



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

MAUS I AND MAUS II

BY ART SPIEGELMAN



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Item No. 200702

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Pre-Reading**Emotion**

Objective: Understanding how facial expressions convey emotion

Activity

Art Spiegelman, the author of *Maus*, gives the following explanation about his use of comics to tell a story about serious subjects:

I prefer the word “commix,” to mix together, because to talk about comics is to talk about mixing together words and pictures to tell a story...The strength of commix lies in its synthetic ability to approximate a “mental language” that is closer to actual human thought than either words or pictures alone.

One way Spiegelman helps the reader understand the thoughts and feelings of the characters in *Maus* is by drawing different facial expressions, which convey emotions. For instance, a wide-open mouth is often used to express shock, outrage, or intense pain.

Make a collage of pictures or drawings of human faces that show an emotion. You may include different emotions or several that express the same emotion.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapter 1**Reading Check****Objective:** Understanding character values and motivations**Activity**

As Vladek relates the story of how he met his wife Anna, he reveals things that are important to him. What are they? Support your responses with quotations from what Vladek says. Use the **Chapter 1 Reading Check Response Sheet** on the following page.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapter 2**Symbolism**

Objective: Responding to the use of symbols and signs

Activity

Vladek explains that on the train ride to the sanitarium, he sees the swastika for the first time.

- Examine the visual representations of Nazi abuse of Jews, both in the book and from any other sources you can find.
- Create a poster to represent abusive treatment of any minority group.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapter 4

Reading for Details

Objective: Reading with attention to detail

Activity

Often, when people consider the Holocaust, they ask how could the Jewish people allow themselves to be victimized; why didn't they fight back? Although there are records of several rebellions and attempts to stop the killings, most Jews were not able to protect themselves. It is difficult, but try to imagine yourself as a Jewish person during this time in history as you engage in the following activity. Perhaps you will gain a better understanding of why so many of the Jewish people could not protect themselves.

Working in small groups, select an identity from the list that follows.

- Imagine you actually are the person you have selected. What would you do if you were this person and lived in Poland between 1940-1943.
- Use the next sheet to formulate a plan of action. Prepare an explanation for each part of your plan. Why will you take each action in your plan?
- List the things that you will guard against. Include at least 5 details about what Jewish people experience that you have learned from *Maus*.
- Describe what you think will probably happen to you and the reasons you think this will happen.

Each group should present its plan, including the cautions to be taken and the expected outcome.

Different Identities from Which to Choose:

- a 70-year-old Jewish woman who lives alone
- a young, strong single man who lives with his Jewish parents
- a strong single woman who lives with her Jewish parents
- an elderly Jewish man who lives with his wife
- a young, Jewish married couple with no children
- an elderly Jewish man who lives alone
- a middle-aged Jewish widow with five children, ages 6-15
- a wealthy Jewish couple in their 50's with married children
- a 50-year-old Jewish man with a sick wife and one teenage son

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus I: Chapters 5 – 6**Point of View**

Objective: Considering parts of the text from a different point of view

Activity

While Anja and Vladek are hiding, moving from one bunker to another, Anja always wrote in her diaries. In the present, though, Vladek has already told Artie that these notebooks have not survived the war.

Each small group should select a different section of text to work with from the list that follows. As a group, write what you think Anja would have written in her notebooks. Use the following sections of text for information about what she is experiencing. You will have to expand on her thoughts and feelings from the text. Each group should share its diary entries with the class.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus II: Pre-Reading

Inference

Objective: Understanding the subtitle, dedication and introduction

Activity

Compare the subtitle of this book, "And Here My Troubles Began," to the title of *Maus*, "My Father Bleeds History."

What differences in these parts do you notice? Compare and contrast everything that comes before the actual cartooning begins. What do you think C is trying to convey by each of the three aspects.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus II: Chapters 3 – 5**Irony**

Objective: Understanding how irony creates meaning in a literary text

Activity

Discuss the contradictions in the example you choose. Plan a way to dramatize the contrasts and contradictions you find in the text. Write out the script, dialogue, and speeches you will use. Be sure you make the discrepancies apparent. Write a short explanation of the thematic idea this irony suggests. All groups should present their dramatizations to the class.

Examples of Irony:

- Pgs. 81 – 88: the irony of the German activity of bringing all prisoners to Germany
- Pg 82: Vladek's ironic comment about how humans die similarly to dogs, especially in light of Spiegelman's use of animals for all different races and how the Nazis used dogs
- Pgs. 98 – 100: the irony of racism
- Pg. 88: ironically, the Red Cross can only provide a small portion of food and nothing else
- Pgs. 105 – 110: the irony of the end of the war for the prisoners
- Pg. 114: the irony of how the Americans treat Vladek
- Pg. 117: Vladek's final comment
- Pgs. 129 – 136: the contrast of Vladek in the past and in the present
- Pg. 131, 133 – 136: the irony of Anja's suicide after her miraculous survival.
- Pg. 132: the irony of: "For THIS he survived"

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus II: Chapter 3**Plot and Irony**

Objectives: Creating an alternate plot by extracting story information, and inferring the thoughts and feelings of a character
Writing a news story relating the Holocaust to present day racism

Activity

Vladek and his friends attempt to hide before they leave Auschwitz. Write the details of an escape plan, including a diagram of the immediate area and the route that will be taken.

You are a journalist for *The New York Times*, and your boss has instructed you to cover the story of the prisoners' return to Germany. Starting with the march from Auschwitz to Gross-Rosen, write an article describing the events leading up to their arrival in Dachau. Be sure to title your article and, if you like, include any comments made by witnesses.

Art is shocked to discover that his father, after surviving the Holocaust, is a racist. Draw an editorial cartoon addressing the irony of a prejudiced Holocaust survivor.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Maus II: Chapter 5**Critical Thinking and Writing**

Objectives: Inferring the thoughts and feelings of a character
Improving critical thinking and writing skills
Writing an introduction

Activity

When the war ends, Vladek begins working his way to Sosnowiec, Poland, to search for Anja. As Vladek, write a letter to Anja explaining your current situation and what you are doing to find her.

You are chosen to conduct a television interview of Vladek. Compose ten questions to ask him in the interview about his experiences during the Holocaust. Ask questions that are informative to your viewing audience. Pair up with another student. Each person will take a turn being the interviewer and being Vladek. As the interviewer, record the answers you receive and use any follow-up questions that you see fit in order to get a more thorough interview.

Write an introduction of one or two pages to *Maus II* analyzing its key elements. Your essay may include a plot summary and information about the author, Art Spiegelman, that pertains to the development of his story. Include major elements of the book such as character, setting, use of symbol, and historical and social contexts. In developing your essay, include specifics from the book to support and illustrate your generalizations.

On Page 134, is an actual picture of Vladek in his concentration camp uniform. He looks fairly healthy, so this must have been taken early on or after his freedom in a posed picture. Compose a short paragraph about his thoughts. Write them in his own particular style of speaking, if you can.