

# Good survival and success essay example

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Maus is one of the most significant and powerful artworks, produced by an American Jewish artist or writer, regarding the Holocaust, which Spiegelman indicates as “ things that happened before young Germans were even born” (461). The work is popular due to Spiegelman’s honesty, narrative talent, and use of graphics. In addition, Spiegelman has also put it clearly that the community that people live in is threatening and can cause trauma.

However, he asserts that the Jewish community has remained bound together, despite the challenges they face. The author gives his family’s life and, the language and images used are effective in describing how people strive to survive and succeed through luck, in areas where inequality and injustice exist.

Masks have been used in the pictures as symbols. At the Polish Army, Vladek wears a pig mask. This is done to ensure that he passes off as a person who is non-Jew, the moment he is captured during World War II, by the Germans. Following his repatriation and release, he ought to walk through his hometown’s streets while wearing masks to ensure that cats do not capture them. Spiegelman uses this technique and represents humans in the form of animals to show how racial profiling can be absurd. The interviewer asks “ if your book was about Israeli Jewsm what kind of an animal would you draw?” (Spiegelman 460). In yet another perspective, the author could be implying that animals and humans have little differences.

Another significant symbol is that of the exercise bike that is used by Vladek. As Art is interviewing him, he jumps on his bike, and starts pedalling it as he recounts the events that took place at Holocaust. The more he increases the peddling speed, the more he remembers the events. For instance, there is

the recalling of Art's brother who had born before the Germans had occupied the land. The boy is poisoned by his aunt for fear that he could be captured or be deported to a camp. This took place in the 1970s. With the remembering of events, Vladek continues to pedal furiously while Art is left standing there with his recording tape. In this case, a stationary bike is used, instead of using an exercise bike, to signify that Vladek wished to leave his past behind, but no matter how hard he tried, he still could not outrun it. This means that such memories can remain forever, and a person needs to confront them.

The drawings are simple, but at the same time, they are effective. In Maus, the pictures used are not colored. They come in black and white. Clothing differentiates characters and the lines used are angular and sharp. This is used to contrast Vladek and Art and differentiate the former perceptions from the later perceptions of reality. This is also used to show the absurdity of having racial lines in the population. By looking at the characters keenly, one can see that they are distinguishable from each other, apart from their clothing. As a metaphor, Spiegelman wanted to make members of a common nationality to look alike to “ self-destruct.”

Maus can be compared to “ Animal Farm” where inequality exists, and people have to strive to succeed in life. All the characters are represented as animals. For instance, Jews are presented as mice, dogs represent Americans, and Poles are presented as pigs while Nazis are brought out as cats. Permutations of each of the groups is also present to show how the groups were unsatisfied and how they wished to be like each other in order to enjoy certain privileges. German Jews are drawn as the normal mice, but

they have stripes of a cat and mouse whiskers. Jews would pose as non-Jews, and such Jews are presented posing while wearing pig-masks. By presenting Jews as porcupines, Spiegelman wants to show that Jews were considered less of humans. As shown earlier in the text, Spiegelman is asked by the interviewer which animal he could use to represent Israeli Jews, he replies, “porcupines” (Spiegelman 460). In the writing, we realize that Vladek had mastered various languages such as German, French, Yiddish, English, and Polish. As a result, he gained a competitive edge in various situations as people would not exactly tell to which nationality/race he belonged. This shows how people learn to survive in regions that are dominated by inequalities. One has to be wise in order to succeed.

For people to survive, they ought to be careful because their enemies are always after them. Germans, presented as cats are considered predators as they would hunt the Jews. For the Americans, they are symbolised with dogs as they would often save Jews from the hands of Germans. A racial stereotype is played off well in Maus. For example, neither the mice nor the pigs are universally good. The mice had the stereotype thinking where for instance, they would wear pig or cat’s masks in order to pass through the streets undetected as “Jews.” In conclusion, during World War II, minority and oppressed groups had to look for means of survival. The most powerful individuals who discriminated against the minority groups had dominated the world. For instance, Germans dominated Jews. Through imagery, symbols and figurative language, Spiegelman makes it clear that racial lines existed. He mainly uses animals to symbolise human beings. Indeed, he

demonstrates that people have to be creative and imaginative in order to survive in a world of discrimination.

### **Works cited**

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986. Print. Pp. 458-466.