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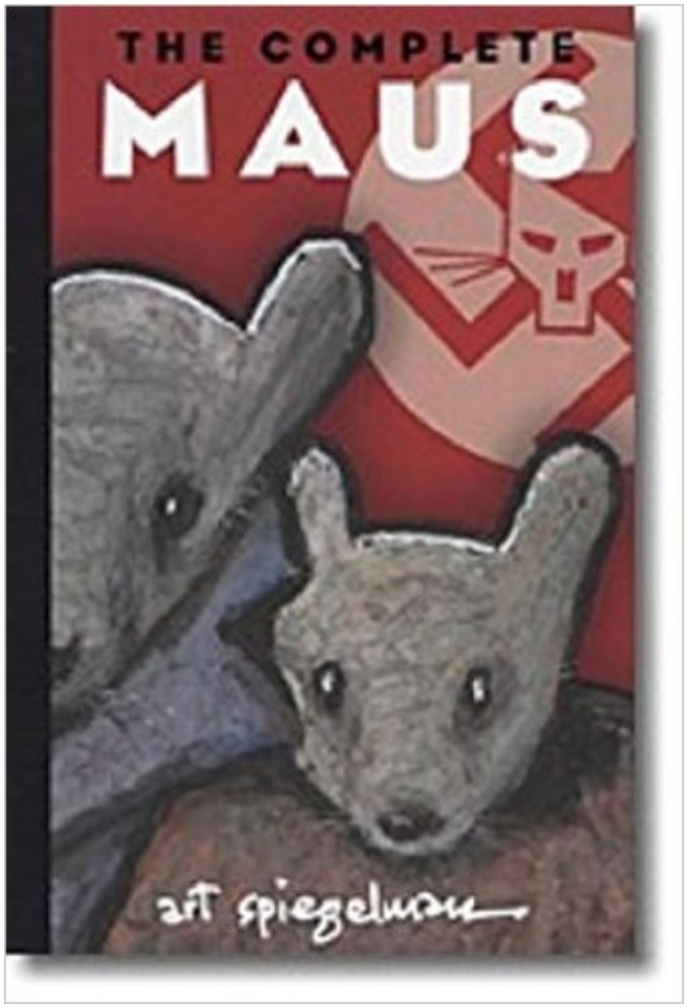
The Complete Maus, 25th Anniversary Edition



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Synopsis

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its first publication, here is the definitive edition of the book acclaimed as â œthe most affecting and successful narrative ever done about the Holocaustâ • (Wall Street Journal) and â œthe first masterpiece in comic book historyâ • (The New Yorker).The Pulitzer Prize-winning Maus tells the story of Vladek Spiegelman, a Jewish survivor of Hitlerâ ™s Europe, and his son, a cartoonist coming to terms with his fatherâ ™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 â œdrawing us closer to the bleak heart of the Holocaustâ • (The New York Times).Maus is a haunting tale within a tale. Vladekâ ™s harrowing story of survival is woven into the authorâ ™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 centuryâ ™s grisliest news is a story of survival, not only of Vladek but of the children who survive even the survivors. Maus studies the bloody pawprints of history and tracks its meaning for all of us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Browsing through the reviews and comments about Maus, I saw that there was some question as to whether the hardcover edition comprised Parts I and II. This is understandable because the product is listed in as "The Complete Maus: A Survivor’s Tale (No 1)," which seems contradictory.When I was considering purchasing it, I looked at the number of pages that were listed for the edition and guessed that it included both parts of the story. So I bought it, it arrived fine, and I am now writing to

confirm that yes, this edition includes I and II. should look into this and remove the "(No 1)" from the listing’s title.

These books are an easy and fast read, but by no means are they simple. In two slim comic books, Art Spiegelman chronicles his parents’ movement from comfortable homes in Poland to the death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau, and from there to a surreally banal afterlife in upstate New York. We watch the destruction of the Holocaust continue in Spiegelman’s father’s transformation from a bright, good-looking youth to a miserly neurotic, his mother’s deterioration from a sensitive, sweet girl into a suicide, and in the author’s own unhappy interactions with his parents.I have read some of the most negative reviews of these books, and I respectfully disagree. Some negative reviews ("Spiegelman is a jerk") castigate Spiegelman for his shamefully self-interested milking of his father’s life and the Holocaust. Other negative reviews find fault with the unoriginality of the story, or discover historical inaccuracies, self-contradictions, or simplifications in the tale. Finally, a set of reviews are upset with Spiegelman’s coding of people of different nationalities as animals(especially the Poles, who were also victimized by the Nazis but are depicted as pigs in the comics.)The first criticism is both deserved and unfair. Deserved, because Spiegelman profits by the pain and death of millions, including his own family. Unfair, because Spiegelman himself consciously provides the basis for our criticism that he mocked and neglected his elderly father at the same time that he fed his own success upon his father’s tales. The two volumes echo with his regret and unexpiable guilt at his treatment of his parents, and at his own success and survival. To attack Spiegelman for these things is like scolding a man in the midst of his self-immolation.The second type of criticism finds _Maus_ to be sophomoric, inaccurate, or repetitive of other Holocaust survivor’s experiences. The defense here is that Maus is the story of a single family, seen through the eyes of a single man (Vladek Spiegelman), and filtered again through his son. It is almost certain that the elderly Vladek forgot, exaggerated, or hid details, just as it is certain that his son summarized and misunderstood. However, the quasi-fictionalized format of the comic book throws this subjectivity into relief. The destroyed diaries of Spiegelman’s mother are a reminder of the millions of life stories left untold, including stories perhaps too horrible and shameful for the survivors to reveal. _Maus_ does not claim to be an objective, authoritative history of the Holocaust, and in fact tries to emphasize its own limitations.While other works may better convey the Jewish experience in the Holocaust, the innovative format of _Maus_ justifies its existence, as it allows the story to reach a greater audience.Finally, many have objected to the negative stereotyping of the many peoples appearing in the book, especially the Poles. Spiegelman draws the Jews as innocent mice, but the Germans

as bloodthirsty cats, and the Poles as selfish pigs. More amusingly (because they appear infrequently in the story) the French are drawn as frogs, the Swedes as reindeer, and the British as cold fish. The Americans are dogs, mainly friendly bow-wow dogs but also sometimes cold-eyed predators capable of pouncing on a mouse or rat. I believe that the wrongness of stereotypes was a major reason why Spiegelman used them. The Nazis are recorded as having called the Jews "vermin" and the Poles "pigs". Whether they had the qualities of these animals or not, they were treated as such... and such they were forced to become despite themselves. The Jews had to hide, hoard, and deceive; the Poles were compelled to act out of self-interest just to survive.In other words, I think that Spiegelman's stereotypes were a deliberate choice. The WHOLE POINT of _Maus_ is how the dehumanization of the Holocaust twisted people beyond their capacities... how the camps tried to make people as ugly and despicable as their worst racial stereotypes, by making them all alike in their fear. Sometimes they succeeded.Neither Poles nor Germans are depicted as only selfish, cowardly, and cruel in _Maus_. In fact, there are many Polish in Spiegelman's books who are shown as fellow-sufferers, or kind despite the risks to their own lives, just as there were Jews who betrayed their own. Look closely at the drawings-- I open Maus II to a random page, and see both pigs and mice in the prison suits, both as capos and victims. Who is the kind priest who renews Vladek's hope on page 28? A Pole! Even the Germans are seen to suffer from the war, caught by powers beyond their control. Meanwhile, Vladek himself is shown to be an inflexible racist (II, p. 98).I argue, therefore, that the above criticisms of _Maus_ show a hasty reading of the books and poor comprehension of how an artist(even of non-fiction) chooses to convey a theme.As a non-European, I have no personal investment in Jewish, German, or Polish points of view. However, as a second-generation American and child of war survivors [a civil war, so we are both victims and oppressors], I have a chord that resonates with the story of the Spiegelmans. I just re-read "Maus II" this afternoon and found to my amazement that it was still able to draw tears. In fact, when I first read the Maus books ten years ago I don't recall them affecting me so deeply... but I was younger then and had only an intellectual understanding of many things, such as love, fear, guilt, death, and weakness.I wholeheartedly recommend these books to those who are willing to read them more than once. If you are not moved by them now, perhaps later you will be. Meanwhile, let's do our best to stop such suffering around the world.

Art Spiegelman's "Maus: A Survivor's Tale" is a unique and unforgettable work of literature. This two-volume set of book-length comics (or "graphic novels," if you prefer) tells the story of the narrator, Artie, and his father Vladek, a Holocaust survivor. "Maus" is thus an important example of

both Holocaust literature and of the graphic novel. The two volumes of "Maus" are subtitled "My Father Bleeds History" and "And Here My Troubles Began"; they should be read together to get the biggest impact.Artie is a comic book artist who is trying to create art that is meaningful, not just commercial. As the two volumes of "Maus" unfold, he gradually learns the full story of his father's history as a Jewish survivor of the World War II Holocaust. There is a complex "book within the book" motif, since the main character is actually writing the book that we are reading. This self-referentiality also allows Spiegelman to get in some satiric material.The distinguishing conceit of "Maus" involves depicting the books' humanoid characters as having animal heads. All the Jews have mice heads, the Germans are cats, the Americans dogs, etc. It is a visually provocative device, although not without problematic aspects. To his credit, Spiegelman addresses some of the ambiguities of this visual device in the course of the 2 volumes. For example, Artie's wife, a Frenchwoman who converted to Judaism, wonders what kind of animal head she should have in the comic."Maus" contains some stunning visual touches, as well as some truly painful and thought-provoking dialogue. Vladek is one of the most extraordinary characters in 20th century literature. As grim as the two books' subject matter is, there are some moments of humor and warmth. Overall, "Maus" is a profound reflection on family ties, history, memory, and the role of the artist in society.

The title of this review consists of words I don't use too often. But this is a masterpiece that deserved its Pulitzer Prize and then some. What makes Spiegelman's work so moving is the juxtaposition of a supposedly lighthearted form, the comic strip, with the greatest evil and suffering in human history, the Holocaust. Spiegelman's parents miraculously survived the concentration camps, being among very few survivors, getting by on luck and (in the case of Spiegelman's father) a lot of resourcefulness. This is their story, from the point of view of the father, who lost nearly all of his relatives. With the Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats, this work pulls no punches in describing the true horrors of the Holocaust, and Spiegelman's minimalist artwork makes the images all the more disturbing. You don't get this kind of emotion, terror, and brutal honesty in standard written accounts of the period. But underneath the direct suffering of the Holocaust, the true theme of this book is the lasting effects on the Spiegelman family, including the father's lasting agony and the mental illness shared by both Spiegelman's mother and himself, who hadn't even been born yet. The strained relationship between father and son are the true heart of this tremendous work. I haven't been this blown away by a work of literature in a very long time, if ever.

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