



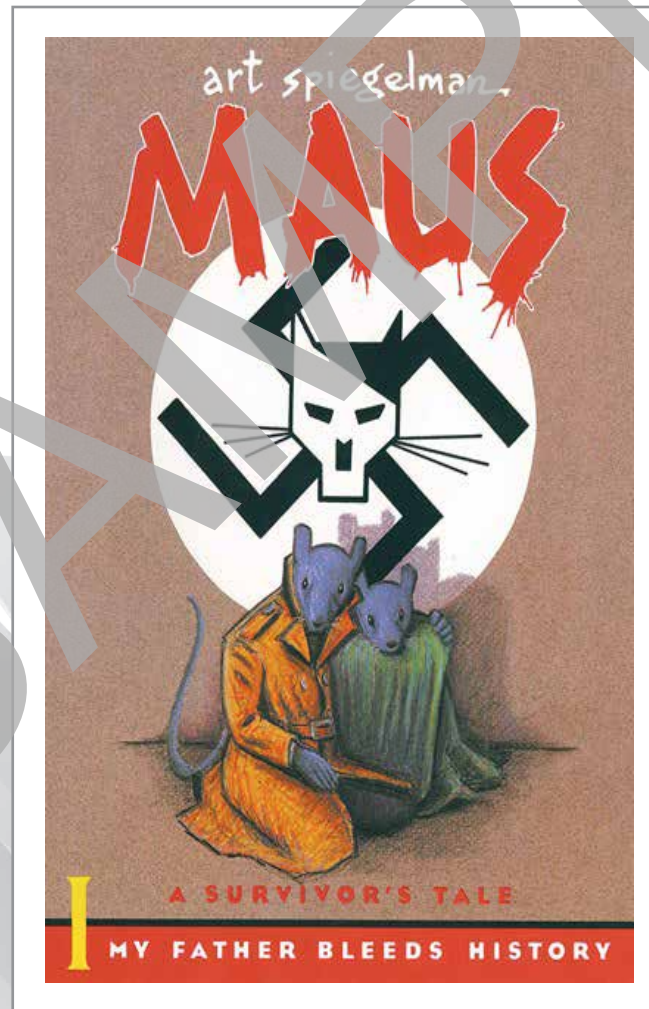
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Maus I: My Father Bleeds History

Art Spiegelman



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Maus I: My Father Bleeds History

Art Spiegelman

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

sales@novelunits.com

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Analyzing, inferences, research, opinions, predictions

Comprehension

Plot development, compare/contrast, cause/effect

Literary Elements

Visual accompaniment, themes, symbolism, conflict

Vocabulary

Definitions, application, synonyms/antonyms, usage

Listening/Speaking

Presentation, play, discussion, group activities

Writing

Essay, poetry, letter, journal, review, synopsis

Across the Curriculum

Geography—maps;
Literature—book reviews;
History/Culture—passports, Rudolph Valentino, swastika, Star of David;
Art—photography, painting, collage, drawing

Genre: memoir/graphic novel

Setting: various locations in Poland; Rego Park, New York (USA)

Point of View: third-person limited mixed with first-person narrative flashbacks

Themes: Holocaust survival, family trauma, religious persecution, war, loss, death, freedom

Conflict: person vs. society, person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. nature

Style: black-and-white pictorial retrospective

Tone: harrowing, stressed, hopeful, frustrated, reflective, loving, suspicious, horrified

Date of First Publication: An altered version of Chapters 1–6 was published in *Raw* magazine between 1980 and 1985. “Prisoner on the Hell Planet,” pages 100–103, was originally published in *Short Order Comix #1* in 1973.

Summary

Art Spiegelman visits his father to learn and record Vladek’s life story before and during the Holocaust. The two do not always get along, and their differences quickly become apparent. Vladek starts his story with how he met Anja, Art’s mother. Vladek was a successful, handsome man and fell in love with Anja because her personality and intelligence charmed him, while other more attractive women did not. They married and had a son, Richieu (who later dies during the Holocaust). While Anja suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts, Nazi threats loomed over Poland. When war came, Poland called Vladek into service. During the first battle, Nazis captured Vladek and sent him to a prison camp. By agreeing to work for the Germans, Vladek got better housing and food, and when Germany succeeded in capturing Poland, he was released, although the world was now very different. Jews could no longer own factories, and all businesses had to support the German war effort. Nazis slowly gained control of every element of Jewish life, and a propaganda campaign turned many Polish citizens against their former Jewish neighbors. More and more Jews were rounded up and deported, often to their deaths, and Vladek’s family tried to survive by hiding and utilizing their connections with powerful people. Over time, even these connections failed, and almost everyone Vladek and Anja knew had been shipped off and killed. They hid in barns and basements, scrounging for food to survive. When a plan to follow smugglers to Hungary went wrong, Nazis captured Vladek and Anja aboard a train and sent them to a prison camp. At the end of the story, Art Spiegelman learns that his father burned his mother’s journals, destroying what little written record existed of his parents’ turbulent lives.

The Sheik

Art Spiegelman visits his father, Vladek Spiegelman, for the first time in two years. While the two often clash, Art hopes to record his father's memories of the Holocaust for a book. Vladek happily obliges and starts the story with himself as a handsome young man cavorting around town with many beautiful women. One woman, Lucia Greenberg, was particularly insistent. Though Vladek was reluctant to date her, she was eager to be his girlfriend. After dating for a few years, Lucia thought they should get married, but Vladek was still not convinced Lucia was right for him. When he met Anja, Vladek fell in love with and decided to marry her. Though she was not as beautiful as the other women he dated, Vladek found Anja sweet, charming, and intelligent. Lucia tried to sabotage the relationship but failed. After Vladek married Anja, her father made Vladek a partial owner in his business and the newlyweds anticipated a long, happy life together. Back in the present, Vladek tells Art that he does not want these stories in the book and Art promises to omit them.

Vocabulary
regards
textiles
sheik
engaged
dowry
hosiery
gefilte
Holocaust

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of relationship does Art have with his father? What about Vladek's personality might cause this reaction in Art? *(Art and Vladek share a distant relationship, as is evident by how long it has been since their last visit. Art admits that he and his father are not close. When Vladek comments about "Françoise" [presumably Art's significant other], Art brushes off the comment quickly. Answers will vary, but Vladek displays a stubborn and dominant attitude and is easily frustrated [for example, when Mala hangs Art's jacket with a wire hanger instead of a wooden one]. This kind of attitude likely grates on Art, who seems much more agreeable and easygoing.)*
2. What is the symbolic importance of the stationary bicycle? *(Answers will vary. In essence, a stationary bike allows a person to ride for miles without actually going anywhere, much like a story allows a person to take a journey without physically going anywhere. With his story, Vladek transports himself and Art back in time, revealing many unknown details about his past, and yet the two never leave the confines of the room. Like riding a stationary bicycle, telling the story is hard work for Vladek, and he must maintain a steady pace or he will lose his focus and slow down or stop altogether, as is evidenced on pages 14 and 15 of the book. Students will likely find other symbolic meanings for the stationary bicycle.)*
3. Describe Lucia Greenberg. What kind of relationship did Vladek have with her? *(Lucia Greenberg was an attractive, assertive woman who was determined to be Vladek's girlfriend. She followed him around constantly and often made romantic overtures. When she discovered that Vladek loved Anja, she became desperately jealous, mocking Anja's appearance and throwing herself at Vladek. Vladek never took his relationship with Lucia very seriously. Even after dating Lucia for two or three years, he brushed off her suggestions of engagement. Vladek obviously never really loved Lucia and only associated with her because of her persistence.)*
4. Why did Vladek fall in love with Anja? *(He did not fall in love with Anja because of her appearance but rather for her personality and the way she made Vladek feel. He was comfortable around her and found her interesting. He says, "...if you talked a little to her, you started loving her more and more" [p. 18]. Vladek found Anja sensitive and intelligent and loved how she wrote him letters and called him every day. Contrary to his relationship with Lucia, Vladek did not feel harassed by Anja's attention.)*

5. What did Vladek discover about Anja when he met her family at dinner? (*When he was alone in her room, Vladek peeked into Anja's closet and found she was a fine housekeeper—the closet was neat and orderly. He also found pills, which worried him. He considered that she might be sick and wondered if he should be involved with her if she was. These actions and thoughts showed a more selfish side of Vladek, who was eventually reassured by a druggist that the pills were just "because [Anja] was so skinny and nervous" [p. 19].*)
6. How did Lucia Greenberg affect Vladek's relationship with Anja? (*Vladek stopped hearing from Anja right around the time he rejected the last of Lucia's pleas to take her back. He discovered that Anja received a letter from Lucia saying terrible things about Vladek. After Vladek explained Lucia's motivations to Anja, she was finally convinced that what she read in the letter was untrue.*)
7. Why doesn't Vladek want his son to write about Anja and Lucia in the book? How does Art respond? (*Vladek does not want Art to include Lucia and Anja in the book because Vladek's romantic life has nothing to do with Hitler or the Holocaust and because it "isn't so proper, so respectful" [p. 23]. Art tries to convince Vladek that the love story will add a human element to the book but eventually relents. He promises not to include the material in his book.*)
8. **Prediction:** How might marrying into a wealthy family help Vladek survive the Holocaust?

Supplementary Activities

1. Select one illustration from this section for each of the following. Support your choice with evidence from this section of the book.
 - a) An illustration that represents a point at which either Art's or Vladek's life drastically changes
 - b) An illustration that symbolizes a major theme from the book
2. Complete the Word Map on page 24 of this guide for five vocabulary words from this section.
3. Research Rudolph Valentino, and write one paragraph about why being compared to him is a positive thing. Be sure to include at least three facts from your research supporting your opinion.

Cause/Effect Chart

Directions: Make a flow chart to show decisions a character made, the decisions s/he could have made, and the result(s) of each. (Use your imagination to speculate on the results of decisions the character could have made.)

