*Maus* by Art Spiegelman /Reading Questions

How do you read a graphic novel? (discuss)

* Read top left hand corner frame to right and down left to right.
* Read the images as well as the words. Pay attention to the way the images are positioned within the frames.
* Notice the different way words exist in the frames. Either spoken: “speech bubbles” or “narration” (information given to the reader, not spoken out loud by characters).

**Terms to know:**

Frames: the boxes that have the images, they are read left, right, top, bottom (usually)

Close-up: images are bigger, implying a “close-up” camera angle

Tight focus: one small aspect of the image is emphasized with a very close, tight shot.

Long-shot: images are farther away, implying the viewer sees them from a farther distance.

Worm’s eye or bug’s eye view: images are seen from a “ground” viewpoint looking up.

Bird’s eye view (aerial shot): images are seen from an “above” vantage point looking down.

**Front Cover: Discuss**

1. What details do you notice about the front cover, including the images, fonts, colors? What effect do these details have on the reader?

2. Title and subtitle: predictions? **Back cover:**  look over the maps. What symbol is used for concentration camps?

**Introduction: p. 4-6 (we’ll do this together)**

1. How does the quote from Hitler help explain why Art uses animals instead of people?

2. What is the setting? (time/place) Describe what kind of neighborhood this is using images as evidence.

3. What point of view is used?

4. What can you infer about the father based on his syntax (sentence structure).

5. What do you think of his “advice” about friends to his 10-year-old son?

6. How do you know when characters are speaking, or when the narrator is addressing the reader?

7. There are 10 frames. State the numbers: What frames are “close-up,” what frames are “long-shot” (more distance between the viewer and the images)? What frames are from “bug’s eye view” (from the ground looking up)? What frames are “bird’s eye view”? Why are they framed this way?

8. Why do you think the author includes this scene as an introduction?

9. What animals do you notice so far? What is the purpose of using the different animals?

**Chapters 1-2 vocabulary**  
  
a. cataract – an abnormality of the eye, characterized by opacity of the lens  
b. sheik – (slang) a man held to be masterful and irresistibly charming to women.  
c. Communism – a system of social organization in which all economic and social activity is controlled by a   
totalitarian state dominated by a single political party tenant – someone who rents an apartment or a room from a landlord

d. anti-Semitic – being prejudiced against Jews  
e. sanitarium – an institution for rest and recuperation or a mental hospital pogrom – an organized massacre, especially of Jews.   
f. Pogrom: a government sanctioned riot against Jews. Pogroms were common throughout Europe even before WWII

**Chpt 1: The Sheik:** (*The Sheik* was a popular romantic movie in the 1920s starring the heartthrob Rudolf Valentino.)

1. pg 11: (list or character map) who are the main characters so far and what are their relationships to each other? What important information do we know about them?

2. What does Artie mean when he describes Mala as a “survivor”?

3. What are the reasons Artie wants to hear his father’s story? (pg12)

4. What important visual clue tells us the father was in a concentration camp?

5. The **narrative point of view** shifts (pg 12-13); who is telling the story now?

6. What do you notice about the way the frames change when the narration shifts from present to **flashback** (be sure you understand “flashback”)?

7. (pg 15) Why is some of the comic written on a ticket?

8. What does Vladek (Artie’s father) ask Artie to promise, and why?

9. Does Artie keep his promise to his father? Should he have?

10: There are multiple stories being told. What are the stories being told so far (at least 2)

The story of… The story of… The story of…

Ch**pt 2: The Honeymoon pg 25-40**

1. What political group did Anja belong to that the Nazis were trying to eliminate?

2. How is the image of the seamstress on page 29 effective?

3. (pg32-33) What animal is used for the Nazis, why?

4. (32-33) What does Vladek learn about how Nazis treat Jews?

5. How is the swastika image effective in these frames?

6. (page 37) What nationality do pigs represent? What do we learn about this nationality’s feelings about Jews?

7. Where is Vladek sent (pg38)

8. What do we know about Vladek’s health/age from chapt 1-2? What impact does this have on the story?

**Chapters 3-4 vocabulary**  
  
a. annexed – attached to; incorporated into a larger body  
b. Gestapo – an abbreviation of “Geheime Staatspolizei,” the Secret State Police, the SS  
c. protectorate – land controlled by German government  
d. reich – land annexed to Germany, later meaning the Nazi regime  
e. Wehrmacht – the German Armed Forces  
f. Bar Mitzvah – a ceremony to admit as an adult member of the Jewish community a Jewish boy 13 years old

g. schlepped – Yiddish for “carried or moved in a trudging fashion” 

**Chpt 3: Prisoner of War pg 41-70**

1. Art doesn’t have a close relationship with his father. On pages 43-44 he describes how his father would force him to eat everything on his plate. How does being a “survivor” probably affect the way Vladek parented Art?

2. How does Vladek’s father try to help him survive (pg 46)?

3. How are the Jewish prisoners of war treated? Do they live under the same conditions as the other prisoners? Explain.

4 How does Vladek survive the work camp? What motivates him?

5 (pg 56 and pgs 62-63) How do Jews help each other to survive?

6 What is the significance of the mask Vladek wears on pg 64

7 Describe Vladek and Art’s relationship using examples from pgs 67-69

**Chpt 4: The Noose Tightens pg 73-94**

1. Give an example of how Vladek is “frugal” (tight with money).

2. How did being frugal HELP Vladek survive? How does it create problems (now) between him and his family? (give an example with explanation).

3. Since Jews were not allowed to work, how did they make money to survive? What happened if they were caught?

4. How did Nazis try to trick families into giving up the old people? Where did the elderly end up?

5. Why did some Jews become police for the Nazis?

6. Describe one thing that either Vladek or Mala remembers about the time everyone in Sosnowiec had to get their passport stamped.

**Chapter 5-6 vocabulary**  
  
a. liquidate – to put an end to; to abolish (also: to kill)  
b. meshuga – Yiddish slang for “crazy; senseless”  
c. neurotic – overanxious; panicky  
d. kombinator – a person of low morals, used to describe a Jew who collaborates with the Nazis caricature – an exaggerated representation   
e. pragmatic – practical; concerned with the facts at hand

**Chpt Five Mouse Holes pg 95-128**

1. Art describes his father as “showing off” all the time. Based on the way Vladek has described himself and his exploits in the war, would you agree? Why?

2. In “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” (p. 100-103), Art tells us about his mother’s suicide. What information seems important, why?

3. How does Art connect himself with Holocaust victims in this story? Who does doctor Orsens represent?

4. Who does Art blame for his mental instability?

5 Anja is described as intelligent, sensitive and nervous by Vladek and Art. We are never told why she kills herself. How might surviving the holocaust have contributed to her suicide?

6. What does Tosha decide to do when her ghetto is deported to Auschwitz? Do you think it was the right decision?

7. How does the image of Vladek and Anja walking help reinforce their desperate situation?

**Chpt Six Mouse Trap pg 129-end**

1. What is Art worried about regarding the way he is portraying his father in his book?

2. Art thinks that his father is ‘miserly” (cheap) because of the war, Mala thinks otherwise. Who is right? Why?

3. What does Vladek say about the importance of money/valuables in survival?

4. What did Polish mothers teach their children about Jews?

5. What decision does Vladek make about staying in Poland? How does it turn out?

6. Why does Art call his father a “murderer”?

7. How does Art portray himself? Is he likable?

**Reflect:**

1. How do you think Vladek and Anja survive Auschwitz?

2. Why do you think Anja kills herself?

3. Explain what you believe will happen to Vladek and Mala’s marriage?

4. What will happen with Vladek and Art’s relationship? Why?

5. Why did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he call it Maus?

6. Why did Spiegelman portray his father’s story as a comic strip?

7. The Holocaust is a genocide, a deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, religious, or cultural group. Have you studied any other genocides? How are these genocides similar to or different from the Holocaust?

8. What would you have done if you were a Jew living in Poland during the Second World War? What would you have done if you were a Pole? A German? Why?

9. How did people survive in Poland during the Second World War? How do you think these survivors felt after the war? Why?

10. How reliable do you think Vladek’s memory is about what happened? Why?

11. What happens to people who live under a terror regime for a long period of time? Should people adapt (become comfortable with) to a terror regime? Discuss the frog in the boiling water…☺ ask me!

12. Look at page 4 where Art thanks several people for their help. Who does he NOT thank?