

***Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* Study Guide Questions**

Directions: Answer each of the following questions in a complete sentence in your practice journal.

Chapter One: The Sheik

textiles – fabric

dowry – the money or possessions that a woman brings to her husband at marriage

1. What is the first thing we learn about Artie's mother?
2. Why does Artie's father object when Mala gives Artie a wire hanger on which to hang his coat?
3. What sort of drawings does Vladek think Artie should spend his time making?
4. Why do you think Spiegelman chooses to re-introduce the Vladek of the present, pedaling on his cycle, against the background of the poster for *The Sheik*?
5. Why did Vladek take English lessons in his youth?
6. How does the director of Anja's school describe Anja to Vladek?
7. Why does Vladek snoop in Anja's closet when visiting the Zylberbergs? What does he find there?
8. Briefly describe the Zylberbergs' economic status.
9. Why does Vladek think Artie should leave out the story of Lucia when writing his book?
10. Artie finally promises Vladek that he will leave the story of Lucia out of his book. As we read his "promise," what makes the promise ironic?

Chapter Two: The Honeymoon

zloty – the monetary unit of Poland

kilos – kilograms; one kilogram = 2.2 pounds

pogrom – an organized extermination of a minority group

tuchus – Yiddish for "buttocks"

anti-Semitic – having prejudice against Jews

11. What do the words and images on the title page of this chapter seem to foreshadow?
12. Why is Miss Stefanska, the seamstress who lives down the hall from Vladek, arrested?
13. What political party is Anja involved with, and how does Vladek react to the news of her involvement?
14. Examine the third frame on page 29, which depicts Miss Stefanska in jail. Why do you think Spiegelman decided to draw everything within this frame on a slant?
15. At what point does Anja first start to feel suicidal? How does Spiegelman visually emphasize her despair?
16. What does Vladek see for the first time while traveling to Czechoslovakia?
17. What new and redeeming quality does Vladek exhibit as he dances with Anja at the café?
18. Spiegelman portrays Jews as mice, regardless of what country they are from. How does he portray non-Jewish Poles? Explain the symbolism.
19. Why does Vladek think that Sosnowiec will be a safer place for Jews than Bielsko?
20. Why must Anja and Vladek part ways at the end of this chapter?

Chapter Three: Prisoners of War

Wehrmacht – the German Armed Forces

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

annexed – attached to; incorporated into a larger body

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

protectorate – land controlled by German government

21. What childhood offense of Artie's was Vladek particularly strict about?
22. Why does Vladek continue to shoot at a soldier who holds up a hand in surrender?
23. Briefly characterize Vladek's response to the knowledge that he has killed Jan, a German soldier.
24. What do the Nazis see as proof that Vladek has never had to work hard in his life?
25. What significance does "Parshas Truma" have to Vladek?
26. How does Spiegelman visually describe the Germans' attitude towards killing Jews on page 61?
27. What concretely brings home to Vladek the idea that he could die?
28. How does Vladek come to have chocolate to give to Orbach's daughters?
29. How does Spiegelman visually portray Vladek's attempt to pass for a Pole on the train?
30. What does the incident involving Vladek's father's beard reveal about the German soldiers?

Chapter Four: The Noose Tightens

schlepped – Yiddish for "carried or moved in a trudging fashion"

gemeinde – German for "members of a municipality"

31. What has happened to Jewish businesses during Vladek's absence?
32. Why does Vladek lie to his family about the amount of money he makes from his under-the-table deals?

33. How do the Germans who take the Zylberbergs' beds react when Mr. Zylberberg protests that he has not been paid for the furniture?
34. On page 81 and elsewhere in this chapter, 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?
35. How does Vladek manage to survive when German officers catch him on the street, his arms full of more than ten kilos of "illegal" sugar?
36. 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?
37. What forces Anja's grandparents into hiding?
38. Who were the Jewish police?
39. Why is deciding whether or not to register at the stadium such a difficult choice for Vladek and his family?
40. Why is Vladek's sister Fela sent to the "bad" side during the selection at the stadium? What sacrifice does Vladek's father make for Fela?

Chapter Five: Mouse Holes

liquidate – to put an end to; to abolish (also: to kill)

neurotic – overanxious; panicky

"Juden Raus!" – German for "Jews, out!"

meshuga – Yiddish slang for "crazy; senseless" **nu**– Yiddish for "so" or "obviously"

oi [oy]– Yiddish for "oh!" or "My God!"

41. Why is Artie reluctant to use tools or fix things around the house?
42. What costume does Art portray himself in in *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*?
43. Although Mala mentions that Vladek has read *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*, it was not necessary for Spiegelman to include a reprint of this early comic in the middle of *Maus*. Why do you think he chose to do so?
44. Why does Anja agree to let Persis take Richieu into hiding after so forcefully rejecting Ilzecki's offer to do so before?
45. How is Richieu killed?
46. In describing his bunker in Srodula, Vladek says to Artie, "Show to me your pencil and I can *explain* you...such things it's good to know exactly how was it—just in case." (Pg. 110) How does this comment help us understand why Vladek may have insisted that Artie learn to use tools the same way Vladek does?
47. How are Vladek and his family twice betrayed by fellow Jews in this chapter?
48. How does Spiegelman represent the quavering in Vladek's voice when Vladek's heart begins to bother him?
49. 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. (Pg. 124) Vladek tells Artie, "I didn't want to take. They *needed* these to live. So I took only the small watch." (Pg. 124) What two things does Vladek's comment tell us about his character?
50. Do you think Vladek's comments about Mala, his present wife, wanting all his money and valuables are correct?

Chapter Six: Mouse Trap

pragmatic – practical; concerned with the facts at hand

caricature – an exaggerated representation

51. Richieu's governess, Janina, had offered in the past to help the Spiegelmans if it became necessary. When they knock on her door, however, she tells them to go away quickly before they bring trouble to her household. What can we assume has changed Janina's mind?
52. At the bottom of page 136, 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?
53. What happens to Vladek as an immediate result of his daring to answer a stranger on the street in Hebrew?
54. What are some similarities between the Montonowa incidents and the ones in the barn?
55. How are Anja and Vladek able to travel openly and without incident to Mrs. Motonawa's house, twenty kilometers from their hiding place?
56. What does the incident with Vladek and the playing schoolchildren tell us about the way anti-Semitism is passed from generation to generation during the war?
57. Describe the conditions Miloch, his wife, and his young son are living in.
58. What convinces Vladek to trust the Poles who have offered to smuggle him and Anja into Hungary?
59. Explain the sign at the entrance to Auschwitz.
60. What does Artie call Vladek when he learns that Vladek has burned Anja's diaries? Why do you think Artie chooses this word?