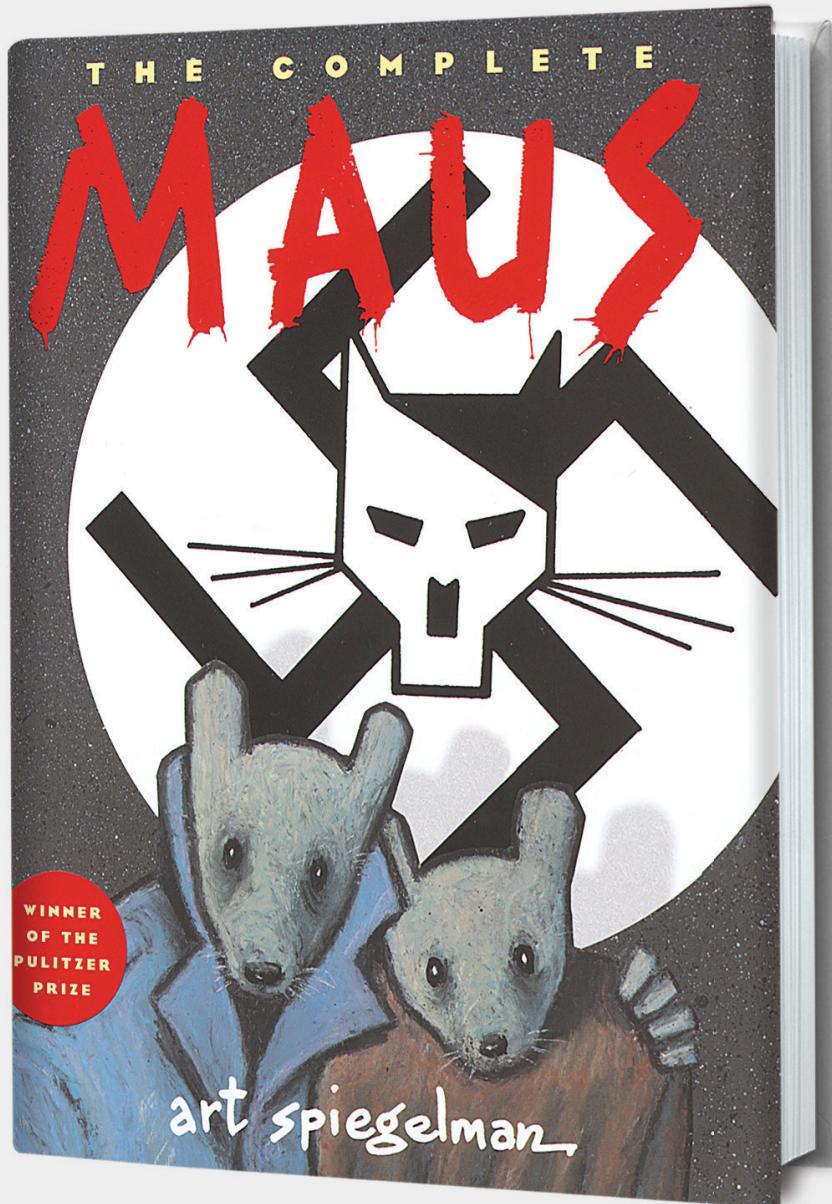


# THE COMPLETE MAUS

## BY ART SPIEGELMAN

Reading Group Guide for  
Parents of Children, Ages 12 -18



### About This Guide

The questions, discussion topics, and other material that follow are intended to enhance the conversation with your child or students 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. Did your child know about the Holocaust and World War II prior to reading *Maus*? If so, how did this story change their understanding of these historical events? If not, what is their understanding now of the crimes of the Nazis? Did the graphic novel format affect their understanding in either case?
2. Media coverage of wars and other news items is very different now than it was during the time of this book, during World War II and the eighties, at the time of *Maus*'s original publication. How might your child, given their exposure to the news throughout their life, relate to the way information was shared during the time of the novel?
3. What visual symbols appear throughout the book to represent difficult topics or events?
4. Discuss the father-son relationship between Vladek and Artie and how it changes during the two volumes of this book. What can your child relate to about that parent-child dynamic?
5. Vladek's experience throughout the war is interrupted by moments of the present story with his son. Take time with your child to make an outline of the major events of his life, and discuss what skills or resources he used to keep himself and his family alive at each stage.
6. What are some of the impossible decisions Vladek and his family have to make leading up to their internment? Did you think they were the "right" ones? Discuss with your child how you, as their parent, might make similar decisions if you had to about their safety in the time of a crisis.
7. What presence does Richieu have in the story, even though Art never met him?
8. Who are some of the key people who come to Vladek's aid when he needs them most? What information, resources, or other help do they provide him with, and how does he "pay them back"?
9. Discuss with your child the role of luck versus preparation that helps Vladek get through the war, including the various ways his education and skills earn him the good favor of the officers in Auschwitz.
10. How does Vladek's ailing health in the present reflect the trajectory of him telling his story to Artie? How is this process healing and painful for him, and all the generations of his family?
11. The beginning of Volume II opens with Artie feeling pressure and overwhelm at the media attention for Volume I of *Maus*. Has your child ever felt similar anxiety about something in their life, and how did they cope with it?
12. Discuss the multiple levels of narration and authorship at play in this book—Art the human in the book, Art the human writing and drawing the book, and Art the mouse.
13. Why might he have chosen to use animals as the characters in this story instead of people?
14. What information does Art receive in discussing his challenges with writing with his therapist? Discuss with your child how to decide when questions are appropriate or helpful to ask others, and when they're not, especially around difficult topics.
15. Does your family have any direct connection to the Holocaust, or other wars or tragedies? Create a safe space to talk about that experience with your child and think of ways you might honor that story the way Spiegelman did with his past in *Maus*.
16. The horrors of World War II have had many echoes into the twenty-first century. Discuss with your child some events they might have witnessed, or that you have witnessed, and what we can take away from *Maus* as lessons for our present and future.

# Suggested Further Reading

*Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World*  
by Pénélope Bagieu

*Fahrenheit 451*  
by Ray Bradbury

*The Diary of a Young Girl*  
by Anne Frank

*The Librarian of Auschwitz*  
by Antonio Iturbe

*When Stars Are Scattered*  
by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

*March*  
by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell (illustrator)

*Number the Stars*  
by Lois Lowry

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

*Night*  
by Elie Wiesel

*Young, Gifted, and Black*  
by Jamia Wilson and Andrea Pippins (illustrator)

*The Complete Persepolis*  
by Marjane Satrapi