The Common Book Program
Faculty Resources Quick Sheet

2018-2019 Selection:

Maus by Art Spiegelman

About the Book
The Pulitzer Prize-winning Maus tells the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitler's Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his father's story. Maus approaches the unspeakable through the diminutive. Its form, the cartoon (the Nazis are cats, the Jews mice), shocks us out of any lingering sense of familiarity and succeeds in 'drawing us closer to the bleak heart of the Holocaust' (The New York Times).

Maus is a haunting tale within a tale. Vladek's harrowing story of survival is woven into the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father. Against the backdrop of guilt brought by survival, they stage a normal life of small arguments and unhappy visits. This astonishing retelling of our century's grisiest news is a story of survival, not only of Vladek but of the children who survive even the survivors. Maus studies the bloody paw prints of history and tracks its meaning for all of us. (Penguin Publisher)

What can Faculty Members Do?

 Include the book in your class (required or optional, as part of coursework or extra credit).
 Connect regular coursework to the book/topics.
 Discuss the book with students.
 Notify students of Common Book events.
 Help create/plan events.
 Participate on the committee.

EASTFIELD’S COMMON BOOK PROGRAM
Designed to bring disciplines, classes, and students together across campus into a long conversation, the Common Book program can increase understanding, create integrated ideas and experiences, and provide fun connections to course-related content.

Possible Tie-Ins

 Literary & Fine Arts Festival
 Women’s History Month
 International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2019
 STEM (Ethics)
 HISTORY (World War II, the Holocaust, Genocide)
 ARTS (Graphic Novels, Propaganda)
 JOURNALISM / Creative SPEECH COMMUNICATIONS (Culture, Free Speech)
 SOCIOLOGY (Race, Class, Religion, Gender)
 Other Classroom Content
### Possible Lesson Plans

**Possible Lesson Plans**

**(PSYC or ENGL)**

1. What signs of PTSD did Vladek show? How did this effect how he interacted with the people around him?
2. Studies show that PTSD may be passed from one generation to another. What evidence do we see in Maus that the trauma of the Holocaust has been passed down from survivors to their children?
3. In the image above, what does Art mean by “in some ways, he didn’t survive”?
4. How does survivor’s guilt affect Vladek? How does it affect Art?

**Sample Writing Prompts**

**(ENGL or DIRW)**

Divide the class into small groups and provide each group with a discussion topic from the following:

1. Is prejudice learned, inherent, or both? Explain.
2. Is there a connection between social customs and prejudices? Explain and give examples.
3. What is the attraction of using a scapegoat? What are the results of scapegoating for both the perpetrators and victims of this practice?
4. Discuss the following statement: “Genocide can never be eliminated because it is deeply rooted in human nature.” Do you agree or disagree?

**The Ethics of Discovery:**

One of the most powerful ways to teach about the Holocaust is to bring the voices of survivors to your students. Precisely because they portray people in the fullness of their lives and not just as victims, first-person accounts add individual voices to a collective experience and help students make meaning out of the statistics. As you teach about key historical topics, incorporating survivor testimony personalizes the history, emphasizes its impact on individuals, and highlights the diversity of individual experiences.

**Global Perspective:**

Maus portrays a genocide, which is the elaborate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. What are some other examples of genocides? How are these genocides similar to the Holocaust? How are they different? Students should research both recent and historical genocides in other parts of the world and consider how the Holocaust fits into the larger historical context of genocide.

### Join Us! Use the Common Book in class with these General Activities

**Photo Assignment:**

By examining historical photographs, students consider the pressures and motives that influenced the behaviors of ordinary people during the Holocaust. Students find and examine photographs of European Jewish families before the Holocaust and will interpret what pre-WWII Jewish life in Europe may have been like. Students can also relate their own family life to these pre-WWII Jewish families. Students should also research the locations where the photos were taken and research the Jewish population there before, during, and after WWII.

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**See more resources or ideas on EFC’s Faculty Resources Page for the book.**

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**Sample Writing Prompts**

(We can also help you craft or adapt ideas for your classrooms.)

**Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History**

1. The use of animal figures gives Maus the quality of a fable or an allegory. How might we read Maus in light of other experiences of genocide or “ethnic cleansing”?
2. What signs did Vladek and Anja see in the beginning that the Jewish people were in danger?
3. What role does propaganda play in encouraging both the Polish and Jewish peoples to betray their neighbors, friends, and even family members?
4. What roles does guilt, not just survivor’s guilt, play throughout the graphic novel?
5. On one level, Maus tells Vladek’s story of living through the Holocaust. How does it also show the lasting, multi-generational psychological and sociological impact of the Holocaust?

**Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My Troubles Began**

1. Why is this book subtitled “And Here My Troubles Began” when Maus I seemed chock full of troubles?
2. What is the significance of Spiegelman drawing himself and Françoise as mice instead of dogs? What do you make of Spiegelman sometimes drawing himself as a human with a mouse mask?
3. How does Pavel function as a surrogate for Vladek after Vladek’s death?
4. Discuss whether Vladek is ultimately a hero or a villain. Why is this such a difficult distinction to make?