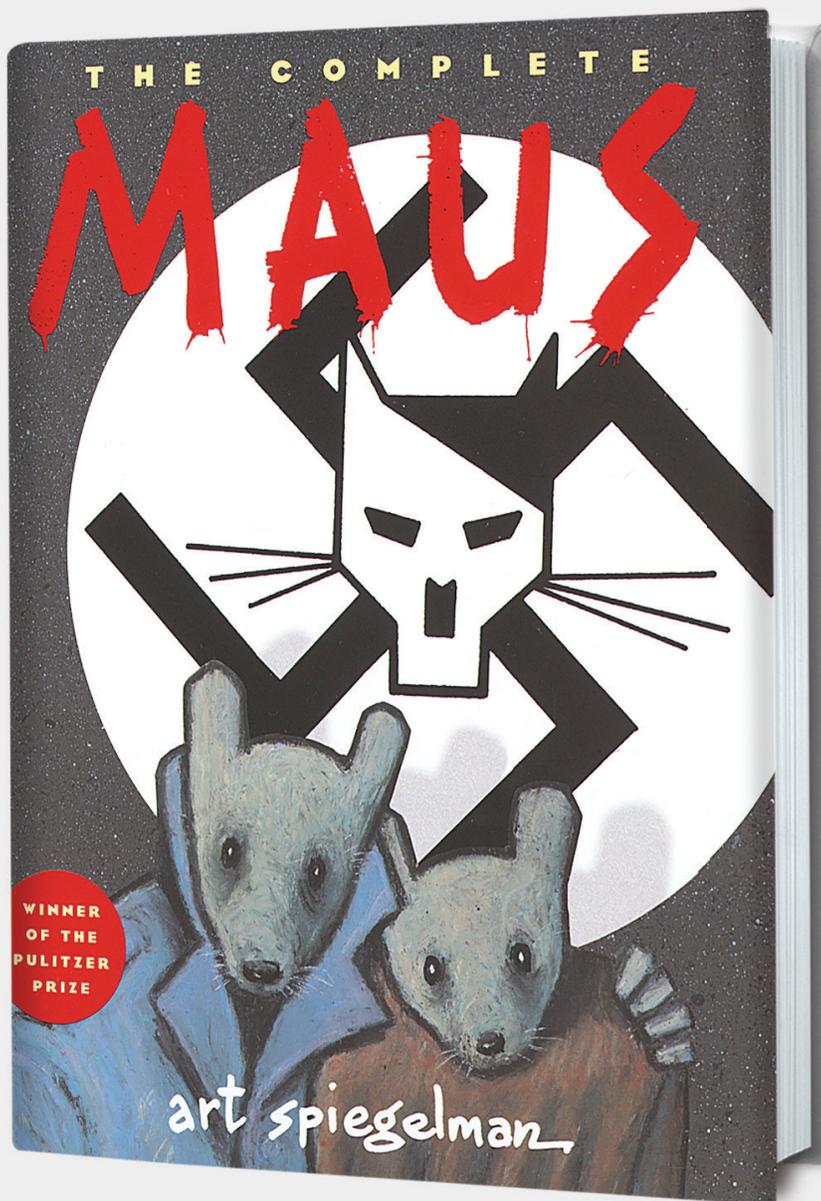


# THE COMPLETE MAUS

BY ART SPIEGELMAN

## Reading Group Guide



### About This Guide

The questions, discussion topics, and other material that follow are intended to enhance your group's conversation about Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus*, the Pulitzer Prize winning graphic novel that offers a poignant depiction of the horrors of the Holocaust even as it resonates with injustices that have persisted in the decades since.

# Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What is your experience with reading graphic novels? How did this format affect your relationship to this historical material compared to how you've learned about or seen depictions of the Holocaust in other media?
2. How does the format of the graphic novel support movement between past and present, and integration of the two, as Vladek tells his story?
3. Describe Vladek and Anja's courtship and relationship overall. How do trials and challenges of all sorts define their love, and help sustain them during their lowest moments?
4. Why do you think Vladek remarried when Mala seemed to antagonize him so? Did you feel his complaints against her were warranted?
5. Discuss the relationship Artie has with his father compared to that with his mother, and his memory of her. Did you agree with his reaction to learning that Vladek burned her diaries?
6. What was your impression of Artie's expectations of Vladek in retelling his story in such detail? If you were in his shoes, how would you have gone about that inquiry into your family's past?
7. How did you interpret Artie's comic about his mother, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet"? What does that interlude in the story reveal about Artie's history that's not otherwise explained?
8. How does the priest that Vladek meets soon after arriving at Auschwitz change his perspective on what's happened to him? Does the priest's reading of his identification number stay with him during his time in the camps?
9. Who are some other benefactors that cross paths with Vladek during the war and help him survive or gain important information?
10. Discuss the author's decision to "break the fourth wall" of the book by showing a human wearing a mouse mask at the beginning of Volume II. How does this meta-acknowledgment of the making of this book disrupt the distance made by turning the characters into animals?
11. Were you familiar with the Nazi criticisms against Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse? How do you think this influenced the author's choice about the illustrations for his characters in this book?
12. Different groups of people in the novel—the Jews, the Nazis, people of other nationalities—are depicted as different kinds of animals, and sometimes wearing masks to look like another animal. How did you interpret that?
13. In the final scene, Vladek finishes telling his story to his son, and how he was reunited with Anja after the war ends. Why do you think the reunion with his wife is where his tale ends?
14. Do you know anyone from Vladek's generation, in your own family or other communities, who has similar tendencies around spending, food, and other elements of survival? Were they directly affected by World War II or another tragedy?
15. In what ways is this book a "novel," meaning a fictionalized story? Would you put it in another genre or category, or a combination of genres?
16. Spiegelman has never wanted to turn *Maus* into a film. Why do you think this story could only be told using comics?

# Suggested Further Reading

*The Handmaid's Tale*  
by Margaret Atwood

*Fahrenheit 451*  
by Ray Bradbury

*Man's Search for Meaning*  
by Viktor Frankl

*The Complete American Gods*  
by Neil Gaiman, P. Craig Russell, and Scott Hampton (illustrator)

*Amazons, Abolitionists, and Activists: A Graphic History of Women's Fight for Their Rights* by Mikki Kendall and A. D'Amico (illustrator)

*Lost Children Archive*  
by Valeria Luiselli

*The Sympathizer*  
by Viet Thanh Nguyen

*Animal Farm*  
by George Orwell

*1984: The Graphic Novel*  
by George Orwell and Fido Nesti (illustrator)

*Persepolis*  
by Marjane Satrapi

*They Called Us Enemy*  
by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott, and Harmony Becker (illustrator)