

Maus essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I'm going to discuss the following question: How and why is a social group represented in a particular way? I'm going to answer this question based on the book 'Maus' written by Art Spiegelman. I've chosen this question because I thought it was quite interesting why the author uses animals for different social groups instead of just using humans.

Points of focus:

- * How did Art Spiegelman portray different social groups
- * Why did he chose for this method
- * Explain the choice for the animals (like mice to represent the Jewish people.)

Written task 2 How and why is a social group represented in a particular way?

In 'Maus' the author chose to use animals to represent different social groups. For example, the Jewish people are shown as mice whereas the Germans are shown as cats. This isn't the most common way to portray communities, but I think Art Spiegelman made a great choice using animals to portray the different social groups.

The first animals we find in the book are the mice followed by cats. The mice represent the Jewish people and the cats represent the German people. There is one obvious reason for the use of these two type of animals: Cats prey on mice. Art Spiegelman knew this was/is a generally known fact and when he thought about the animals he had to use to represent the Jewish

and the German people there couldn't have been any doubt but to chose for the cats and mice. If you portray the German people as cats and the Jewish as mice, everyone instantly knows the cats are the ' bad guys' in the story.

Mice are also known as innocent, helpless (especially compared to cats) animals which helps state the fact that the Jews where innocent in the holocaust. I also believe that the author chose mice because mice look like rats, and rats are known as ' low animals' and Jews where at that time also seen as ' low people'. You can then ask yourself why he didn't use rats instead of mice to make this statement even more obvious. I guess there are different reasons why he didn't chose to do so.

The first reason will probably be the fact that if he would have shown the Jewish people as rats, you most likely would feel less compassion for the Jews. We mostly see rats as gross animals and I don't think Spiegelman wanted the readers of the book to think of the Jewish people in the same way as they do about rats. Secondly, if he used rats the whole ' cat chasing mice' thing would not be applicable. We also learn that the Americans are represented as dogs. Generally speaking, cats are afraid of dogs, just as the Germans were afraid of the Americans in the holocaust. The Poles are shown as pigs in the story. I don't know if this is as important as the choice for the other animals because I believe the story would have had the same value when the Poles were portrayed as something other than pigs.

I believe the reason Art Spiegelman chose animals instead of humans in his book is the fact that it's easier to portray specific social groups as animals to really show difference between these social groups. You can more easily

portray the difference between the social groups if you use animals like cats and mice. If Art Spiegelman would not have chosen to use animals to portray the social group I guess the story would have had less impact; all humans would sort of all look-a-like instead of showing a real difference between groups. It's clear the animals represent humans though, especially at times when the animals in the story are faced with real animals; one mice actually had a cat as a pet.

To conclude, I think the author made a smart choice using animals to portray social groups. The animals he chose for the different social groups made clear sense: The cats(Germans) chased the mice (Jews) who were eventually saved from the cats by the dogs(Americans). The use of animals in the book state the difference between the social group much better than when he would have used humans for all the different social groups. This is extra important in the book ' Maus' because the whole holocaust was based on differences in social groups.