



Maus I – Study Guide Terms, Questions, & Vocabulary - 11th grade

Catachresis: the deliberate use of words to create an impossible situation or mixed metaphor.

Examples: John Milton wrote of “blind mouths”; in one section in *Maus*, Spiegelman says, “My father bleeds history.”

Epigraph: a short quotation that appears in front of a poem, a book, or a chapter explaining something about what follows. Examples: T. S. Eliot places a quotation from Dante’s *Inferno* before the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, which gives the reader an additional method of understanding that Eliot’s poem deals with a person in Hell.

Frame Narrative or Frame Story: a story that has another story or stories within it. Examples: *The Canterbury Tales* or *the Arabian Nights*.

Juxtaposition: the placement of two dissimilar items, people, thoughts, places, etc., next to one another to emphasize the differences or heighten the similarities. Examples: in *The Pearl*, the main character instinctively touches the valuable pearl and his knife at the same time.

Litotes: a conscious understatement that achieves the opposite effect of the words themselves. Examples: I like money a little.

Metafiction: fiction that makes no attempt to disguise itself as factual; fiction that comments in its actually being fiction.

Mixed Metaphor: combining two or more literary terms in such a way that the meaning is ridiculous, impossible, or incorrect. Examples: the athlete sailed down the road of life without missing a step. The President will put the ship of state firmly on its feet.

Paradox: a statement that is self-contradictory on its surface, yet makes a point through the juxtaposition of the ideas and words within the paradox. Examples: “Noon finally dawned for the remaining weary soldiers”; “He that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat...”

Parallelism: the repetition of similarly constructed phrases, clauses, or sentences within a short section. Examples: “Government of the people, by the people and for the people...”

Pun: an expression that achieves emphasis or humor by utilizing:

1. two distinctly different meanings for the same word
2. two similar sounding word

Vocabulary:

Kilos – kilograms; one kilogram = 2.2 pounds

Pogrom – an organized extermination of a minority group

Tuchus – Yiddish for buttocks

Zloty – monetary unit of Poland

Gestapo – an abbreviation of “Geheime Staatspolizei,” the Secret State Police, the SS

Reich – land annexed to Germany, later meaning the Nazi regime

Wehrmacht – the German Armed Forces

Gemeinde – German for “members of a municipality”

Schlepped – Yiddish for “carried or moved in a trudging fashion”

“Juden Raus!” – German for “Jews, out!”

Meshuga – Yiddish for crazy or senseless

Nu – Yiddish for “so” or “obviously”

Oi [oy] – Yiddish for “oh!” or “My God!”

Pragmatic – practical; concerned with the facts at hand

Maus I – Study Guide Questions.

1. What literary device is Spiegelman using in *Maus's* subtitle, “My Father Bleeds History.”
2. What is the first thing we learn about Artie’s mother?
3. Why did Vladek take English lessons in his youth?
4. Why does Vladek snoop in Anja’s closet when visiting the Zylberbergs? What does he find there?
5. Briefly describe the Zylberberg’s economic status.
6. What does Vladek’s dialect show?
7. What do the words and images on the title page of Chapter 2 seem to foreshadow?
8. Why is Miss Stefanska, the seamstress who lives down the hall from Vladek arrested?

9. Examine the frame that depicts Miss Stefanska in jail. Why do you think Spiegelman decided to draw everything within the frame on a slant?
10. At what point does Anja start to feel suicidal?
11. Spiegelman portrays Jews as mice, regardless of what country they are from. How does he portray non-Jewish Poles? Explain the symbolism?
12. What childhood offense of Artie's was Vladek particularly strict about?
13. What do the Nazis see as proof that Vladek has never had to work hard in his life? What is unusual about one frame that interrupts the story? What is this technique called?
14. In what way does Vladek immediately stand out as more practical and self-motivated than his fellow prisoners?
15. What does Vladek think about the way the Germans clear POWs out of camp?
16. How does Spiegelman visually describe the Germans' attitude toward killing Jews?
17. How does Vladek come to have chocolate to give to Orbach's daughters? What does his possession of the chocolate say about his character?
18. What incident at the end of chapter 3 speaks of the generation (in addition to personality) gap between Vladek and Artie? What habits of Artie's is Vladek unable to understand?
19. What has happened to Jewish businesses in Vladek's absence?
20. Compare Vladek's response to the new economic situation of the Jews to his brother-in-law Wolfe's response.
21. How does Spiegelman visually emphasize the fact that the streets have become unsafe for Jews?
22. In chapter 4, Spiegelman interrupts the sequence of images of the young Vladek in Poland with images of the elderly Vladek riding his exercycle as he tells his story. What is the effect of the interruptions? Why not simply draw the entire chapter in flashbacks?
23. Describe the visual effects Spiegelman employs to illustrate the impact of the public hanging of his acquaintances on Vladek.
24. Vladek says of the hanging, "I was frightened to go outside for a few days...I didn't want to pass where they were hanging. Andy maybe one of them could have talked of me to the Germans to try to save himself." In what way are these comments consistent with what we have come to know of Vladek's personality so far?
25. Why does Vladek decide to work at a carpentry shop where he will not make nearly as much money as he does from his off-the-record dealings?
26. When did Vladek first hear about Auschwitz, and what was his reaction when he did?

27. When we first see Vladek, Anja and Artie drawn as humans for the first time, what term could describe the build up to actually seeing Artie's drawings?
28. Briefly describe the artistic style of *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, focusing on those areas in which it differs from the style of the rest of *Maus*.
29. What literary term could you apply to Artie's comment, "You murdered me, Mommy, and you left me here to take the rap!!" What term is used in the previous panel?
30. Why does Anja agree to let Persis take Richieu into hiding after so forcefully rejecting Ilzecki's offer to do so before?
31. What happens to many of the young children taken by the Germans from Srodula while they are en route to Auschwitz? What literary term could be used to describe Vladek's comment about the children, "and they never anymore screamed"?
32. How are Vladek and his family twice betrayed by fellow Jews in chapter 5?
33. Avram and his girlfriend, who are sharing Vladek's bunker, offer to pay Vladek two watches and "some diamond rings" for his advice on what their next move should be. Vladek tells Artie, "I didn't want to take. They needed these to live. So I took only the small watch." What two things does Vladek's comment tell us about his character?
34. Why do you think Spiegelman named chapter 5 "Mouse Holes"? What are the literal "mouse holes" the title refers to?
35. Vladek tells Artie that it was easier for him to pass as a non-Jewish Pole than it was for Anja. How does Spiegelman's illustration of his parents walking in the street subtly convey this fact?
36. What happens to Vladek as an immediate result of his daring to answer a stranger on the street in Hebrew?
37. How are Anja and Vladek about to travel openly and without incident to Mrs. Motonawa's house twenty kilometers from their hiding place?
38. What convinces Vladek to trust the Poles who have offered to smuggle him and Anja into Hungary?
39. Explain the sign at the entrance to Auschwitz.
40. What does Artie call Vladek when he learns that Vladek has burned all Anja's diaries? Why do you think Artie chooses this word?