

Maus

[Countries](#), [Germany](#)



Maus, by Art Spiegelman, is a graphic novel in which the characters are represented as animals. The comic collection is full of juxtapositions. Vladek and Artie represent the opposition of past and present. The story also illustrates the opposition in the cultural contexts of Nazi occupied Poland and Rego Park, New York. The format of the book contrasts images with language, and the characters of the book depict the opposition of father and son. These juxtapositions serve to emphasize the transmission of conflict from one generation to the next, as with Artie and Vladek. Vladek is telling his story as a father, about the cultural context of Poland in the past. Artie is listening to his father as a son, living in the present New York. The drastic differences between their two worlds show the divide between them emotionally. Vladek is still suffering from his experiences as a Jew during a time of Nazi power, and Artie is still struggling to overcome his mother's suicide. Artie and Vladek are completely different and the contradictions and juxtapositions in the story help illustrate these differences. The whole purpose of the book is to show someone making an attempt to work through a traumatic experience. Artie is working through his mother's suicide, and Vladek is working through his wife's death and his life in concentration camps. The two of them combining their broken lives to try and create a unified story exemplifies the healing process and trying to become whole again. They are embracing their fragmented selves and trying to come to terms with their damaged history. Something that stood out to me in the book that my classmates may not have noticed is what happened to Anja's diaries. Anja filled her diaries with the troubles she went through in Nazi concentration camps and as a persecuted Jew. She wrote about her struggle

to stay alive and avoid the mass fires where many Jews were meeting their ends under Nazi brutality. Isn't it ironic, then, that her diaries, that survived even her, should be destroyed by fire, just as the Jews were by the Nazis, by her own husband?