haskel Spiegelman is the cousin whose position as a Chief of Jewish Police enables him to help Vladek, Anja and Lolek escape—for a high price. He also takes the parents-in-laws' valuables but doesn't save them. Vladek calls Haskel a 'Kombinator'. Haskel survives the war hidden by his Polish girlfriend.
- Pesach Spiegelman is also described by Vladek as a 'Kombinator'.
- Miloch Spiegelman was 'a fine fellow' who, along with his wife and child survives the war with Mrs Motonowa. He migrates to Australia but dies of a heart attack on a street in Sydney in the 1970s.

- Yidl is a communist prisoner in charge of the tin shop where Vladek works in Auschwitz. He treats Vladek less harshly in return for food.
- A Kapo to whom Vladek teaches English. He provides Vladek with extra food and protects him as long as he is able.
- A Jewish department store owner in Sweden who takes Vladek on as a partner.

Authorities and Groups

- Red Cross
- Jewish groups
  - ➔ Jewish Community Organisation (Gemeinde)
  - ➔ Jewish Council in the ghetto
- Poles
- Americans
- Kapos
- Gestapo

Look over the text again to see how each of the above groups is represented in *The Complete Maus*.

ISSUES AND THEMES

Task: Create a table using the various headings below. For each issue/theme, make a series of columns that allow you to record notes on general ideas, examples from dialogue between characters, examples from Art's narrative and examples from Art's drawings. Make sure you record the page numbers. Use the ideas below as a start to your own understanding of each issue/theme. When your table is complete, practise writing paragraphs on each. Make sure you use quotes to support your ideas. *(Please note: some of the headings below overlap.)*

The Holocaust and genocide

- *Maus* provides a history of aspects of the Holocaust through one man's personal journey.
- The role of Auschwitz and Birkenau.
- The tactics employed by the Nazis to firstly shift the Jewish population to ghettos and then to concentration camps.
- The organisation and detailed planning needed to eliminate Jews.
- The loss of several generations of families.
- Statistics are woven in to emphasise the enormity of the genocide.
- The effect on non-Jews.
- The difficulty of resistance.
- Post-Holocaust consequences: the search for loved ones, migration and resettlement, dealing with the psychological trauma and grief.
- The build up of anti-Jewish sentiment and curtailing of Jewish rights and freedoms from mid-1930s.

Racism and persecution

- Anti-Semitism—the signs saying 'Jews out'.
- Children taught by parents to hate Jews.
- Synagogues burned.
- Jews seen as rich businessmen: 'All you Jews have gold'.
- Scapegoating.
- Disempowerment through loss of businesses, homes, papers, curfews.
- Humiliation—made to wear Jewish star; beards forcibly cut off, shaving of hair on arrival at concentration camps.
- Vladek's reaction when Françoise picks up an African American hitchhiker.
- Stereotyping—Art worries that he is promoting stereotype of miserly Jew through his portrayal of Vladek.

- Those who are not racist and offer friendship and assistance
- Vladek's bigoted opinions.

Being a prisoner

- In the ghetto.
- Hiding in bunkers and other places.
- In the concentration camps.
- People who are a 'prisoner' of their past.
- Mala feeling trapped in her marriage to Vladek.
- Art's 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case Study' comic.
- Anja and her ultimate release through suicide.
- The constant use of bars and prison/camp attire in the drawings.
- The dehumanising of concentration camp prisoners to sub-human status.
- Living with the fear of death.
- Powerlessness of situation.
- The different ways in which people cope with imprisonment.
- Power structure within the concentration camps.
- The tattooed numbers.

Being a survivor

- The consequences on a person's future life.
- Vladek's impaired ability to connect properly with family and friends in later life.
- Vladek and Anja repeatedly avoid death through illness, starvation, beatings and the gas chambers. It is a daily battle to survive.
- Questions about what survival means. Can someone survive physically but not emotionally/psychologically?
- Vladek hoarding in case of another disaster.
- The inability to ever live in the same way again.
- Feeling guilty about being a survivor.
- Survivors of Holocaust tending to live in same area of NYC.
- Survivor guilt of next generation and their inability to understand what parents have been through.
- The tactics employed to survive.

Guilt

- Art feels guilty about not living up to his father's expectations or being able to relate to his father's past.
- Art feels guilty about not being able to complete *Maus.*
- Art's guilt over his mother's death is exacerbated by the comments of family friends at funeral.
- Survivors of Holocaust who feel guilty they survived.
- Mala returning to Vladek.
- Mrs Motonowa who feels guilty about making Anja and Vladek leave.
- Guilt over choices made: e.g. not sending Richieu away with Ilzecki's son.
- Giving Anja's grandparents up to the Gestapo.
- Vladek's guilt about helping his brother and wife back to Hungary when they would have been safe in Russia.

Morality and values

- How these can change in times of crisis: e.g. stealing food and clothes.
- The ability to take another's life, let alone millions.
- The black market.
- Vladek's desire to 'reward' those who helped him and Anja after the war.
- Vladek and Shivek taking clothes from a German house after war ends. American says they have to return the clothes to owner.
- The smugglers.
- Mancie.
- Making use of who you know: e.g. friends or relatives on Jewish Council.

Trust and betrayal

- Avram and wife reported by Polish friends after their money runs out.
- Vladek entrusts Art with his story.
- Vladek doesn't trust others with his money etc. Part of this aimed at Mala. Hitchhiker might steal.
- Bribing guards who cannot be trusted: e.g. Pesach Spiegelman who is shot
- The seamstress who hides the communist documents for Anja.
- Lucia feels betrayed by Vladek's engagement to Anja.
- Trust within marriage: Vladek doesn't trust Mala.
- Mrs Motonowa and her small son who knows not to give away Vladek and Anja.

- Anja and Mrs Motonowa don't trust the smugglers.
- The betrayal by the smugglers.
- Janina who returns family photos but not valuables.
- Haskel Spiegelman as a 'Kombinator'.
- Art feeling betrayed by his mother's suicide.

Kindness and integrity

- This could also be read as a lack of kindness and integrity.
- Mancie.
- Mrs Motonowa.
- Vladek's assistance to Mandelbaum.
- Art's integrity as an artist and son.
- Does Art treat Vladek kindly?
- The department store owner in Stockholm.
- The supermarket owner: why give Vladek some free groceries?

Evil and brutality

- The unforgettable evil of the Holocaust.
- Brutality of treatment of prisoners—long marches through snow, physical labour, starvation, beatings, dehumanisation.
- Brutality of Nazis depicted in Art's drawings: ferocious cats and brutal Kapos.
- The hanging of Nahum Cohn and others in town square as a warning.
- Nightmares experienced by Vladek.
- The drawing of mice dying in gas chambers or being burned alive.

Mental illness

- Vladek's obsessive nature, hoarding, frugality.
- Anja's depression and suicide. She was already subject to depression after episode after Richieu's birth.
- Art's breakdowns and his depression whilst working on *Maus II.*
- Pavel choosing to work as a psychiatrist.

Remembering

- The role of memory.
- The photo of Richieu in his parents' bedroom.

- Vladek keeps photos of Anja on his desk.
- Photographs—the cigar box of photos Vladek shows Art of the relatives who perished in the Holocaust on Anja's side. No photographs remain of his side of family.
- Anja writing in her diaries and their destruction by Vladek who wants to forget.
- Nightmares.
- Other survivors—Mala, Pavel.
- Art's memories of his mother
- Permanency of concentration camp tattoos.

Being a witness and personal testimony

- Conscience.
- Success of *Maus.*
- Vladek says 'And to this I was a witness'.

Truth

- Art's honest depiction of Vladek.
- Art's depiction of himself although not always flattering.
- The truth about Art's feelings revealed in 'Prisoner on the Hell Planet'.
- Mala being truthful about her frustrations with Vladek.
- How to tell who is being truthful or not? E.g. the smugglers.
- The creative expression of truth in comic book form.

Conflict

- War between Germany and Allies.
- Anti-Semitism.
- Over food.
- Of conscience.
- Between Vladek and Mala.
- Between Vladek and Art.
- Art's internal conflict about *Maus* and the impossibility of understanding what his father went through.
- Sibling rivalry with 'ghost brother'.
- Internal conflict—Art's guilt over his mother's suicide.
- Tosha making the decision to die rather than go to Auschwitz.

- Vladek avoids conflict with Kapos and guards by being useful.
- Anja's struggle with wanting to live.
- Art's conflict with the writing process.

Loss and tragedy

- Death of Richieu.
- Anja's suicide and consequences for Vladek and Art.
- Loss of Anja's notebooks and other papers/letters from war.
- Loss of businesses, homes, possessions.
- Family and friends perishing in concentration camps.
- Loss of dignity—Mandelbaum's pants.
- Loss of faith in God.

Aging

- Vladek's loneliness, ill health.
- Nazis sending elderly to death camps first.

Family relationships

- Art's relationship with his father, mother, wife and step-mother.
- Parental expectations of children: e.g. Vladek disapproving of Art's career.
- Vladek seeming to expect Art to care for him.
- Helping family members out through providing money and shelter.
- Art caught in middle of arguments between Mala and Vladek.

Parent and child connection

- Being the second generation and not experiencing same horrors.
- Inability to relate.
- Vladek referring to Art as Richieu at end.

Love and marriage

- Mala leaves Vladek finding him impossible to bear.
- The love between Vladek and Anja and how that is represented.
- Art and Françoise.
- Vladek and Lucia.
- Françoise's conversion to Judaism.

Resilience and initiative

- Pesach Spiegelman and his dessert scheme.
- Work ethic of Vladek.
- Ingenuity in devising hiding spots.
- Vladek's language skills in English, German and Polish and his ability to turn his hand to tin making, shoe repairs and roofing.
- Ingratiating himself with Kapos and guards.
- Locating and saving food.
- Trading on the black market.

Hope and faith

- Parshas Truma—Vladek's dream about his dead grandfather and the religious symbolism within this page.
- The Rabbi to whom Vladek talks.
- Man who tells him his camp tattoo is a lucky number.
- Art is not a practising Jew.
- The gypsy whose crystal ball reading gives Anja hope.
- Entrusting Richieu to Tosha and Persis.

Grief and despair

- The grief at losing Richieu and other family members.
- Vladek's inability to recover from losing Anja.
- Art's despair about finishing *Maus.*
- Anja's desire to escape her despair.
- The image of the parents-in-law knowing they will be sent to the gas chambers
- The images of desperate prisoners at Auschwitz

Fear

- Pavel's attempt to help Art understand Auschwitz by saying 'BOO!'
- Anja shaking with fear.
- Jews waiting for transports to Auschwitz.
- Fear of Selektions.
- Mrs Motonowa telling Vladek and Anja to leave after Gestapo search.
- Those turning backs on helping Jews out of fear: e.g. Janina.
- Fear at seeing swastikas.

Bravery

- Polish woman judge who keeps Haskel Spiegelman alive in Poland (120).
- Mancie who takes great risks.
- Vladek and many of his undertakings.
- Mrs Motonowa hiding Jews.
- Vladek telling his story.

Money and possessions

- Anja's father as a millionaire providing a luxurious life for his family and believing money will buy safety.
- Vladek's wedding gifts.
- Vladek as a miser and the effect on Anja and Mala.
- Nazis confiscating Jewish property.
- The items valuable for trading in the black market and concentration camps.
- The greed of some who demand a high price for assistance.

Responsibility

- Art and Françoise looking after Vladek.
- Mala looking after Vladek.
- Vladek caring for Anja after her breakdown.
- Art feeling a responsibility to honestly represent his father in *Maus.*

Other issues and themes to consider

- Fate, luck and randomness.
- Animals and the Cat/Mouse metaphor.
- Masks and Identity.
- Displacement.
- Healing process.
- Storytelling through the comic form/language and visual images.
- Understanding.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The Complete Maus or *Maus* as it is more commonly known, can be found in the graphic novel section of bookshops but it is not really a graphic novel. Even Art Spiegelman had to write to *The New York Times* when they published a review on its publication, referring to the book as fiction, asking them to recognise that it was non-fiction and in fact had been categorised as non-fiction by the National Library in Washington. The confusion arises for good reason and it is vital that students can comment on the book's genre. Whilst *Maus* tells the true story of Vladek, and of Art, the fiction is that humans are anthropomorphised as animals or masked as animals.

Another consideration when students are considering the language and style of *Maus* is the blending of dialogue, narrative and drawings. Art Spiegelman creates a perfect connection between the three but it is hard to break them down into easy to follow study notes. The words and images work together, creating two narrative tracks. One is verbal and one visual. We can follow the visuals and supplement our reading with the words or vice versa. As we read, our eyes slide over the frames, carefully structured by the author for us to logically follow his storyboard. The experience is rather like watching a film at times; it's as though a camera is panning around a scene or zooming in and out. But instead of a film camera and actors, Art Spiegelman is using his pen to create these visual images. Students could be asked to 'read' *Maus* only following the pictures and then again, this time only following the words. Tricky but worth a try!

You need to search for meaning in both the words and drawings. Sometimes the meaning is not explicit: the reader must fill in the gaps and accept that not all questions will be answered. So much is hidden in the visual metaphors, in the use of irony and within the darkness and shadows of Art's ink. You will also spot signals indicating Vladek correcting himself or a memory lapse or the narrative breaking out of chronological order.

The dual narrative of 1973-1991 and 1935-1945 moves forward in time but also shifts between past and present; the younger and older Vladek. Most of the chapters begin and end in the present. We see flashbacks to Vladek's tragic past and the insertion of episodes where the author reflects on the *Maus* project and his own inadequacies and lack of confidence or feelings of depression.

Narrative perspective

- Both Art and Vladek narrate the story.
- The narrative is placed above the frame or placed within the frame but in a box.
- Speech bubbles are used for dialogue.
- The tone of voice is emphasised by the size and darkness of the words. Art uses the largest print for shouting or screaming.
- Vladek's voice is always written in upper case.
- In the chapter 'Time Flies', Art's narrative and his dialogue with Pavel is written in normal case.

- Vladek and Art both talk to the reader as well as each other in a manner that makes the words more intimate. This also helps us engage with the personalities of each and learn their idiosyncrasies, as well as pick up on the underlying tension.
- Vladek is positioned in different places as he narrates his story; on his exercycle, lying on a deckchair covered in a blanket or sitting at The Pines.

Capturing the nuances and tone of speech

- Vladek is not a native English speaker although he speaks four languages. Art allows us to 'hear' his accent through the use of grammatical distortion or errors. Vladek's sentence structures are often incorrect or words are ordered back to front.
- Vladek also mispronounces some words such as 'conspirations'. This is a malapropism.
- Pavel, who was also a Polish Jew incarcerated in Auschwitz, interestingly speaks in grammatically correct sentences. He does not appear to have an accent.
- Mala also speaks much better English than Vladek.
- Certain words are also written in **bold** to emphasise tone.
- When Art and Pavel have their session that is written in normal case, some words are capitalised and/or bolded to convey tone.
- Art often says 'Uh-huh' to indicate how he is processing what he's just heard.
- Vladek's narrative sometimes starts with a 'Sigh!' suggesting his mood is low.
- Other dialogue starters are 'Jeez!', 'Pssh', 'Coff!', 'Ach', 'Um', 'Gee'.
- Exclamation marks are frequently used to express tone as well.
- Ellipses also help indicate pauses in the narrative.
- There are also links between the tone of the dialogue and facial expressions or hand gestures.

Use of a comic within a comic

- 'The Prisoner on the Hell Planet' is inserted at the spot where we learn Vladek has discovered it.
- It is drawn in a different style to the rest of *Maus.*
- Its pages 'bleed' to the very edge so that the section is apparent when you look at *Maus* side on. The rest of the pages in the book have plenty of white around them.
- The drawn hand holding a photo of Anja and Art shows the reader a different artistic technique.
- Human faces are used although are somewhat distorted.

- The frames and panels vary in size and positioning.
- Art is drawn in prison clothes; a style that is also linked to the clothing of the prisoners in Auschwitz.

Maps, diagrams and photographs (or different types of texts)

- The map of layout of Auschwitz/Birkenau gives a realistic overview of how the camp was set out. Allowing the reader to see the layout is more effective than Vladek trying to describe it in great detail.
- The map of Poland and surrounds is useful for the reader to see the geography of Poland, a country caught between Germany and Russia.
- Vladek draws diagrams of several of their hiding spots or bunkers on Art's notepad showing the ingenuity of their design.
- The detailed drawing of the gas chambers, coupled with the very specific labelling of each room's purpose, shocks the reader. It also provides a contrast to the way Vladek controls his emotions as he narrates this section.
- The use of real photographs has a powerful effect. They help remind us that the story is real; that these are actual photos of real people who perished in horrific circumstances at the hands of the Nazis.

Use of black and white

- *Maus* is drawn with black fountain pens on paper the same size as the actual pages of the book.
- As much white is used as black, and various shades in between.
- Black and white increases the intensity of the images. The horror stands out.
- Shadows are regularly used.
- Solid black is used for night time.
- If characters are hiding, they are drawn in black.
- Clothes are given spots, checks, stripes or other small black and white patterns

Motifs/symbols

- Anja's lost diary.
- Art's cigarette smoking.
- Hiding places/bunkers.
- Mice, mouse holes, mouse traps, mouse tails.
- Swastikas.
- Flies.
- Masks.
- Bars.

- Art's spiral bound notebook.
- Art's tape recorder.
- Coffee.
- Money.
- Food.
- Barbed wire.
- Eyes.
- Trains and trucks.

Other elements of the drawings

- Use of mice and cat metaphor.
- Anthropomorphising different ethnic groups into different animal species.
- Characters drawn with animal faces but human bodies.
- The use of masks: mice drawn wearing pig masks and Art and Pavel drawn as humans wearing mouse masks.
- The ways in which Art connects real time and the past. He places frames of the present at the top of the page or in a corner.
- The use of different layouts. As well as helping to integrate or separate the past and present, he also uses little arrows to point to items of importance.
- Small narrative boxes allow Art to add an 'extra' touch or a light-hearted comment. For example, when he comments that Pavel's cats and dogs mess up his metaphor.
- Use of flies and the pile of dead bodies in 'Time Flies'.
- Shrinking Art's size in this section.
- Use of angles.
- Use of bars. There are many vertical lines drawn in *Maus*, whether on prisoner's camp outfits, background wallpaper or the chimneys of the crematoria.
- The clothing worn by particular characters. Anja's father always wears a bow tie. The Jewish businessmen wear suits.
- The drawings shift between lots of detail and little detail. It depends what Spiegelman wants us to focus on.
- Conveying sounds: 'KPOW', 'KRAK'.
- Close ups of feet and faces.
- Scenes where many people are drawn.
- The drawings that open each chapter.

- Drawings that display Art's frustration with his father.
- Representations of sadness and misery as opposed to happiness and joy.

Other things to spot

- Different cultural settings intertwined (poland, Germany, New York, Florida, Czechoslovakia).
- Symbols of suffering.
- Symbols of death.
- Grotesque distortions.
- Use of realistic detail.
- Symbols of human kindness.
- Symbols of human tradition.
- Images of guilt.
- Images of power.

CLOSE STUDY

Students can use these extracts to closely analyse Spiegelman's writing and drawing style, as well as thinking further about characterisation, setting and key themes. Each extract could be displayed on screen (if you have the *MetaMaus* DVD) in class before the questions are discussed as a group or completed individually.

Pages 160–161: Vladek's admission to Art that he has burned Anja's notebooks.

- Why has Art raised the issue of the missing diaries again at this point in the story?
- How is the older Vladek depicted in this extract? What demonstrates his frailty?
- Why does Vladek finally tell Art the truth of what he did with the diaries at this point?
- How do you react to Art in this scene? Has he really 'listened' to Vladek's reasons?
- What is the significance of Anja's words: 'I wish my son, when he grows up, he will be interested by this'?
- How are these two pages indicative of the way Art uses size and colour strength when writing the dialogue?
- How does the scene convey Vladek's loneliness?
- Is Vladek really a 'Murderer'? Can Art justify the use of this word?

Pages 230–232: The detailed sequence of the crematoria witnessed by Vladek

- How does Vladek come to be involved in the dismantling of the gas chambers?
- Why do you think Art felt obligated to present these pages in so much detail?
- Are the panels in this section drawn differently (or similarly) to other parts of *Maus*?
- In what way do the representations of the crematoria seem clinical or dehumanised?
- How does Art achieve the contrast between the precise diagrams and the screaming mice in the flaming pits?
- How does the reader react to the diagram of Crematorium II on page 230?
- Why might some prisoners believe that 'really it was here a place for showers'?
- Art draws just the door to the gas chamber rather than trying to draw what happened inside. Why does he do this? Also comment on the words in the narration box below the door.
- Think about why Vladek tells Art the graphic details but is shown saying **'Enough!'**?

- ‘To such a place finished my father, my sisters, my brothers, so many’: What effect do these words have on the reader?
- Why does Art return the narrative to the present in the middle of page 232?

Pages 201–203: Art suffering writer’s block and depression

- Why does Art make a pun on the word ‘flies’?
- How is juxtaposition used on page 201?
- How do the drawings highlight Art’s depression?
- The progress of time and events that have happened are imparted in minimal words? Is this effective?
- What was your first reaction upon seeing the frame at the bottom of page 201?
- What has been the response to *Maus I*?
- What other specific drawing techniques can you see in this extract?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- Reread the prologue of 'My Father Bleeds History'. Discuss what Spiegelman establishes for the reader in the prologue.
- On page 165 of *MetaMaus*, Spiegelman describes 'Time Flies', the first section of *Maus II*, as 'a commentary on the whole project'. Look at these first few pages of the text again and discuss what he means.
- Search *Maus* for the many swastikas that are drawn. Some are drawn to explicitly draw reader attention. Others are hidden in the shadows of the drawings. Make a list of your findings.
- Find all the examples of characters wearing masks in *Maus*. Develop a theory about why Spiegelman draws these masks.
- In a group, discuss which are the 'blackest' frames and the 'whitest' frames. Is there a pattern? A point you can make?
- Organise a class debate on the topic: 'That *Maus* could be seen as offensive and racist towards Poles and Germans'.
- Each student is to select a different page of *Maus* to examine closely and report their findings back to the class. Remember that Art Spiegelman drew each page as a single entity on paper exactly the same size as the pages in your copy of the text.
- Reread page 76 of *Maus*. This page, depicting the family dinner celebrating Vladek's return as a POW, employs a number of artistic devices. Write about what you can see. (Afterwards, ask your teacher to read out page 167 of *MetaMaus*.)
- Why does Art Spiegelman use spotlights and circles in some of his drawings? Find all the examples and develop a theory.
- In a group, discuss the various methods Spiegelman uses to express tone and create mood or atmosphere in *Maus*. Report back to a whole class discussion.
- How is emotion conveyed in *Maus*?
- Conduct a study of the mouse faces. Look for techniques Spiegelman uses in his drawing such as the inclusion of spectacles, cigarettes, eyebrows etc.
- Money and possessions become very important motifs in *Maus*. In a group, locate as many references to money, jewellery and other valuables as you can. Discuss their importance to Vladek and other characters.
- Vladek's obsessiveness and fastidiousness is a feature of the story. Make a list of the 'things' he hoards and other examples of his obsessive behaviour. As a class, discuss why he behaves like this? What effect does it have on the reader and those around him?
- The structure of *Maus* is very precise. For example, look at page 54. Vladek has been talking about how he was made to clean the stable by the Germans,

then tells Art off for dropping cigarette ash on the carpet. Look for other examples of such structuring of the text.

- In a group, draw up two lists: one of the occasions where you believe Vladek survived because of luck, the other of the occasions where you believe his resourcefulness saved him. Discuss which was more important: luck or resourcefulness.
- Conduct a class discussion about whether all Jews/mice were presented as admirable in the text. Think about those who betrayed their fellow kind, the Gemeinde or Jewish Councils, some of Vladek's relatives and those who worked or informed on behalf of the Nazis.
- Anja's diaries/notebooks are a significant motif in *Maus*. Gather all the references to them and write a paragraph discussing their importance to both Art and Vladek, and of course, Anja.
- As a class, discuss why many Jews didn't believe the rumours and stories about the concentration camps.
- The idea of family is represented in different ways in the text. Find examples and discuss how and why Spiegelman presents families in both a positive and negative light.
- 'It was the last time ever we saw them; but that we couldn't know.' (p. 110). Discuss the use of foreshadowing in *Maus*.
- Consider the role of Mala. How is she depicted? How do you react to her?
- Use the table in the Structure and Running Sheet section of this study guide to develop your ideas about the way Spiegelman uses time and chronology in *Maus*. The table sets out key events in the order that they happened but the chronology of the story in the text is different. Find all the appropriate references, spoken, narrated and drawn, and consider your findings.
- In a group, examine the images drawn at the start of each chapter. Write a paragraph discussing how these drawings contribute to the structure of *Maus*.
- How would you describe Art's relationship with Françoise? Compare his marriage to his parents' marriage.

KEY QUOTES

For each of the following quotes, find out who is speaking, the context of their words and why the quote is important to the story of *The Complete Maus*.

- 'The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.' (p. 10).
- 'I went out to see my Father in Rego Park. I hadn't seen him in a long time—we weren't that close' (p. 12).
- 'I want to tell your story, the way it really happened' (p. 24).
- 'I told her 'Anja, if you want me you have to go **my** way…' (p. 31).
- 'But I don't care. **I just don't want to live**' (p. 33).
- 'Every Jew from the train—got very excited and frightened' (p. 34).
- 'How can you **say** such a thing? I think of you as part of my family' (p. 39).
- 'You will come out of this place—**Free!...**on the day of Parshas Truma' (p. 59).
- 'You really threw out my coat. I can't believe it!...I just can't believe it…' (p. 71).
- 'I'll never give up my baby. Never!' (p. 83).
- '**Ach**. When I think now of them, it **still** makes me cry…Look—even from my **dead** eye tears are coming out!' (p. 86).
- 'Whenever someone is hungry he looks for business' (p. 87).
- 'I was expected to comfort HIM!' (p. 103).
- '**You** put me here…shorted all my circuits…cut my nerve endings…and crossed my wires…' (p. 105).
- '**No**, darling! To die, it's easy…But you have to struggle for life' (p. 124).
- 'In some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew' (p. 133).
- 'I just **gotta** write this conversation down before I forget it' (p. 135).
- 'Of course I paid…and **well** I paid…**what you think?** Someone will risk their life for nothing?' (p. 144).
- 'Don't be afraid, little ones. I'm not a Jew. I won't hurt you' (p. 151).
- 'You'll not find it. Because I remind to myself what happened…one time I had very bad day…and all of these things I **destroyed**' (p. 160).

- ‘I know this sounds insane, but I somehow wish I’d been in Auschwitz **with** my parents so I could really know what they lived through!...I guess it’s **some** kind of guilt about having had an easier life than they did’ (p. 176).
- ‘All around was a smell so terrible, I can’t explain…sweetish…so like rubber burning. And **fat**’ (p. 187).
- ‘But here God didn’t come. We were all on our own’ (p. 189).
- ‘Lately I’ve been feeling depressed’ (p. 201).
- ‘Maybe **everyone** has to feel guilty. **Everyone! Forever!**’ (p. 202).
- ‘Can I mention this, or does it completely louse up my metaphor?’ (p. 203).
- ‘No matter what I accomplish, it doesn’t seem like much compared to surviving Auschwitz’ (p. 204).
- ‘If a couple is loving each other so much, I must help however I can’ (p. 213).
- ‘If you want to live, it’s good to be friendly’ (p. 222).
- ‘And with them was Anja. **This** I arranged. It was the only time I was happy in Auschwitz’ (p. 224).
- ‘For this I was an **eyewitness**’ (p. 229).
- ‘To **such** a place finished my father, my sisters, my brothers, so many’ (p. 231).
- ‘I don’t get it…why didn’t the Jews at least **try** to resist’ (p. 233).
- ‘I **cannot** forget it…ever since Hitler, I don’t like to throw out even a crumb’ (p. 238).
- ‘"It’s a miracle he survived." "Uh-huh. But in some ways he **didn’t** survive"’ (p. 250).
- ‘All such things of the war, I tried to put out from my mind once for all…until you **rebuild** all this from your questions’ (p. 258).
- ‘That’s **outrageous**! How can you, of all people, be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way the Nazis talked about Jews!’ (p. 259).
- ‘**All** what is left, it’s the photos’ (p. 275).
- ‘Well…it’s up to you…he’s **your** father’ (p. 280).
- ‘I **swore** I’d never see him again, but I’m just a sucker’ (p. 282).
- ‘Let the Germans have a little what they did to the Jews’ (p. 290).

- ‘More I don’t need to tell you. We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after’ (p. 296).
- ‘I’m tired from talking, Richieu. And it’s enough stories for now…’ (p. 296).

TEXT RESPONSE TOPICS

1. ‘There’s so much I’ll never be able to understand or visualise. I mean reality is too complex for comics…so much has to be left out or distorted.*’*
   How successful is Art Spiegelman at conveying the ‘reality’ of Vladek’s experiences?
2. ‘More I don’t need to tell you. We were both very happy, and lived happy, happy ever after.’
   Is the reader convinced of the truth of Vladek’s words?
3. Art Spiegelman has described *The Complete Maus* as a ‘metaphor of oppression.’ Is this how you see *The Complete Maus*?
4. ‘Art Spiegelman successfully achieves a balance between being the author of *The Complete Maus* and a character within it.’
   To what extent do you agree?
5. What effect does the use of animals in *The Complete Maus* have on the story?
6. A problem facing Art Spiegelman whilst creating *The Complete Maus* was how to present life in a death camp. Does he succeed?
7. ‘Art Spiegelman has used many techniques to fit his drawings around his restructuring of his father’s narrative.’
   Discuss.
8. How does Art Spiegelman juxtapose past and present in *The Complete Maus*?
9. How are past and present always apparent in *The Complete Maus*?
10. How does Art Spiegelman use the comic book form to present his father’s story of the Holocaust?
11. ‘Although the reader finds the older Vladek a difficult and frustrating character, the younger Vladek is an admirable and courageous man.’
    Do you agree?
12. ‘Both Vladek and Art are haunted by the Holocaust but in different ways.’
    Discuss.
13. How does *The Complete Maus* show that the victims of the Holocaust were not just those sent to concentration camps?
14. ‘*The Complete Maus* shows us that unimaginable suffering doesn’t make a person better; it just makes them suffer.’
    Is this how you see *The Complete Maus*?
15. ‘Art Spiegelman refuses to sentimentalise or sanctify his father.’
    Is his representation of Vladek a strength or weakness of the text?
16. In an interview, Art Spiegelman said: ‘This is the oddness of it…Auschwitz became for us a safe place: a place where he could talk and I would listen.’

How does Speigelman explore his relationship with his father in *The Complete Maus*?

17. ‘The mouse metaphor allows Spiegelman to be brutally honest in his representation of his father’s experiences in the Holocaust.’
    To what extent do you agree?

18. 'Art tells his father: "I want to tell **your** story, the way it really happened".’
    Is *The Complete Maus* more than Vladek’s story?

19. "I went out to see my Father in Rego Park. I hadn’t seen him in a long time—we weren’t that close.**"**
    'Art’s troubled relationship with his father enhances rather than detracts from *The Complete Maus.'* Do you agree*?*

20. Spiegelman quotes Hitler at the start of *The Complete Maus*: ‘The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human.’
    How does Spiegelman convince the reader that his mice are very human?

21. ‘The tragedy of the Holocaust brought out the best and worst of people.’
    Discuss how is this shown in *The Complete Maus*?

22. "Whenever someone is hungry he looks for business." ‘The Complete Maus shows that those who actively pursued survival were more likely to endure the Holocaust and survive.’
    To what extent do you agree?

23. "At that time it wasn’t anymore families. It was everybody to take care for himself."
    How is the notion of families explored in *The Complete Maus*?

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