Study Guide

Prologue

1. Which literary term is being used in the subtitle *My Father Bleeds history*?

2. Can you infer what the remark Vladek makes about Artie’s situation with his friends foreshadows about the problems in their adult relationship?

Chapter 1

1. Why is the chapter called “The Sheik”?

2. What is the first thing we learn about Artie’s mother?

3. How does Vladek get along with his second wife Mala? What strange types of things do they argue over?

4. What three things does Artie say have “taken their toll” on his father?

5. How long has it been since Artie last visited his father? What do you think is responsible for their separation? How is this connected with the Prologue?

6. How does Vladek respond when Artie first asks him about his life in Poland? Why might he be reluctant to talk about those years?

7. On page twelve we get our first shot of Vladek as a young man. Why did Spiegelman choose the different shape for the panel?
8. In the panel mentioned in question # 7, we see a close up of Vladek. What is the meaning of the number tattooed on his wrist? How does this single image manage to convey information that might occupy paragraphs of text?

9. Look at the panel on the bottom left corner of page 13. Then read the definition of juxtaposition in your literary terms. What is being juxtaposed in this panel?

10. Describe Vladek’s relationship with Lucia Greenberg. How is Vladek introduced to Anja? What inference can you make about Anja based on the director’s description of her?

11. Why does Vladek say he snooped in Anja’s closet? What does he discover? What does this reveal about Vladek, along with his comment, “If she was sick, then what did I need it for”?

12. Briefly describe the Zylberberg’s economic status.

13. Why does Vladek want Artie to leave out the story about Lucia in his book? Artie argues that covering the incident with Lucia will make Vladek’s story “more human.” How is Artie’s comment ironic?

14. Artie finally promises Vladek that he will leave the story of Lucia out of his book. As we read his “promise,” what make the promise ironic?

15. What do you notice about Vladek’s dialect? What does this reveal about him?

List any words/things you don’t understand, or questions you have that we did not cover. I have a few listed for you.

Textiles – fabric
Dowry – the money or possessions that a woman brings to her husband at the marriage.
Francoise – pronounced (Fran-swa) Art’s wife
Czestochowa – pronounced (Sest-cho va) a city
Rudolph Valentino – A silent film star of the 1920’s. He was considered the biggest sex symbol of his time as well as the object of much Hollywood gossip. (Think Brad Pitt or Ryan Gosling) He starred in a famous movie titled “The Sheik”.
Sosnowiec – pronounced (Sos-no-vee-ac) a city