

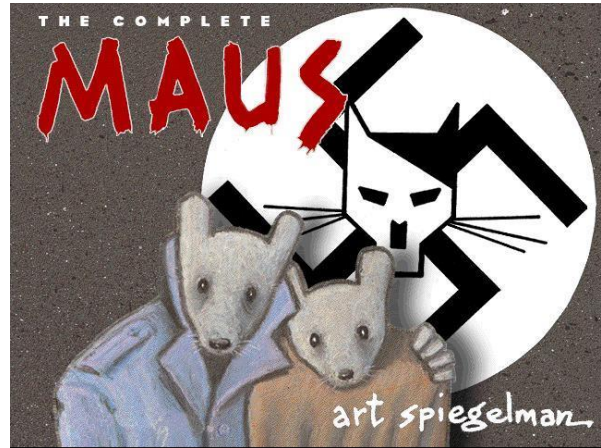
## RWS 200: Paper #3 Prompt Analyzing *Maus* in Context

Final paper due: April 6

Meet with Scott for Peer Review credit

Length: 1,200 Words – 1,600 words

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1991) presents a compelling, captivating, and horrific story of the holocaust. Spiegelman had a number of projects with his singular creation: he wanted to preserve his father's tale, he wanted to understand how the holocaust was possible, he wanted to connect with his family's history, and he also wanted to demonstrate the capacity of graphic novels for serious story-telling.



In this paper, you will examine the impact of **one** specific context on *Maus*, and how it influenced the approaches that Spiegelman used to tell his and his father's story.

*Your paper will focus on one of the following topics:*

### The Historical Temporal Context

There are a number of parallel narratives in *Maus*. One of them is about Artie's choices how to tell his father's story (which provides insight into his relationship to his father). Maus chooses to tell Vladek's story through the lens of Artie contextualizing his father's story as a comic book. Consider why Spiegelman chose this meta-narrative approach. **Answer:** Why does Spiegelman choose to tell Vladek's story *within* Artie's story – and what does that contextualization allow the narrative to do?

### The Contemporary Temporal Context

Holocaust narratives, and their preservation, provide a way to capture insights and experiences into one of history's most infamous, and incomprehensible, events. Consider *Maus*' serial publication from 1980-1991 and how the field of collecting holocaust narratives was evolving during that time. **Answer:** Where does *Maus* fit within the tradition and context of holocaust narratives?

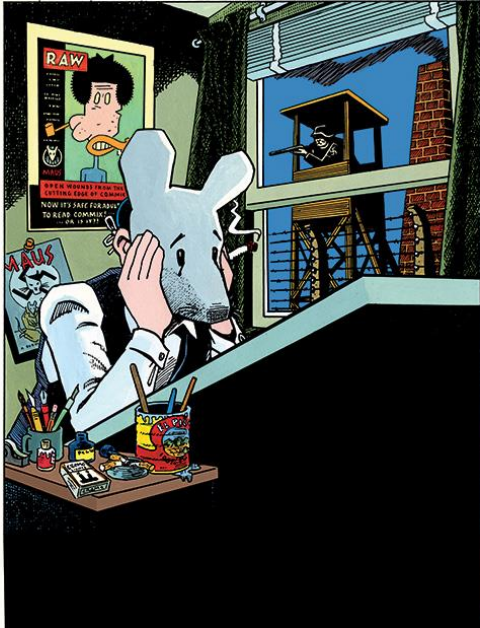
### Artistic Context

*Maus* was among the vanguard of "more literary" works within the comic book medium in 1991. Consider how *Maus* changed the way people thought about comic books. **Answer:** How did *Maus*'s success and innovations change the medium of comic books – how did it alter the context of what was possible in its artistic medium?

### Change the Context 1

Maus was written, initially, for an American audience, although it was translated into nearly every language due to its popularity. Consider the context of Maus for a *non-American* audience that might have a very different reaction to the text: certainly a German or Poland

reader might have a different perspective, but what about a reader from a country that wasn't even involved in World War II? **Answer:** How would this reader (that you choose) subjectively change the meaning of *Maus*?



### Change the Context 2

The world of 2017 is a *very* different time from the one in 1991. Analyze *Maus* from a modern-day perspective.

**Answer:** What lessons can Maus provide a contemporary reader about today's world (whether Spiegelman intended them or not)?

### Your Own Choice

I am open to you choosing a topic of your own choice, although it needs to focus on some exploration of the context of Maus. E-mail me and ask, or we can discuss at your own conference.

How you structure your paper is **up to you**, but be sure to include these elements:

- ✓ A thesis statement which sets-up your argument by explicitly answering one of the questions above (*Intro*)
- ✓ An analysis of 2-3 panels, scenes, or events in Maus to support your argument (*Body*)
- ✓ At least 2 outside sources to support your argument (*Body*)
- ✓ A conclusion which sums up your argument, and also explains why context is so important to Maus (or how a different context changes the text) (*Conclusion*)

As always, the Modern Language Association (MLA) format is a must:

- Times New Roman or Soutane, size 12 font
- Post as a blog *or* as embedded Word document
- Works Cited information

Write the paper as if you are addressing an audience that has not read Maus or knows very much about comic books and thus requires that you “spell things out.”