

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
"The Complete Maus"

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Contents

AUTHOR NOTES.....	4
HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	5
GENRE.....	7
STRUCTURE.....	8
SETTING.....	9
PLOT SUMMARY.....	10
CHARACTER PROFILES.....	18
THEMES AND ISSUES	28
IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS	30
SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS	34
FINAL EXAMINATION ADVICE.....	35
REFERENCES	36

AUTHOR NOTES

Art Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1948, but grew up in New York. Spiegelman started his career as an artist in 1966, drawing comics for Topps Gum Company. In 1980 Spiegelman founded a magazine of unconventional comics, *RAW (Real Art Works)*. It was in *RAW* that the first volume of *Maus* was first published from 1980 – 1985. The following year it was published as a book. In 1992 the second volume of *Maus* was published. Both volumes were published together as *The Complete Maus* from 1996. Spiegelman's graphic novels demonstrated how comic storytelling could be a sophisticated adult medium.

Other Texts

Open Me...I'm a Dog (1997)

In the Shadow of No Towers (2004)

Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@ &!* (2008)

Prizes, Awards and Other Accolades for Maus I, Maus II and The Complete Maus

1992 "Special Award" Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*

Solo exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art

Maus II a *New York Times* best seller

2005 made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Complete Maus is based on Spiegelman's father, Vladek's survival of the Holocaust and his own experiences as a Holocaust survivor's son. Within *Maus I* Spiegelman also deals with the suicide of his mother, Anja, in a short comic, *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case Study*. Anja committed suicide in 1968.

The Complete Maus was created through a series of interviews Spiegelman conducted with his father, which he recorded.

World War II

World War II officially began on September 1, 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. Prior to September 1939 Germany had already annexed Austria (March 1938) and Czechoslovakia (The Sudetenland in September 1938 and the rest in March 1939) with limited resistance from either nation or from Britain and France. In August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union signed the German-Soviet Pact, which stated that Poland would be divided between the two powers. Vladek draws a map of this division on page 62.

In the first two years of the war Britain and France suffered heavy losses under the German Blitzkrieg (lightning war). It was not until 1941, when the United States of America was brought in to the war by Japan bombing Pearl Harbour that the Allies began to regain ground. In September 1940 the war entered North Africa, when Italy invaded British-controlled Egypt. War was brought to the Pacific after Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour (December 7, 1941) and their invasion of the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Singapore. This is the highpoint of Axis dominance in World War II.

With Axis powers fighting on more fronts (North Africa, Europe and the Pacific), the involvement of the United States of America and the changing of sides by the Soviet Union, the Allies were able to re-assert themselves from 1942 to 1944. Britain and the United States of America began bombing key German targets, day and night; the Soviet Union repelled German troops from Stalingrad; Japanese troops were halted on their advance to Australia; and Britain defeated German and Italian troops at El Alamein in Egypt.

The war in Europe shifted into its final stages with the Allied liberation of Rome and invasion of Occupied France, at the Normandy beaches in June 1944. German troops were now fighting on three separate fronts in Europe: Allied troops in the West and in Italy, and the Soviet Union in the East. Their troops began to retreat back to Germany. On May 7, 1945 Germany surrenders. August 6, 1945 the United States of America drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and on Nagasaki on August 9. September 2, 1945 Japan surrenders.