



*Maus* by Art Spiegelman

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*Maus* is a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, the first graphic novel to win. It depicts the author's parents' experience during World War II and the Holocaust. Their main aim was to 'hide and survive' in occupied Poland, where they were being persecuted by the Nazis for being Jewish. Spiegelman portrays the Nazis as cats in his graphic novel, the Jewish people as mice, the Polish as pigs and Americans as dogs: this he did to compare humans to animals, which made their power struggles more understandable. Bribery, betrayal and danger is constantly present in the novel as the war seems to bring out the worst in people. The novel starts with Spiegelman asking his father Vladek about the whereabouts of his late mother's diary. Vladek talks about how he met Anja, Spiegelman's mother. The war broke out soon after they got engaged, making me feel sorry for them because they are unable to enjoy such an important period in their lives. The novel frequently switches time frames, from Spiegelman with his father in their present day (set in the 1950s-60s) and flashbacks to wartime Eastern Europe. The constant altering of time frames makes it a little confusing to absorb the plot at times. However, as Vladek continues his recall, we get the most gripping and tense graphic novel I have ever read. The Holocaust part was the most tense part for me, because Vladek and Anja were living in horrific conditions, and the environment posed a constant threat of death, which increased suspense for me as a reader. Especially when Anja has a baby, I feared for what fate might have in store for them. *Maus* gave me a front row seat on what happened to the victims of the Holocaust: what happened inside Auschwitz, life inside the ghettos and learning to view bread and water as a luxury. All the privileges like eating and sleeping that we take for granted every day can be fragile; Spiegelman warns through his book that these can be taken away from you in a mere matter of days. When the Nazis invaded Poland, there was barely any time to panic; Vladek and his family were instantly taken as prisoners of war and their valuables confiscated. During and after reading the novel, many questions came to my mind. Will Vladek or Anja survive? Are they mentally traumatised after falling victim to the holocaust? When will things return to normal for them? Spiegelman has a talent for making me interested in the story of his family, as if I knew them personally, capturing my complete attention.

Graphic novels are sometimes discussed as if they're less important than regular literature. But illustrations play a powerful part in storytelling, they assist the reader in immersing themselves in what is happening. Spiegelman achieves this brilliantly. His illustrations of every scene guided me to follow his family's journey. I was with Vladek and Anja in my reading every step of the way.