Prejudice
When Vladek is wearing his “pig” mask, he can’t be distinguished from the Poles. What makes the Jews “Jews,” not Poles? Does assigning people social categories change who they are?
What specific strategies do the Nazis employ to create the category “Jews,” making it seem acceptable to the other Poles and Germans to vitilify them? Where does prejudice originate, and how is it perpetuated?

Identify other examples of prejudice and stereotyping in the novel, for instance Artie’s debate about whether to draw Francine as a mouse, given her French heritage (II, 11-12), or Vladek’s prejudice against African-Americans (II, 98-100). How are they similar to or different from the Nazis’ behaviors?

Moral and Philosophical Issues
Vladek says, speaking of Auschwitz, “But here God didn’t come. We were all on our own” (II, 29). How can one reconcile belief in a benevolent God with the evil of the Holocaust?
When the Nazi soldiers commit unimaginable acts—killing, slaughtering innocent people in cold blood—do they cease being human? What about prisoners who are willing to do anything to stay alive, even steal food from family members? What is your definition of being “human”?

Survival
What qualities in Vladek enable him to survive when so many others die? What makes him different from the many books that have already been written about the Holocaust?

The levels of survival: Did the heroic Vladek survive, or had he changed to someone else? What does Anja’s suicide suggest about her survival? Did she not survive?

Guilt
Who is to blame for the Holocaust? Only those who actively participated? Those who did nothing to stop it? All Germans who lived through the war? Contemporary Germans? Artie’s life is shaped by events that occurred before he was born: his parents’ experience, his “ghost brother” Richieu. He says, “It’s spooky, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot!” (II, 15). To what extent can he free himself of his past, and what does the act of writing have to do with it? Consider the last page of Maus II as you answer this.

Identity and the Relationship of Past and Present
How much is our identity shaped by our past? Our parents and their history? Can we compose our own lives, starting with a clean slate, or are we always to some extent a product of our history?
Artie’s life is marked by events that occurred before he was born: his parents’ experience, his “ghost brother” Richieu. He says, “It’s spooky, having sibling rivalry with a snapshot!” (II, 15). To what extent can he free himself of his past, and what does the act of writing have to do with it? Consider the last page of Maus II as you answer this.

Writing About the Holocaust
Auschwitz survivor and author Elie Wiesel calls Holocaust literature a contradiction because “Auschwitz negates all literature as it negates all theories and doctrine” (“A Few Today”). Pavel says, “The victims who died can never tell their side of the story, so maybe it’s better not to have any more stories” (II, 45). What are the inherent problems with writing about the Holocaust? What are the moral issues?
Pavel also says, “Look at how many books have already been written about the Holocaust. What’s the point? People haven’t changed” (II, 45). Is he right? Is it futile?

Do only those who experienced the Holocaust have the right or the authority to write about it?

The Writing Process
What do you make of the fact that Art Spiegelman, speaking of Auschwitz, “But here God didn’t come. We were all on our own” (II, 29). How can one reconcile belief in a benevolent God with the evil of the Holocaust?

Moral and Philosophical Issues
As you read the novel, be alert to the ways prejudice works to dehumanize the “other,” in its obvious and more subtle manifestations, and the impact it has on both victims and victimizers. We hope that you will discuss the novel with your friends, join the online blog discussion, and attend some of the many OneBook and Conversations events.

Biography
Art Spiegelman is the creator of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Maus: A Survivor’s Tale. The two-volume work has been translated into 18 languages. In 1980 he and his wife, Françoise Mouly, co-founded Raw, the acclaimed and influential magazine of avant-garde comics and graphics, which they co-edited until 1991.

From 1992 to 2002 he was a staff artist and writer for The New Yorker, which published his powerful black-on-black 9/11 cover a few days after the event. His drawings and prints have been exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world. Spiegelman lives . . . in lower Manhattan with his wife and their two children, Nadja and Dashiel.


Welcome
As a biography and autobiography (author Art Spiegelman tells the story of his father Vladek, an Auschwitz survivor). Maus examines the relationship of past to present and father to son, the implicit contract between the author and his or her subject, and the tension between factual and emotional truth(s).
As a novel it deals with guilt, identity, survival, and the immediate and delayed impact of trauma.
As a graphic novel, it presents these complicated issues through a combination of words and images, raising still more questions: Does this treatment trivialize the horrors actual people experienced? Is this an appropriate genre for such a subject? Can images accomplish what words can’t?
From all of the many issues Maus addresses, we have chosen “prejudice” as the focus of UT Arlington Conversations, a year-long, campus-wide program of activities and events that explores prejudice from many points of view.

About This Guide
This guide was written by Dr. Laurie Porter of the Department of English and Evelyln Barker and C.D. Walter of UT Arlington Library. Special thanks to Joshua Bean, UT Arlington Library.

www.uta.edu/onebook
Vladek and Anja, previously reunited, leave Poland
Spiegelman family immigrates to the U.S.
February 15

Timeline

World War II begins when Germany invades Poland.

German President Paul von Hindenburg dies. Hitler becomes the “Führer” and commander-in-chief of Germany’s armed forces.

Vladek Speigelman meets Anja Zylberberg in Sosnowiec, Poland.

Vladek and Anja marry.

Vladek's son Richieu is born in Sosnowiec.

Jews in German-occupied Poland are forced to wear Jewish property in Poland is confiscated by Germany. Vladek and his father-in-law lose their factories.

The first concentration camp is opened at Dachau.

Vladek is captured by the Germans and becomes a prisoner of war.

Vladek is released as a POW and sent to Lublin.

All Jews in Sosnowiec forced to move to a ghetto.

Japan attacks U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The German army enters Sosnowiec.

Vladek is called to serve in the Polish Army.

German President Paul von Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler as chancellor.

Adolf Hitler as chancellor.

August 24

Vladek and Anja move to Birkenau.

Vladek is sent to Dachau.

February

Vladek and Anja are in hiding.

August 12

Most inhabitants of the Srodula ghetto are deported to Auschwitz. Vladek and Anja are in hiding.

Vladek sees Anja in Birkenau.

March 22

All Jews in Zawiercie ghetto are sent to Auschwitz.

May 10-12

1500 Jews removed from Sosnowiec. Anja’s grandparents are in this group.

June

2000 Jews sent from Sosnowiec to Auschwitz.

August 16

Vladek and Anja are sent to Auschwitz.

August 26

Vladek and Anja are sent to Auschwitz.

Holocaust Death and Survival Rates


For an interactive version of these maps, visit http://gis.uta.edu/maus.

Glossary and Pronunciation Guide

Anja (Slavic): AHN-yeh – Artie’s mother and Vladek’s wife.

Auschwitz: (German): OWSH-vits – Nazi concentration camp in Poland where Anja and Vladek were sent.

Birkenau (German): BUR-ka-now – Women’s camp near Auschwitz. Also called Auschwitz II.

Françoise (French): fran-SWAH – Artie’s wife.

Gemeinde (German): ja-MIN-da – Jewish community organization.

Juden Raus (German): YŪ-den Rowe – “Jews, get out!”

Judenrat (German): YŪ-den-RAT – Jewish councils formed by the Nazis to serve as a liaison between the Nazis and Jews living in Polish and Soviet ghettos.

Kapo (Unknown): KA-po – Concentration camp prisoner who worked in an administrative capacity.

Oswiecim (Polish): osh-FĒ-EN-cheem – Polish name for Auschwitz.

Richieu (Unknown): RE-shū – Artie’s brother, who was killed as a small child in Poland.

Rosta (Yiddish): ROS-ta – Black person, pejorative.

Sosnowiec (Polish): sos-NŌ-ve-ch – Polish city where Vladek and Anja lived with her parents.

Vladek (Unknown): VLĀH-dek – Artie’s father and narrator of Maus’s Holocaust story.

Zawiercie (Polish): zaw-YUR-chē – Polish city where Richieu was sent for safety.

Zloty (Polish): ZŁO-tē, ZŁO-tēz (pl) – Polish currency.