Study Guide

Chapter 5 & 6

1. Chapter 5 and 6 both have the word “mouse” in their titles. In fact, we see the Jewish characters behaving more and more like their animal counterpart. How do the titles reflect the common characteristics between the mice and the Jews?

2. What seems to be Vladek’s motivation in teaching Artie carpentry skills? What does Artie believe the motivation is?

3. In “Prisoner on the Hell Planet” Spiegelman depicts several ideas symbolically. What could the following items symbolize?

   - Prison uniform
   - State mental hospital (hint: look at Spiegelman’s bio)
   - Distorted faces
   - Prison cells

4. Why do you think this comic was included? What is the effect of seeing the characters suddenly represented as humans?

5. Why does Anja finally consent to send Richieu away after so forcefully rejecting Ilzecki’s offer previously? Was his death “better” than the fate of the children depicted on page 108?

6. How are Vladek and his family twice betrayed by fellow Jews in this chapter?

7. Comment on both the images (including their placement) and words in the final panel on page 115. What is significant about the Zylberbergs having been millionairs and still not being able to escape the camps?

8. How are Vladek and Haskel similar?
9. Comment on the way in which Spiegelman has drawn the crossroads Anja and Vladek come to on the bottom of page 125. What does the image suggest?

Ch. 6

10. On page 131-133 Spiegelman shows Artie commenting on the book that he is writing --- within the very book, Maus, that Artie refers to. What is the literary term for this type of narrative?

11. On page 136 Vladek says it was easier for him to pass as a non-Jewish Pole than Anja. How does Spiegelman’s portrayal of his parents walking down the street subtly portray this?

12. Find the instance of irony on page 140.

13. What does the incident of Vladek and the playing school children tell us about the way anti-Semitism is passed from generation to generation?

14. Describe the conditions Miloch, his wife, and young son are living in?

15. What convinces Vladek to trust the Poles who have offered to smuggle him and Anja into Hungary?

16. The Sign at the entrance to Auschwitz says “Arbeit Macht Frei”, which means “Work makes one free”. What is the irony to and entering Jew?

17. What does Artie call Vladek when he learns that Vladek has burned Anja’s diaries? Why?

Srodula pronounced (SHro-duoo-la) city
Zawiercie pronounced Za-weer-see
Auschwitz pronounced Osh-witz

SS - Brown shirts. Hitler’s street thugs. This group evolved into killing squads that dealt with the external (Non-German) problems.
Gestapo – the SS, the Nazi police

Judenrat – pronounced Jew-den-rat

Liquidate – when the Nazis emptied the ghettos and sent the inhabitants to work or to killing camps.

Juden raus! – Jews out!

Nitrostat – A drug used to quickly relieve chest pain associated with a heart condition

Pragmatic – practical

Dekerta – Da-Kair-ta

20 kilometers – 12.4 miles

Szopienice – pronounced Zo-pee-a- nees

Caricature – an exaggerated representation

Neurotic – panicky, overanxious

Meshuga – Yiddish slang for “crazy, senseless”

Nu- Yiddish for so” or “obviously

Oi – Yiddish for “oh!” Or “My God!”