

**Inland Norway
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LUP

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Master's Thesis

**"All forms of discrimination shall be
combated": Graphic representation of
themes in *Maus* and its benefits to
Bildung and Democracy and
Citizenship in the Norwegian upper-
secondary school**

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II. Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the graphic, multimodal representation of themes such as ethnicities, brutality, trauma and historical accuracy in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and its benefits to *Bildung* and Democracy and Citizenship in the upper-secondary classroom.

The thesis uses two methods to explore the thesis statement. Firstly, a section dedicated to previous research on critical literacy, reader response theory and historical empathy to highlight advantageous elements of the graphic novel that are relevant to the themes that are presented in *Maus*. Secondly, a close reading and literary analysis of the graphic novel *Maus* and a presentation of the core curriculum. Through the presentation of the core curriculum and the English subject curriculum, I outline the relevant elements of the core curriculum to *Maus* and use the different themes that can be attained from the core curriculum to the analysis of the graphic novel.

The analysis of the graphic novel highlights elements that are related to the all-around development of the student and exemplifies different aspects that are used in the discussion of the graphic novel and its benefits to *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship. By addressing the different themes that are presented in *Maus* such as ethnicities, brutality, trauma and historical accuracy, *Maus* offers the reader opportunities for critical reflection, and a newfound understanding of the Holocaust and contributes to the student's understanding of democracy and citizenship and the development of *Bildung*.

III. Norsk Sammendrag

Målet med denne oppgaven er å utforske den grafiske, multimodale representasjonen av temaer som etnisitet, brutalitet, traumer og historisk nøyaktighet i Art Spiegelmans *Maus* og dens fordeler for *Bildung* og demokrati og medborgerskap i den norske videregående skolen.

Studien bruker to metoder for å utforske målet med oppgaven. For det første en del dedikert til tidligere forskning på kritisk literacy, resepsjonsteori og historisk empati for å fremheve fordelaktige elementer i den grafiske romanen som er relevante for temaene som presenteres i *Maus*. Den andre delen av metoden er en nærlesing og litterær analyse av den grafiske romanen *Maus* og en presentasjon av overordnet del av læreplanen. Gjennom presentasjonen av overordnet del av læreplanen og engelsk læreplanen skisserer jeg relevante elementer i overordnet del til *Maus* og bruker de ulike temaene til analysen av den grafiske romanen.

Analysen av den grafiske romanen fremhever elementer som er relatert til elevens dannelse og eksemplifiserer ulike aspekter som brukes i diskusjonen om den grafiske romanen og dens fordeler for dannelse og demokrati og medborgerskap. Ved å ta opp de ulike temaene som presenteres i *Maus* som etnisitet, brutalitet, traumer og historisk nøyaktighet, tilbyr *Maus* leseren muligheter for kritisk refleksjon, og en ny forståelse av Holocaust og bidrar til elevens forståelse av demokrati og medborgerskap og utviklingen av *Bildung*.

Table of contents

I.Acknowledgements	1
II. Abstract.....	2
III .Norsk Sammendrag	3
1. Introduction	7
1.2 Thesis Aim and research question	9
1.2 Theoretical background.....	10
1.2.1 Graphic novels.....	10
1.2.2 Didactic benefits of graphic novels	10
1.2.3 The Holocaust in Teaching.....	11
1.3 Methodology	13
1.3.1 Previous Research	13
1.3.2 Close reading.....	14
1.4. Thesis Outline.....	14
2. Previous Research	14
2.1 Reader Response Theory.....	15
2.2 Critical Literacy using Graphic Novels.....	16
2.3 Historical Empathy.....	18
3. The curriculum	21
3.1 <i>Bildung</i>	21
3.2 <i>Bildung</i> in the Norwegian curriculum.....	22
3.3 The interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship	23
3.3.1 Democracy and Citizenship in the English Subject.....	24
3.4 The relevance of <i>Maus</i> related to <i>Bildung</i> and Democracy and Citizenship.....	25
3.4.1 Othering.....	25
3.4.2 Racism	26
3.4.3 Human rights	27
3.4.4 Historical accuracy	27
3.5 Concluding Remarks	28
4. Literary analysis of <i>Maus</i>	29
4.1 Introduction	29
4.2 Ethnicities: The Dehumanization of <i>Maus</i>	32
4.2.1 Mice.....	37
4.2.2 Pigs	40
4.2.3. Cats.....	43
4.3 Brutality.....	45

4.4 Trauma	50
4.4.1 Vladek	51
4.4.2 Anja	55
4.4.3 Art.....	58
4.5 Historical Accuracy	63
4.6 Concluding remarks	68
5. Discussion of the potential didactic benefits of <i>Maus</i> in Norwegian upper-secondary school	69
5.1 Representation: Democracy and Citizenship in <i>Maus</i>	70
5.2 Historical understanding and <i>Bildung</i>	73
5.3 Understanding the Holocaust: RRT and Critical Literacy in meeting with the graphic novel....	79
5.4 Concluding Remarks	84
6. Conclusion.....	85
6.1 Limitations and Further Research	86
7. References	86

Table of Figures¹

Figure 4.1	p.31
Figure 4.2	p.33
Figure 4.3	p.34
Figure 4.4	p.35
Figure 4.5	p.36
Figure 4.6	p.38
Figure 4.7	p.39
Figure 4.8	p.40
Figure 4.9	p.41
Figure 4.10	p.42
Figure 4.11	p.43
Figure 4.12	p.43
Figure 4.13	p.44

¹ All of the figures used in this thesis are excerpts from *Maus* which is why they have not been given a title. The figures are numbered with chapter.

Figure 4.14	p.45
Figure 4.15	p.46
Figure 4.16	p.47
Figure 4.17	p.48
Figure 4.18	p.50
Figure 4.19	p.51
Figure 4.20	p.52
Figure 4.21	p.53
Figure 4.22	p.53
Figure 4.23	p.54
Figure 4.24	p.54
Figure 4.25	p.55
Figure 4.26	p.56
Figure 4.27	p.57
Figure 4.28	p.58
Figure 4.29	p.59
Figure 4.30	p.59
Figure 4.31	p.60
Figure 4.32	p.61
Figure 4.33	p.62
Figure 4.34	p.63
Figure 4.35	p.65
Figure 4.36	p.66
Figure 4.37	p.67
Figure 4.38	p.68
Figure 5.1	p.72
Figure 5.2	p.79
Figure 5.3	p.81
Figure 5.4	p.82

1. Introduction

"But here God didn't come. We were all on our own" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 189).

Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus*, from this point, referred to as *Maus*, provides an eyewitness account of the Holocaust through the medium of the graphic novel. This thesis argues that the multimodal representation in the graphic novel is especially beneficial for addressing topics in the current core and English subject curriculum. Therefore, how does the multimodal representation of themes such as ethnicity, brutality, trauma and historical accuracy contribute to the students understanding of democracy and citizenship and further all-around development?

Maus is a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman that tells the story of Vladek, Spiegelman's father, and his experiences as a Polish Jew² before, during, and after the Second World War. The graphic novel explores the effect of the horrendous conditions Vladek suffered while at Auschwitz and how his experiences in the war affect his relationships in the present. *Maus* offers insight into the conditions of the Holocaust through the eyes of Vladek and, by doing so, illustrates not only the atrocities of the Holocaust but also glimmers of humanity and perseverance through hardships. The concentration camps that Nazi Germany used during The Second World War shocked the world after they were revealed to the public, and the event has a lasting impact today. *Maus* is a telling of the single most important historical event of the 20th century, the extermination of Jewish people by the Third Reich during the Second World War. As testimonials from concentration camps are becoming more challenging to find, since we are losing more and more eyewitness accounts to old age, it is essential to add literature like *Maus* to teaching to try and make sense of the inconceivable.

Maus's focus is on the Polish Jews during WW2, but it might also offer students insight into one of the national minorities in Norway. In Norway, the Jewish population was mainly sent to Auschwitz, where out of the (approximately) 767 persons deported to Auschwitz, only 26 returned (SSB, 1998, p. 118). The relevance and benefits for Norwegian students of investigating a failed democracy like Germany's in the 1940s can be a useful lens to examine the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship while further developing *Bildung*. "Bildung refers, rather, to the cultivation of the inner life, that is, of the human soul, the

² The norm today is to write "Jewish people", although Spiegelman uses "Jews" in *Metamaus* and *Maus*. Usage in this thesis varies depending on context.

human mind and the human person; or, to be more precise, the person's humanity." (Biesta, 2002, p. 378). By witnessing the Holocaust through the multimodal representation in *Maus* and understanding the event contributes to the students development of *Bildung*.

Therefore, this MA thesis investigates the didactic benefits of *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship to the graphic novel, *Maus*. Although the main focus of this thesis will be on the core curriculum's core values and principles, *Maus* is still relevant to the English subject curriculum as the graphic novel is literature in English. Additionally, it is the responsibility of all teachers to relate the teaching of their subject to the core curriculum, therefore, the approach made in this investigation are relevant to English teaching in upper secondary school.

The interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship within the core values and principles for upper-secondary school outlines the importance of being an active member of society and understanding the relationship between Democracy and fundamental human rights (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 10). This also entails the ability to be a critical thinker. The importance of a well-functioning democracy is highlighted in the core curriculum's values and principles as an essential part of the training the pupils will receive during their primary and secondary education in Norway. Using the graphic novel *Maus* in English teaching, the graphic novel can highlight the importance of participation in democracy and illustrate the consequence of having fundamental human rights and citizenship revoked, as well as promote *Bildung*.

Maus is a Holocaust story, and the students can be reintroduced and familiarized with a subject matter which they have previous knowledge of but not necessarily have a deep connection to. The difficulty of topics like racism, trauma, and brutality are all important themes to explore in a safe setting like a classroom. This exploration of horrendous crimes against humanity can also be beneficial to explore through *Maus's* use of anthropomorphic animals, as the painful themes are put at a distance since the characters are all represented as animals.

This is not the whole purpose of the anthropomorphic design, however. Spiegelman states, "the most shockingly relevant anti-Semitic work I found was *The Eternal Jew*, a 1940 German 'documentary' that portrayed Jews as mice – or rather rats – swarming in the sewer, with a title card that said 'Jews are rats' or 'the vermin of mankind' (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 115). This shows the attempts made by the Nazis to dehumanize the Jewish populace around the

world. As Spiegelman elaborates, "the idea of Jews as toxic, as disease carriers, as dangerous subhuman creatures, was a necessary prerequisite for killing my family" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 115). Moreover, Spiegelman, when discussing a news article written by Gopnik, states, "I think the essay referred to it as a way of 'drawing something too sacred to show' and in *Maus*, Gopnik described what I was doing as showing something to profane for depiction" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 117). Two of the elements that distinguish *Maus* from other Holocaust testimonials is the use of multimodality and the representation of different ethnicities and nationalities as animals. Through the representation of Jewish people as mice, the Nazis as cats, poles as pigs and Americans as dogs Spiegelman establishes a visual hunter-hunted metaphor that is present throughout the graphic novel. Additionally, the multimodality of the text allows for different forms of literacy as the focus on multiliteracies are required to understand the graphic novel. The benefits of visual and textual elements can contribute to the meaning-making of the text as elements of the visual can help determine the meaning of the text and vice versa. As *Maus* is a multimodal text it gains the benefit of showing the reader the events of the Holocaust through the character of Vladek. It contributes to the understanding of the Holocaust through its visual medium. This will be further investigated through chapter 4 of this thesis and will be shortly introduced in the thesis aim.

1.2 Thesis Aim and research question

By exploring the graphic, multimodal representation of themes such as racism, trauma, brutality, and historical accuracy in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, this thesis explores its benefits to *Bildung* and Democracy and Citizenship in the upper-secondary classroom. This paper aims to show how the themes in the novel can introduce students to the importance of cultural understanding and what it means to be an active member of a democratic society. One of the main ideas behind this study is to investigate *Bildung* in upper-secondary schools and how it can be promoted through literature in the English classroom by drawing on aspects from the core values and principles of the curriculum in *Maus*. To support the main thesis the study will explore four subordinate questions

- 1.) Are there any didactic benefits to using graphic novels like *Maus* in upper-secondary school?
- 2) How are Democracy and citizenship, or the lack thereof, represented in *Maus*?
- 3) How can *Maus* be beneficial to promote discussion around complex topics such as racism, trauma, death, and brutality?

4) How can *Maus* be used to promote Bildung in upper-secondary school?

1.2 Theoretical background

1.2.1 Graphic novels

The graphic novel is, as Spiegelman states, "... a comic you need a bookmark for" (Bland & Lütge, 2013, p. 69). It is in other words a longer form of comic book that combines sequences of visual and textual elements to drive the narrative. Eisner was the first to coin a definition for the comic as "the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea" (Eisner, 1985 in Rimmereide, 2021, p. 198). McCloud builds on the definition that Eisner presents as comics are "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1993, p. 9). Comics are, therefore, a combination of the visual and textual sequences that narrate and drive the story. These sequences, called panels, can be separated by blank spaces between the illustrations and text and are called the gutter. To analyze *Maus*, there is a need to examine the different elements of terminology related to the graphic novel as a genre. They include but are not limited to text bubbles, panels, gutters, visual symbols, visual metaphors, drawing styles, and the composition of the visual imagery presented to the reader. These elements will become important in the analysis of the graphic novel. The graphic novel works through the combination of both visual and textual elements in order to create meaning and convey this meaning to the reader as is illustrated by the definition presented by McCloud. The interplay of visual and textual elements of the graphic novel requires elements of both visual and textual literacy in order to understand what is being conveyed on the page.

1.2.2 Didactic benefits of graphic novels

The graphic novel offers possibilities related to multimodality and multiliteracies, as Jaffe illustrates: "Visual educational content aids memory and comprehension while making content more meaningful and accessible" (Jaffe, 2019, p. 12). Moreover, graphic novels can show the reader abstract ideas in a concrete manner, showing language use in a different manner than traditional literature and expressing changes in the narrative in a more familiar way through scenes (Jaffe, 2019, p. 12). The difference in both subject matter and how it is represented in *Maus* also offers potential benefits as students can be subjected to a vast variety within the graphic novel. This can be shown in the shape of the panels, the gutters, or through the present text bubbles. The comprehension and retention can also be shown by McCloud as "pictures are received information. We need no formal education to 'get the message'. The

message is instantaneous. Writing is perceived information. It takes time and specialized knowledge to decode the abstract symbols of language" (McCloud, 1993, p. 49). McCloud's statement can show the importance of focusing on the ability that comes with literacy, the concept of visual literacy, and the skill of reading images. Jaffe highlights the benefits of verbal and visual literacy in a study by Pantelo which suggests that teaching visual literacy could improve the students' meaning-making to their own culture and the surrounding world (Jaffe, 2019, p. 13).

1.2.3 The Holocaust in Teaching

The Holocaust is a historic event that is well known but not necessarily through the testimonies of the survivors. The extermination of the Jewish populace by the Nazis during WW2 throughout Europe is well-documented and, one of the darkest moments of history. As educators, the role of teaching this historical event and the aftermath can offer benefits in the exploration of culture and history. Furthermore, Russel states, "the study of the Holocaust assists students in developing of the ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping in any society" (Russell III, 2005, p. 93). The study of the Holocaust can grant insight into the political, religious, and historical factors that play a part in the destruction of civilization as a consequence of not speaking up against oppression (Russell III, 2005, p. 93). These elements of the Holocaust are a significant aspect of understanding its complexity and effect on the world.

Kokkola asks, "what does it mean to understand the Holocaust, its events, its peoples?" (Kokkola, 2003, p. 167) in her chapter on "Understanding the Holocaust? Literature in Education". Kokkola emphasizes the selection of literature that a teacher can use when teaching about the Holocaust. The literature must be judiciously chosen for it to have the wanted effect of acquiring historical insight, knowledge, and understanding (Kokkola, 2003, p. 167). The right kind of stories of the Holocaust can revitalize interest in a subject, that is often taught as history compared to the humanized manner the stories are given, as stories. Students can therefore gain the ability to understand the complexity of the Holocaust from the point of view of their own cultural background, which could contribute to the interpretation of the text. One of the main ideas in the text by Kokkola is the investigation of meaning-making in play with Holocaust literature. She claims that "individuals create (rather than receive) knowledge. This explains why readers differs in their interpretations of texts" (Kokkola, 2003, p. 168). Kokkola's claim illustrates the importance that previous knowledge has when

teaching the Holocaust. The meaning-making process or interpretation of the text would be built upon a previous knowledge of the Holocaust to further the students understanding of both the literature chosen and the historical significance and background. Kokkola does not claim, however, that meaning is determined by the reader alone: " meaning does exist in a given and fixed form in the novel prior to its being interpreted by the reader" (Kokkola, 2003, p. 169). However, it is essential to note that different readers of the text will have different interpretations of the text.

One of the problematic aspects of teaching the Holocaust to students is the vast array of literature that can be found, ranging from fiction to autobiographies. There are potential pitfalls in choosing literature, especially when relating to fictional works that can come across as true stories, such as *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (Gray, 2014, pp. 116–117). For students unaware that this book is a fictionalized telling of the Holocaust, it can take away from the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. Another problematic element of fictionalized telling of the Holocaust can be illustrated through Kokkola's response to critiques of reader-response theory.

When reader-response critics argued that the reader's interpretation rather than the author's intention was what determined meaning, they opened up the possibility for deniers to argue that the texts written about the Holocaust, interpreting the facts, had no basis in reality. (Kokkola, 2003, p. 168).

Kokkola's claim contributes to show the interplay between interpretation and the author intention as a significant factor. Although Kokkola is critical of the role of reader response theory it is one of the aspects needed in the development of *Bildung*, as it is developed through interplay between the individual and the material. Additionally, the interpretation of the events can also be related to Endacott and Brooks framework for historical empathy, as "historical empathy is the process of students' cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42). Therefore, reader response theory becomes an essential part of exploring the Holocaust in order to promote both historical empathy and the development of *Bildung* and through these aspects gain an understanding of the Holocaust through the interpretation of the reader and the intention of the author.

Kokkola illustrates that addressing the interplay between the reader and the text is a necessary part of the pedagogical scaffolding when learning about the Holocaust. The main idea behind

teaching the Holocaust in school is for the student to internalize the anti-fascist elements that are prevalent when reading about survivor stories. It allows the readers to mourn the monumental loss of life and see what the consequences of racist sentiments can do when standing unchecked and activate their critical thinking skills as they deal with a burdensome topic.

This can also be related to the concept of critical literacy, as mentioned above, that the student's previous knowledge can influence how the text is interpreted. Luke exemplifies some of the first approaches of critical literacy as "approaches to critical literacy a) The expansion of education beyond canonical and literary texts to include works of popular culture; b) a focus on critical analysis as *counter-hegemonic* critique that might, in turn c) encourage recognition of marginalized communities, histories and experiences" (Luke, 2012, p. 6). Although different philosophies have later influenced these approaches, provides a base for critical literacy. Therefore, it is crucial for students to be exposed to literature dealing with the Holocaust.

1.3 Methodology

This master thesis aims to investigate the potential didactic benefit of using the graphic novel *Maus* in the EFL classroom. To answer this first section of the research question, the method used will be an exploration of previous and current research conducted in the field of literature through the specific lens of graphic novels to see if there are any didactic benefits of the graphic novel *Maus* in the EFL classroom. The secondary literature will later be used to analyze *Maus*.

1.3.1 Previous Research

For this master's thesis, a section will be dedicated to previous research investigating previous research on the fields of comics and didactic theories. The different theories will be used to relate the analysis of *Maus* to the concept of *Bildung* and Democracy and citizenship. There are three primary sources in addition to *Maus* for this thesis. First, *Considering Maus* (Geis 2007) contains a series of essays discussing and analyzing the work by Spiegelman through a multitude of different aspects of the graphic novel from influences from other comics to the anthropomorphic animal characters. Second, *Metamaus* (Spiegelman 2011) is a series of recorded interviews with Spiegelman, where he revisits *Maus* in-depth to elaborate on *Maus* as a whole. And thirdly, there is the core-curriculum of the Norwegian education system.

1.3.2 Close reading

To conduct this theoretical study, the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman was chosen to explore didactic possibilities in the EFL classroom and to promote *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship in upper-secondary schools in Norway. This will entail a close reading of *Maus*, where central themes of the graphic novel will be explored, and how they can be relevant to exploring the concept of *Bildung* by examining the core-values and principles for teaching. Moreover, during the close reading of *Maus*, there will also be a presentation of the core values, English subject curriculum, and the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and citizenship. Finally, the culmination of the work will answer the question of whether graphic novels have didactic benefits and if *Maus* is suited to further *Bildung* and Democracy and citizenship in upper-secondary school.

1.4. Thesis Outline

This thesis is structured in six chapters. The first chapter of this thesis introduces the core elements of the thesis and clarifies the thesis statement. Chapter two is dedicated to the previous research relating to didactic and literary theory, which will be used in the discussion and analysis of *Maus*. Chapter three is a presentation of the curriculum and how the concepts of *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship are presented in it. Through chapter three, some of the themes that will form the analysis of *Maus* and how these themes can be drawn from the core curriculum. Chapter four of this thesis is a close reading and analysis of *Maus*. The previously mentioned themes drawn from the core curriculum will be explored through *Maus* and how this is represented in the graphic novel. Chapter five will discuss how *Maus* can be applied to upper-secondary school, by discussing the themes analyzed in chapter four, in combination with didactic theory. Chapter six of this thesis will be the conclusion, where the previous chapters will be summarized and the thesis statement resolved. Then there will be a list of the multiple references made throughout this thesis.

2. Previous Research

The following section provides an account of the most relevant aspects of reader response theory, critical literacy and historical empathy. They have been selected as the ability to reflect on the events of the Holocaust critically and to be aware of the thoughts and knowledge that the reader brings to the literature are essential aspects of understanding the themes that are presented in *Maus*, and the concept of historical empathy will broaden the students understanding of the Holocaust.

2.1 Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory is the idea that the individual reader's meeting with a text is something that needs to be explored. One of the leading thinkers of reader response theory is Wolfgang Iser, in shifting the focus from the text and its author to the text and the reader (Davis, 1989, p. 421). Iser's thoughts on the limitations of the traditional viewpoint of the text and the disregard of the readers' role of the text was the baseline for reader response theory. Iser writes in his book *The Act of Reading* that "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader" (Iser, 1991, p. 21). Iser in other words, claims that the text itself cannot become fully realized without the reader. Davis comments, "The 'blanks' in the text must be completed by the reader, based upon personal experiences but constrained by the instructions provided by the reading selection" (Davis, 1989, p. 421). This means that both the interpretation of the text and how the reader interprets it are essential in understanding how it works. Moreover, the interplay between the reader and the text are highlighted as essential in the meaning-making process as the personal experiences and interpretations are drawn into the text so the reader can understand their own experiences (Davis, 1989, p. 421). This can also be related to the selection of text to use when teaching.

In his article "Reader-response Theory and the English Curriculum", Robert Probst explores different issues regarding the choice of literature in the Danish subject curriculum and how teachers use literature to promote the joy of reading rather than strictly as an academic prospect. Probst argues that "the literary experience, then, although it may involve learning about history, biography, genre, technique and other elements into which literature is too easily subdivided, is first of all the immediate encounter between reader and a book" (Probst, 1994, p. 37). Therefore, when working with literature, the teacher must allow the students to interact with and experience the text on their terms. One of the main concepts in Probst's article is the issues with so-called correct readings of a text and how different readers of the same text will have different interpretations of the literary work. Probst writes, "meaning lies in that shared ground where the reader and text meet – it isn't resident within the text, to be extracted like a nut from its shell" (Probst, 1994, p. 38). This can therefore mean that the meaning-making process in play with text cannot just rely on the text itself but rather the previous experiences of the reader in interplay with the text. Suppose the student, for instance, has limited knowledge of the Second World War or the Holocaust. In that case, a student's interpretation of *Maus* will be completely different from that of a student with previous

knowledge of the Holocaust. In that case, the student's interpretation of the Holocaust can contribute to the students' further development of understanding the Holocaust, and the limited previous knowledge functions as a springboard into the Holocaust. Furthermore, Probst writes "... that a work may mean to a reader what it did not mean to its author. It may trigger responses, evoke memories, awaken emotions and thoughts that could not have been predicted by the writer" (Probst, 1994, p. 38). The unintended consequence of the piece of literature being able to evoke powerful thoughts and feelings are things that need to be discussed within a teaching situation, as the main goal of literature is to evoke reactions in the reader.

Probst's argument is supported by Alan Hirvela, who in his article "Reader-response theory and ELT", writes "it challenges traditional emphases on authorial intention in a text, and on the text itself, in assigning supremacy to the interpretation of texts while asserting instead that the reader plays at least an equal role in the interpretative process" (Hirvela, 1996, p. 128). Students' interpretation of a text can be used as a springboard to elevate the discussions about the text, as illustrated by Probst and Hirvela. Furthermore, Hirvela states, "the reader's interpretation of the text describes not the text itself but how the reader re-created it while reading it" (Hirvela, 1996, p. 129). Texts such as *Maus* that explore themes such as racism, brutality, and violence, will through its visual and textual element leave an impression on the reader and can be a great exercise in critical thinking as the interpretations of the text are important for the development of anti-facist sentiments.

2.2 Critical Literacy using Graphic Novels

Critical literacy is a broad term that can have many different definitions. Luke states that "the term critical literacy refers to use of technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (Luke, 2012, p. 5). It is a term that can be used to explain how a text is formed and the purpose that text serves. In addition, "Critical literacy has an explicit aim of the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures, and economies, and institutions and political systems" (Luke, 2012, p. 5).

One of the foundations of critical pedagogy, which can be seen as a precursor to critical literacy, was developed by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, in the late 1960s. In his book *Pedagogy of Hope* Freire comments on teaching as "...not a simple transmission, wrought by and large through a pure description of the concept of the object, to be memorized by students mechanically" (Freire, 1996, p. 80). Instead, Freire states, "... teaching implies that the

educands, by 'penetrating,' as it were, the teacher's discourse, appropriate the deeper meaning of the content being taught" (Freire, 1996, p. 81). In other words, Freire states that receiving instruction requires the students to engage in interpretation, as opposed to passive reception of information. Furthermore, this can be transferred to one of the terms used when dealing with critical literacy: the concept of *truth*. Therefore, working with all sorts of communication and text and seeing whether the concept of truth can be explored is a highly relevant challenge spurred on by the constant wave of information available today.

One of the ways that this can be explored is by adding literature that represents previously repressed voices, can be a gateway into the mainstream, and offers students the ability to think critically about the presented material. Luke comments on the approaches of critical literacy as "a) the expansion of education beyond canonical and literary texts to include works of popular culture; b) a focus on critical analysis as a *counter-hegemonic* critique that might, in turn, c) encourage recognition of marginalized communities' histories and experiences" (Luke, 2012, p. 5).

This thesis argues that graphic novels are particularly useful for obtaining critical awareness. By including texts like *Maus*, which include both a verbal and a visual mode, the students' are presented with a new form of reading the text, as the reader is also *shown* the conditions of the Holocaust. The view of graphic novels as beneficial tools for extensive reading has started to emerge, with literature like *Maus*, *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2000), and *Wonder* (Palacio, 2012), to name a few can give the teacher great resources to deal with themes of otherness and racism while focusing on critical literacy. Chun writes that.

Graphic novels like *Maus*, *Barefoot*, *Gen*, and *Persepolis*, about seminal events in the not-so-distant past, can mediate these historical realities with their unique visual narrative styles that allow many readers, especially adolescent ones, to imagine and interpret characters' experiences that are far removed from their own daily lives. (Chun, 2009, p. 146).

Moreover, teachers can ask concise questions relating to the illustrations that are present in order to further develop the student's critical thinking. Chun states, "An understanding of the reason why the texts are written for specific readerships and how they achieve purposes in conveying particular messages is at the heart of critical literacy" (Chun, 2009, p. 147). By exploring the importance of Holocaust texts and why they are written, the students can, therefore, potentially critically reflect on the subject matter of topics such as racism and the consequences of a failed democracy through reflection on anti-Semitism. The idea of critical

literacy in interplay with a graphic novel like *Maus* offers endless possibilities in the EFL classroom. For students to be able to critically reflect on the subject matter of the Holocaust and the Nazi regime can promote insight into the political systems of the modern day and give the students a broader understanding of today's politics. The search for truth in the text is, therefore, a necessary component of working with *Maus* and can be introduced to analyze today's society and further develop the students' previous knowledge about the Holocaust. By exploring the histories of survivors of the Holocaust, it is necessary to address the conditions they suffered and how this has shaped not only the lives of the survivors but the rest of the world. Because of the effect that the Holocaust has had, it is important to include the affective elements of the story, which is why the discussion will now do an undertaking of the concept of historical empathy.

2.3 Historical Empathy

This section will give an account of historical accuracy and illustrate its relevance in *Maus* and the development of *Bildung*. Historical empathy is "understanding how people from the past thought, felt, made decisions, acted and faced consequences within a specific historical and social context" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 41). This thesis uses Endacott's and Brooks' definition of Historical empathy as "1) an updated dual-dimensional cognitive-affective conceptualization of historical empathy that differentiates historical empathy from exclusively cognitive or affective modes of inquiry" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42). This is due to the previous research relating to historical empathy, which mainly focused on the cognitive aspects of understanding history. In contrast, the definition presented by Endacott and Brooks encompasses the use of a dual-domain construct that includes the situation and thoughts of the historical figures.

Moreover, the changes from looking at historical empathy from a purely cognitive viewpoint is further developed to include the affective perspective. Endacott and Brooks write, "engaging in sympathy with our contemporaries in the here-and-now involves an affective connection to the situation faced by another person, which is shaped by our cognitive understanding of the person's perspective and the extenuating circumstances surrounding it" (Eisenberg, 2000; Hoffman, 1984 in Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42). Furthermore, this can be highly relevant when exploring the graphic novel *Maus* as the reader gets a deeper understanding of Vladek's character as the story progresses. This relates to historical empathy as "historical empathy requires one to discern the difference between life in the present and life in a distant past while maintaining the possibility that the past perspectives hold some

validity" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42). This means that the students' previous knowledge about the Holocaust is an important factor in the development of historical empathy and that being able to see the viewpoint, through both the feelings and thoughts of the historical figure are pre-requisites for developing historical empathy. Endacott and Books write

if students examine such situations from a purely cognitive standpoint, why wouldn't they consider themselves superior to people of the past since rational people are better than irrational people? If asked only to apply logic or reason when exploring historical figures, then students are at a disadvantage when trying to understand people who were influenced by concerns such as pride, fear, love, hate, desperation or greed (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 42).

For the student to display historical empathy, the student must be able to see the historical figure and how that figure felt in a given context and the student's own perspective. Exploring the different surrounding factors around the figure and the students trying to place themselves into the situation of the historical figure, can ultimately lead to a broader understanding (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43).

Endacott and Brooks suggest three concepts that must be included when discussing historical empathy. Firstly, historical contextualization means there needs to be a clear understanding of the period being investigated. Furthermore, it means that the students must possess previous knowledge about the time's social, cultural, and political norms (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43). Secondly, perspective-taking. Endacott and Brooks write, "understanding of another prior lived experience, principles, positions, attitudes, and beliefs in order to understand how that person might have thought about the situation in question" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43). Perspective-taking becomes a crucial element of historical empathy. It involves seeing things from the point of view of the historical figure which is a feature in *Maus* through its visual narrative of an eyewitness account of the Holocaust which allows the reader to *see* and place themselves in the event. Thirdly, affective connection. This third concept is in relation to the reader's thoughts, feelings and experience in connection with the historical figures and how that figures personal experiences may affect how the figure responds to certain situations (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43). The three concepts outlined by Endacott and Brooks as the core foundation of historical empathy and the development of dual-dimensional historical empathy have positive effects on teaching. Endacott and Brooks write

The development of dual-dimensional historical empathy has the potential to promote both proximate goals (i.e. those that are related to immediate curricular objectives in the classroom) and

ultimate goals (i.e. those that deal with understandings, skills and dispositions that an individual might benefit from for a lifetime). (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 44).

The benefits of historical empathy in relation to a Holocaust story like the one *Maus* offers can give the students a broader understanding of the material as well as the opportunity for critical reflection on the source text and how we perceive the world today. It is, therefore, important when working with literature like *Maus* that the educator that is teaching the subject is aware of the different factors pertaining to historical empathy, as it can grant them an understanding of the political, social, and cultural background of the material (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 45). Furthermore, the exploration of the thoughts and emotions of the historical figure can lead to an appreciation for that figure's decisions, and this can benefit the students by showing the complexity of the situation that the figure was facing, for instance, the ethical dilemmas such as the lesser of two evils. Moreover, "The ultimate purpose in promoting such moral responses is to foster desire to prevent similar wrongs or to perpetuate similar rights in the present" (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 45).

Eisman and Patterson build upon the aspect of historical empathy and how to implement it into teaching in their chapter on *A Framework for Historical empathy and Social and Emotional Learning*. Patterson and Eisman introduce the concept of direct instruction and reflection, emphasizing the importance of perspective-taking (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, pp. 133–135). Eisman and Patterson state, "the first element of the framework includes direct instruction about the historical content, as knowledge and comprehension are antecedents to historical empathy" (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, p. 133). This inclusion of historical contextualization and the importance it plays during the investigation of historical events is some of the groundwork needed for historical accuracy. Furthermore, in the emphasis on perspective-taking, Eisman and Patterson comment, "teachers ought to push their students to empathize with individuals whose experiences, cultures and perspectives are unfamiliar to those of their students" (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, p. 133). This can be a way in which the student's personal experiences and knowledge can be challenged by exploring another person's lived experiences. Lastly, on reflection, Eisman and Patterson write, "students will reflect on their stepwise empathy experiences and its value in building self – and social awareness. This intentional reflection will support students' prosocial development, meaning-making processes, and identity development" (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, pp. 134–135). The aspects that both Endacott and Brooks bring forth, as well as Eisman and Patterson, can lead to the students raising their awareness of the historical significance and context of the time,

which could allow for the students to be better equipped to handle similar problems in the present. And can therefore be a beneficial tool in the all-round development of the student as it is presented in the curricula.

3. The curriculum

3.1 *Bildung*

The Norwegian school system is built around the German concept of *Bildung* (or in Norwegian *Dannelse*). In light of the core curriculum, *Bildung* emphasizes the importance of education that develops not only the competencies required in a school setting but also the pupil as an individual (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 3). *Bildung* is a foundation of the core values and principles. It is stated that "primary and secondary education and training is an important part of a lifelong process which has the individual's all-round development, intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility and compassion for others as its goal" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12). The basis for the understanding in the Norwegian curriculum is built upon Klafki's understanding of *Bildung*. Klafki (1986) in Biesta comments on the concept of *Bildung* that "the focus is on notions like self-determination, freedom, emancipation, autonomy, rationality, and independence" (Klafki in Biesta, 2002, p. 379), intending to create autonomous citizens. The concept of *Bildung* that forms the basis of this thesis is Klafki's thought of a third branch of *Bildung*. However, this third branch of *Bildung* is not a combination of the previous branches but represents a new idea of what *Bildung* is, as categorical *Bildung*. Lyngstad further elaborates on the term as the interplay between the individual and the material that is used and that the individual has to link with the outside world; moreover, the significance of reflection and critical thinking is required (Lyngstad, 2019, p. 16).

Furthermore, the importance of creating well-rounded individuals who can adjust and participate in society is through exploring different cultures, ideas, values, and world views and thorough investigation of history (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12). The exploration of these different aspects of *Bildung* is also represented in the interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship, as the students should possess the ability to understand connections between key human rights and Democracy, be able to use critical thinking and problem-solving to participate actively in the Norwegian Democracy (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16).

Educating students to be well-rounded participants in society is of the utmost importance, as a more comprehensive array of information is available through multiple channels like social media or the internet. Furthermore, the focus on educating the entirety of the pupil instead of just in the subject may also contribute to students connecting previous knowledge to different subjects and retaining knowledge, which can be achieved through interdisciplinary topics such as democracy and citizenship.

The function of teaching democracy and citizenship can be easily clarified as students need to know which rights they have within a society and the knowledge they need to acquire to be participating citizens in the democracy. However, Biesta points out that "while teaching definitely has a role to play, it is far from the only factor that matters in the ongoing formation of democratic citizenship" (Biesta, 2011, p. 1). Illustrated by the quote from Biesta, it is, therefore, necessary to explore how democracy and citizenship, and as *Bildungs* main objective is to create this autonomous citizen, it can show a clear correlation with the intended purpose of the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship. As this paper will conduct an in-depth exploration of Bildung and Democracy and Citizenship, it will explore how the two concepts are connected and the benefits of exploring themes related to the concepts through the graphic novel *Maus*. As this thesis has the perspective of the Norwegian Educational system the next section will explore *Bildung* as it is represented in the Norwegian core curriculum.

3.2 *Bildung* in the Norwegian curriculum

The purpose of education is presented in the core curriculum's core values and principles for primary and secondary education. One of the objectives of the Norwegian education system is "the all around development (*Bildung*) and the development of the competence of all participants in primary and secondary education and training" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 3). The importance of all around development is also detailed in section 2 of the core curriculum under *Principles for Education and All-around Development*. Furthermore, in the core curriculum, the process of acquiring new knowledge through the exploration of different cultures, worldviews, religion, and history can be potentially beneficial ways for students to become autonomous (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12). Exploring different elements of culture is fundamental to *Bildung* as the interplay between cultures are aspects of self-reflection needed to become autonomous. Furthermore, it is stated in the purpose of education that the "education and training shall

provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality, and scientific thinking" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 5).

The core curriculum underlines values that primary and secondary education should follow. These values are:

1. Human dignity
2. Identity and cultural diversity
3. Critical thinking and ethical awareness
4. The joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore
5. Respect for nature and the environmental awareness
6. Democracy and participation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, pp. 6–10)

The purpose of these core values is to develop the students' awareness of the foundations of democracy and to unite Norwegian society behind Christian and humanist heritage and traditions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 6). The thought behind the core curriculum values and principles is a continuation of the *Bildung* principle on which the Norwegian school is built. By exploring different values, such as critical thinking and ethical awareness, the student can acquire the skills necessary for all-around development. The core curriculum further explores how schools should facilitate and be an arena for students to develop these particular skills. Equality and dignity are significant themes brought up in *Maus*, which can be a springboard for exploring otherness and racism within the graphic novel. The investigation of different voices that can be presented in *Maus* such as the representation of ethnicities through the use of anthropomorphic animals or the importance of democracy and human rights in a dictatorship where these values are removed, can be related to the further promotion of *Bildung* through critical thinking. The focus on all-around development, the importance of history and democracy, and citizenship are the core inquiry of this thesis.

3.3 The interdisciplinary topic of Democracy and Citizenship

One of the most significant changes made to the new curricula of 2020 is the implementation of three different interdisciplinary topics. These are life and health skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, pp. 15–16). The interdisciplinary topics are based on the issues facing the world nationally and

globally. The purpose of the interdisciplinary subjects is to develop understanding and collaboration further to deal with issues that will arise in the future (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 15). The three interdisciplinary topics are also implemented for students to see the connection between subjects throughout primary and secondary education in the Norwegian school system. They are introduced as a measure for students to acquire the necessary skills and see the connection between action and consequences.

The interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship is implemented to show students the importance of being an active and participating citizen in a democracy: "The teaching and training shall give the pupils an understanding of the relationship between democracy and key human rights, such as freedom of speech, the right to vote, and freedom of association" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16). The necessity of teaching these aspects of democracy and citizenship can further explain aspects of society that one might take for granted in a democracy. The removal of these aspects are themes heavily present throughout *Maus* and will be explored later in the thesis. The interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship also promotes understanding of critical tenets of democracy as it explores the challenges that arise when discussing different dilemmas that may occur when dealing with a popular majority and the rights of the minority (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16). The inclusion of democracy and citizenship can illustrate a shift in the Norwegian educational system as the concept of full development of students is further solidified in the core curriculum, and the importance of democracy and citizenship is made evident.

3.3.1 Democracy and Citizenship in the English Subject

In the English subject, the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship highlights the importance of students' understanding in meeting with different cultures (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, the interdisciplinary topic highlights the importance of communication as a vital value needed to explore different cultures further. It is stated in the English curriculum;

By learning English, the pupils can experience different societies and cultures by communicating with others around the world, regardless of linguistic or cultural background. This can open for new ways to interpret the world and promote curiosity and engagement and help to prevent prejudice" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3)

As the quote illustrates, the notion of democracy and citizenship in the English subject is more heavily inclined towards the citizen aspect of the interdisciplinary subject. This can be made evident by the individual's role in the English curriculum's description of democracy

and citizenship. One of the ways this is explored is through the use of English as a communication tool. English can be a tool when encountering different texts that are written in the English language, and this exploration of different texts from different cultures can further develop the understanding that the pupil shall receive during primary and secondary education, as the exposure to texts like *Maus* can be in line with fighting prejudice.

3.4 The relevance of *Maus* related to *Bildung* and Democracy and Citizenship

One of the objectives behind teaching the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship is to illustrate to the students that how they perceive the world depends on their cultural background (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). This can allow the student to explore different cultures through the use of English and gain an understanding of cultural heritage and the history of the world. The search for cultural understanding is related to the values and principles of the Norwegian education system, as one of the ways to practice *Bildung* is through exploring the history and interplay between the outside world and the students' predisposition to the world. It is, therefore, necessary to explore themes such as othering, racism, human rights, and historical accuracy found in the graphic novel *Maus* and also be linked to the concepts of critical literacy, *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship.

3.4.1 Othering

Othering is defined in the Oxford Learners Dictionary as "the fact of viewing and treating a person or group as different from yourself and from most people" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2023). One definition of othering is "the terms 'other' or 'others' can be understood in all sorts of ways and used in various meanings and contexts, to distinguish gender, for example, or generation, or nationality and so on" (Kapuściński, 2018, p. 13). The concept of othering is, in short, a way in which people separate themselves from others and understand the world and its people. Many things can distinguish between different people, things like time, regionality, and language. The concept of others is inherently human, as people tend to look for similarities with those they decide to spend time with. The idea that someone is an other can bring in aspects of dehumanization, as they are stripped of characteristics that grant them humanity in some extreme cases like the Holocaust.

Kapuściński further builds on the idea of the other. He states, "the person living in a mass society was typified by anonymity, lack of social ties, indifference towards the other and, as a result, his cultural identity, defenselessness and susceptibility to evil, with all its tragic results; the most inhuman symbol of this phenomenon would be the Holocaust" (Kapuściński, 2018,

p. 34). As the quote illustrates, the unwillingness to meet the other and falling into a mob has had dire consequences on the world stage and are elements brought up in *Maus*. Kapuściński further illustrates the importance of showing acceptance and curiosity while experiencing different cultures through cultural exchanges and the importance of viewing the other as an equal (Kapuściński, 2018, p. 35). Exploring different cultures and meeting these cultures are core fundamentals of the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship and *Bildung* in the English curriculum and the core values of the core curriculum. The consequences of othering are elements present in *Maus* and will be further investigated in chapter 4. It is crucial to explore the concept of othering as the curriculum highlights the importance of intercultural competence and understanding to develop the individual student fully, and as the results of othering can lead to prejudice and racism, which will be further explored in the next section of the thesis.

3.4.2 Racism

Racism can be the consequence of othering. This thesis will employ the definition of racism presented by Brookfield as "a system of beliefs and practices that are embedded in the institutions we move through as individuals and routinized in the conventions of everyday life" (Brookfield, 2019, p. 2). Furthermore, through these systems, certain racial groups can legitimize their position as superior to other groups (Brookfield, 2019, p. 2). The main goal and function of racism is therefore solidified as trying to maintain the power structure that is in place while keeping another group down. This can be related to critical literacy as recognizing these power dynamics and how they function. The main reason behind teaching students about racism is for them to understand how it occurs in society and how the students can combat racist sentiments and internalize anti-racism. Racism is, however, not static: "when racism is threatened it responds with a combination of overt force [...] and covert manipulation [...]" (Brookfield, 2019, p. 3). In other words, racism can be altered and lose focus from mainstream media while maintaining its influence through different forums, thus appearing to become less frequent while still remaining in the societal landscape (Brookfield, 2019, p. 3). This can manifest as negative stereotypes and prejudice placed upon a particular group. Which can be challenged with Luke's definition of critical literacy as an aspect of critical literacy is to reveal these prejudices and challenge the and transform the present ideology (Luke, 2012, p. 5). It can make students aware that racism is not a trait one is born with. Racism must be learned through interaction with the stereotypes and prejudices placed on different groups (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, pp. 3–4). The significance of racism and knowing how the systematic construction of stereotypes and prejudice form the basis for its

growth are themes present in *Maus*. The systematic oppression of a minority as is presented in *Maus*, can explain issues of oppression that are present in modern society, and the teaching recognition of these patterns of racism can further build upon the democratic foundation in society.

3.4.3 Human rights

Maus repeatedly brings up the concepts of human rights and citizenship. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified in 1948 due to the Second World War. It establishes each person's rights regardless of race, nationality, and cultural affinity. In the wake of the Second World War, texts like *Maus* deal with the subject matter that directly influenced the making of said rights by exploring the reason for the creation of universal human rights. The themes of losing fundamental human rights and citizenship can increase student awareness of said rights and citizenship. Lenz offers some thought on the role of citizenship in the democratic process, as citizenship is not just a factor of where one is from but includes aspects of participation and formal rights as a citizen (Lenz, 2020, p. 48). Furthermore, the students should be made aware of the difficulty of citizenship when it has to do with minorities who do not match up with the majority of the population within society. When discussing human rights through texts like *Maus*, the student can be shown the limitations of citizenship when there are differences between the majority and minority of society in relation to ethnicity and religious affiliation. These differences between majority and minority within the society can lead to separation and turn minorities into second-rate citizens. This can lead to marginalization, discrimination, and persecution (Lenz, 2020, p. 49). It, therefore, becomes vital that teachers facilitate understanding of fundamental human rights so that the student can become an active participant and see the value of citizenship.

3.4.4 Historical accuracy

The importance of historical accuracy is one of the fundamental themes throughout this thesis. The subject matter of the Holocaust has such a vital function in teaching Europe's history. It has direct connotations to Norwegian society and international relations to this day. Ideas related to knowledge of history and culture and the exploration of Jewish culture through *Maus* can be beneficial to explore, for instance, Judaism which will be explored further in Chapter 5. Historical accuracy is brought up specifically in *Maus* and is a key tenet of historical empathy. When the first parts of Spiegelman's graphic novel gained critical acclaim after their release, Spiegelman offers thoughts in subsequent volumes on how he can represent the Holocaust and his father accurately (Spiegelman, 2003, p.133). The cultural and

historical impact that the Holocaust has had on the world is a subject matter which has to be taught to student's for them to be completely aware of the history of Europe and how it has been shaped into society today.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

By looking at themes related to the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship as well as *Bildung*, it is made evident that for the students' all-around development in upper secondary school that there is a need to explore complex subject matters like racism, othering, human rights, and the historical accuracy that Spiegelman includes to represent the Holocaust. The connections between the core curriculum and *Maus* through the themes mentioned above, will give the basis for the analysis of ethnicity, brutality, trauma and historical accuracy. This is because of how Spiegelman illustrates racism and othering through ethnicity, human rights and the removal of said rights through brutality and historical accuracy through trauma and fleeting memories. This illustrates different elements that are the foundation of democracy and citizenship and *Blidung*.

The curriculum highlights the importance of cultural diversity and critical thinking as primary objectives of forming *Bildung*. It is shown through chapter 3 how the theory presented in chapter 2 relates to the core curriculum. Through the core-values and principles, different themes that relate to the development of *Bildung*, such a racism, othering, and the importance of historical knowledge challenge the students understanding of the world. Thus the significance of cultural diversity, human rights, democracy and citizenship are essential in the development of *Bildung*. The thesis will now analyze the themes found in the core-curriculum within *Maus* as a tool to develop *Bildung* and democracy, and citizenship further.

4. Literary analysis of Maus

4.1 Introduction

This chapter studies how *Maus* addresses the general issues taken up in chapter three. More specifically, the following readings will study the graphic novel's representations of ethnicity, brutality, trauma, and attitudes toward historical accuracy. The way the graphic novel uses the combination of text and visual elements to drive the narrative leaves the reader with a lasting impression that cannot be attained through textual literature, as the interpretation of the graphic novel is separated between the text and illustrations and how they combine in meaning-making. The graphic novel *Maus* comprises two volumes: Volume one, *Survivor's Tale*, and volume two, *And Here my Troubles Began*. *Maus* follows Vladek through pre-war Poland to the outbreak of the Second World War before he is eventually placed in Auschwitz, in addition to illustrating the present day at the time of writing. What differentiates the graphic novel *Maus* from other Holocaust testimonies is the use of anthropomorphic animals representing ethnicities, Jewish people as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, and Americans as dogs. The story's narration is first introduced as interviews between Vladek and Art in the present, and it is through this dimension, the narration of the story is introduced to the reader. Art functions as the frame narrator of the story, and Vladek's experiences are told through Art. This is through the visual reconstruction of Auschwitz, Vladek's home in Poland, and his family, and the interview between Art and Vladek. Through this narrative and the visual reconstruction of history, the students are *shown* Auschwitz and Poland, and the themes that are otherwise left to the imagination to construct are visually represented and can be dissected in-depth through the text and illustrations.

The narration aspect also changes from Vladek's stories from the start of the Second World War to the present in conversations between Art and his father. The narrative explores the connection between the past and present, and Spiegelman's writing process is shown to the reader as he battles with morality and ethical considerations while writing the graphic novel.

Spiegelman states, "visibly juxtaposing pasts and presents allowed there to be a continual kind of flashing back and forth that wouldn't feel like a total flashback to an erzats reconstruction of the past" (Spiegelman, 2011, p.208). Furthermore, Spiegelman separates the difference in the storytelling by rigid borders around panels used to depict the past. At the same time, the present is usually unrestricted by those panel borders, as shown in figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1.(Spiegelman, 2003, p. 16).

This clear separation between the past and present also shows the reader that the graphic novel is a meta-comic as a reminder to the reader that the story is being told through the interview format between Art and Vladek. The inclusion of borders so that the past and present do not bleed over into one another is also an aspect of the graphic novel, which is only broken once. This will be explored further in the discussion. The differences between the past and present that are depicted with or without borders in the graphic novel can be attributed to the notion of freedom that is present in the graphic novel.

The past is presented as a strict dictatorship and therefore has strict borders, whereas, at present, they live in freedom. The panels can also be symbolic: the stories from the Holocaust are a part of history and cannot be changed. Furthermore, restricting the past into these borders also constricts the information being shared in the past to singular frames. It can therefore be a nod to the restriction of information during this time period. Because of these strict borders, it is clear to the reader that there is a separation of past and present, while the

story moves from pre-war Poland to Auschwitz through the two previously mentioned volumes of the graphic novel.

Throughout the first volume of the graphic novel, the reader is familiarized with Vladek and his previous life as a textile factory owner before the outbreak of the Second World War. Through this first volume of the graphic novel, the rumors of concentration camps within the German Reich start to flourish, and Vladek and Anja live under constant fear of detection after their near escape from the Nazis. The first volume of the graphic novel illustrates the conditions that are suffered when citizenship and basic human rights have been removed and how othering is used to separate and suppress a minority group in society. These are some of the themes that are analyzed later in section 4.2. *And here my Troubles Began* is the exploration of Vladek's and Anja's experiences in Auschwitz with a focus on Vladek. As Anja committed suicide before Spiegelman started *Maus*, her stories are combined with Vladek's testimony or, in Vladek's words, "I can tell you... she went through the same what me: Terrible!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 160). *And here my Troubles Began* offers insight into Vladek's ingenuity and luck through the trials that he overcame during his time in Auschwitz. This is where the reader is exposed to the horrific treatment of Jewish people in the concentration camp and what living conditions in the camp were like. The second volume of *Maus* offers insight into themes such as othering, racism, brutality, and violence while also including humor to illustrate the absurdity of the Holocaust.

The structure of the analysis will be comprised of four different sections. Section 4.2 explores ethnicities by analyzing the representation of the different ethnicities as animals and what function and purpose it serves. The representation of different ethnicities can illustrate how othering, racism, anti-Semitism, and dehumanization function in the graphic novel. Section 4.3 is dedicated to the theme of violence, which is a theme that is heavily present throughout *Maus*. In section 4.4, the theme of trauma will be explored by analyzing each of the three main characters of *Maus* Vladek, Anja, and Art. Exploring trauma through the main characters will show how the different traumatic experiences shared between Anja and Vladek's Holocaust experiences and how they have lingering effects in the present, especially on mental states. The final theme analyzed in chapter four will be 4.5 historical accuracy of the text. As mentioned above in section 1.2.3 the significance of using text when dealing with subject matters such as the Holocaust, it is important that the text is historically accurate for the development of historical empathy. Spiegelman places the theme of historical accuracy and unreliable narrator in terms of fleeting memory in the searchlight as the graphic novel

progresses. These themes have been chosen due to their relevance in the core curriculum and their connection. Othering and racism legitimized the brutality shown toward the Jewish population in the Second World War. The brutality of the conditions is directly related to trauma and mental health, and these elements can affect reliability in the form of fleeting memories. The themes brought up from both volumes will be analyzed through an adapted version of Endacott and Brooks framework on historical empathy in chapter 5. Through analyzing these themes, the discussion will explore how the previous research of critical literacy, *Bildung*, reader-response theory, historical empathy, Democracy, and citizenship can be developed through *Maus*.

4.2 Ethnicities: The Dehumanization of *Maus*

"The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human. - Adolf Hitler" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 10).

Anti-Semitism is one of the fundamental themes that are present in *Maus*. The story is a telling of the Holocaust and the treatment of the prisoners of Auschwitz. The underlying notion of race, othering, and discrimination are important aspects of the story. Antisemitism and the anthropomorphic animals' representation illustrate racial identity within *Maus* and visually functions as a distinguisher between the different nationalities and ethnicities presented to the reader. By depicting the Nazis as cats and Jews as mice, the metaphor of the hunter and the hunted is established. The mice metaphor within *Maus* is an allusion to the Nazi propaganda spread by the Third Reich throughout the Second World War, and serves as a constant reminder of racial identity. As the representation of ethnicities and nationalities in *Maus* is directly affected by the anti-Semitism of the historical context of the graphic novel, the introduction of representation in *Maus* will explore how anti-Semitism and racism contribute to the portrayal in the graphic novel.

Although there are many different examples of anti-Semitism in the graphic novel, this section of the thesis will focus on showing specific examples in which anti-Semitism is shown



to the reader. One example from the early onset of the story are the rumors of the Nazis advances in Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Figure 4.2 shows Vladek and Anja discussing the political climate in Germany in 1938 and the rumors that were starting to spread about the conditions Jews in Germany were experiencing. The panels of figure 4.2 are an important aspect of how anti-Semitism is portrayed in the graphic novel, as the rumors of the treatment of Jews and the fear

inspired in Vladek and Anja foreshadow what is to come, as do the stories from the people sharing the compartment with them. Another element included in figure 4.2 is the backdrop of the swastika and how it is initially partially hidden when dealing with the lesser extremes of the treatment of the Jews, to being fully exposed in panels three, four, and five, as the treatment becomes more extreme. The swastika also covers the entire background of panels two, three, four, and five, with darkness covering the parts not illuminated by the white, can also be symbolic that Germany has fallen to the Nazis and that they are everywhere. The stories shared between Anja and Vladek in the train compartment set the tone for the graphic novel as it is made evident to the reader that the violence that the Jewish people suffered will be shown to the reader.

Furthermore, the exploration of anti-Semitism is a theme prevalent throughout the graphic novel, as seen in figure 4.3.



Figure 4.3. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 82)

Figure 4.3 shows the German occupation of Poland, and illustrates aspects of living in the ghettos that were made for the Jewish population. The most striking inclusion in figure 4.3 is the third panel, where the borders of the panel are in the shape of the Star of David, as the scenes play out of the nazis rounding up Jews for deportation to the concentration camps. What differentiates the third panel is that Vladek is illustrated with the star of David on his jacket and enclosed by it. With the historical context and previous knowledge that the Jewish people in occupied Poland were

required to identify themselves with the star of David, the reader is offered a deeper understanding of the fear felt by Vladek during this encounter. Furthermore, the angel in which the frame is shown is from above, like a faraway spotlight surrounding Vladek, exposing him as a Jew as he is walking.

Figure 4.2, in comparison to figure 4.3, show the reader one of the reoccurring motifs within the graphic novel. The illustration of the swastika and the circular motifs that are present in the graphic novel, for instance, on pages 14, 15, and 68 (Spiegelman, 2003). Spiegelman comments, “circular motifs do have a privileged role in the book, if nothing else, because it’s integral to the swastika logo-design” (Spiegelman, 2011, pp. 182-183). The quote illustrates the juxtaposition of Vladek in the Star of David panel to the swastika as the Star of David becomes a variation of the circular motif. As the shot is removed from Vladek, the inclusion of the small line under his eye illustrates the fear and exposure that Vladek is under and that he is in the spotlight.



Figure 4.4. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 151).

However, although there is powerful visual imagery to depict anti-Semitism and othering within *Maus*, one of the ways that racism is distinguished in the graphic novel is through the vocabulary used by the different characters in the story to reference the Jewish population. Evidence of this can be found in figure 4.3 in panel three or as can be seen in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 shows a disguised Vlodek meeting with Polish children who

are playing before he is accused of being a Jew. The importance of this meeting between Vlodek and the Polish people is a highly relevant commentary on the social landscape in Poland at the time. This is illustrated by the fourth panel, which breaks from the past telling the present, as Vlodek says, “the mothers always told so: ‘be careful! A Jew will catch you to a bag and eat you!’... so they taught to their children” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 151). The inclusion of young children associating Jews with monstrous beings and the lack of understanding present in the Jewish populace are elements of the embedded anti-Semitism that is present in society and the inclusion of this as a commentary of the time.

Anti-Semitism and racism are shown as a constant fear and threat throughout the graphic novel, but Spiegelman also comments on racism in the present, as shown in figure 4.5.



Figure 4.5. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 259)

Figure 4.5 shows Vlodek's anger towards Francois after she decides to help a hitchhiker who happens to be black. Interestingly, this is the first part of the graphic novel where Vlodek is seen using his native language of Polish, if only to show his disapproval of Francois' kindness towards a stranger. The first two panels of figure 4.5 are hugely influential in exploring racism within *Maus*, as it comments on the way racism is still a part of society in the present. It is also one way Spiegelman comments on the absurdity of Vlodek, who is often characterized by Art as "in some ways he's just like the racist caricature of the miserly old Jew" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 133). The idea that a survivor who has been mistreated to the extent that Vlodek has through the Polish ghettos, Auschwitz, and the death marches can keep racist sentiments is challenged by Francois as "that's outrageous! How can you of all people, be such a racist! You talk about blacks the way nazis talked about the Jews!" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 259). The quote illustrates the absurdity of the racist sentiments that Vlodek has and his inability to see the similarity of how Jewish people were subjugated to the same form of generalization which made the Holocaust possible. The conscious decision to keep this encounter by Spiegelman in *Maus* adds a layer of complexity to the character of Vlodek. The racism present within *Maus*, especially concerning the Jews in the graphic novel, are aspects that are present in history as one of the ways that the nazis legitimized and made it acceptable to use brutality and violence against the Jewish population. The antisemitism and racism that function as underlying themes throughout *Maus* contribute to the dehumanizing of the characters and legitimize the use of brutality against the Jewish population.

4.2.1 Mice

One of the ways that *Maus* distinguishes itself from other graphic novels is through Spiegelman's use of anthropomorphic animals to represent different ethnicities. Spiegelman comments on the mice as Jews illustrations as "the mice have the most abstracted and the least physiologically human representation" (Spiegelman, 2011, p.128). This representation can be related to McCloud's thoughts on universality as the reader can place themselves in the situation of the character. One of the ways in which Spiegelman plays with the metaphor he has created within the graphic novel can be shown through the various masks that Vladek, Art, and Anja use throughout the graphic novel.



Figure 4.6 shows the first time that a different animal mask is used in the graphic novel and the significance of hiding ethnicities in the story. The importance behind the mask metaphor is made clear by Vladek's interaction with the conductor can illustrate the peril that Vladek was under while trying to reunite with his family. One of the important aspects of the page presented above is the ingenuity that helps

Vladek survive during the Second World War. The way Spiegelman plays with ethnicities is also crucial for exploring othering throughout the graphic novel. How Vladek tricks the conductor on the train is due to his ability to disguise himself by using the pig mask. Spiegelman challenges the way Vladek can pass as Polish through his depiction of Anja during her and Vladek's escape from the nazis, as shown in figure 4.7.



Figure 4.7. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 138)

The most intriguing aspect of this panel is the reader's viewpoint of Anja and Vlodek. The perspective is taken further away from the actual scene that is playing out so that the reader can be made aware of the ethnic traits that distinguish the characters of Anja and Vlodek by showing Anja's tail. The fact that Anja's tail is visible is also an excellent visual device so that the reader can understand that people can have more defined ethnic traits that, in the context of the story, can mean the difference between life and death, or as Vlodek says "you could see more easy she was Jewish. I was afraid for her" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 138).

Spiegelman's use of the mice metaphor is to draw similarities between the Nazi propaganda of Jewish people, and the graphic novel does this to highlight the treatment and the function of othering. People can associate mice as pests or vermin, but the use of the animal metaphor in *Maus* could, in contrast, be said to humanize the characters. Humanization can be seen in figure 4.7 as the combination of visual and textual modes combine to determine meaning. Figure 4.7 reminds the reader that the graphic novel's characters are human, although they are portrayed as mice. By including Anja's tail, Spiegelman shows the reader that Anja has more ethnic traits that could identify her as a Jewish person than Vlodek. By including the tail, Spiegelman offers the reader a more severe and exaggerated viewpoint of those ethnic traits.

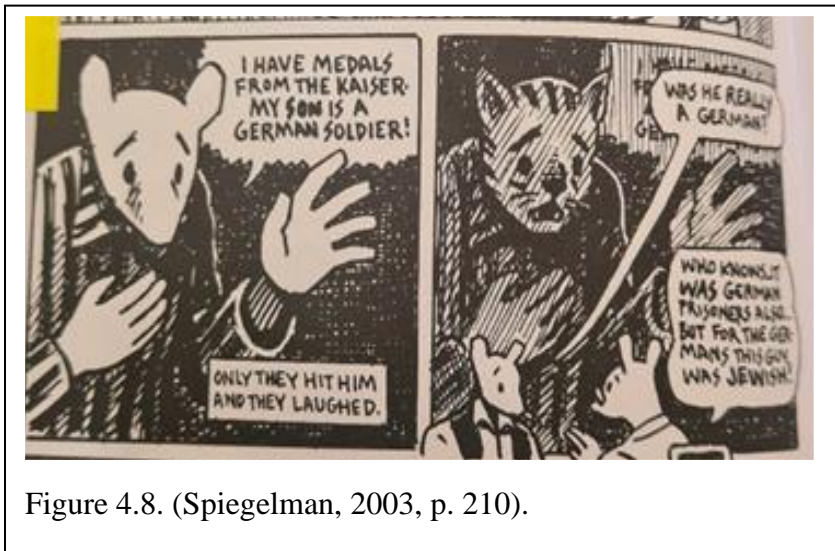


Figure 4.8. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 210).

As the quote by Adolf Hitler in the introduction of this chapter states, Spiegelman does not only use the mouse portrayal to depict the Jewish population, as can be seen in figure 4.8.

The two panels on page 210 illustrate the main

idea of the dehumanization of *Maus*. The complementation of the event that Vladek offers about the German or non-German soldier illustrates the Hitler quote in the foreground of the graphic novel. That there is uncertainty if the character is a Jew or not does not necessarily hold any significance in the eyes of the Nazis. The focus on ethnicity that has been prevalent and used as an identity marker is broken through the two panels and contributes to illustrating the point of the Nazi's dehumanization project. Although the mice characterization is given to the Jews in the graphic novel, it is also given to everyone that was deemed undesirable as Vladek expresses it as "who knows. It was German prisoners also... but for the Germans this guy was Jewish" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 210). The dehumanizing aspects, such as this example from page 210, reinstate the human elements of the character. The fact that a supposed German soldier could be considered undesirable in a similar fashion as the Jews in the graphic novel highlight some of the absurdity of the Holocaust, as the individuals are not being identified as pigs and cats but rather as mice, which both destroys but also reaffirms the symbolism of the mice as vermin or a subrace.

This can therefore be related to Endacott and Brooks notion of perspective-taking. Through examples such as figure 4.8 the reader is presented with the historical figures perspective. Moreover, it is shown that the basic ethnic traits that are prevalent are not the critical factor in determining whether the person belongs to a 'lesser worth' ethnicity, as ethnicity is only the excuse used to commit the atrocities of the Holocaust. Lastly, one of the ways *Maus* breaks with the established portrayals of ethnicity is through Art's reflection on *Maus* after *A Survival Tale* is published and finds both commercial and critical acclaim as seen in figure 4.9.

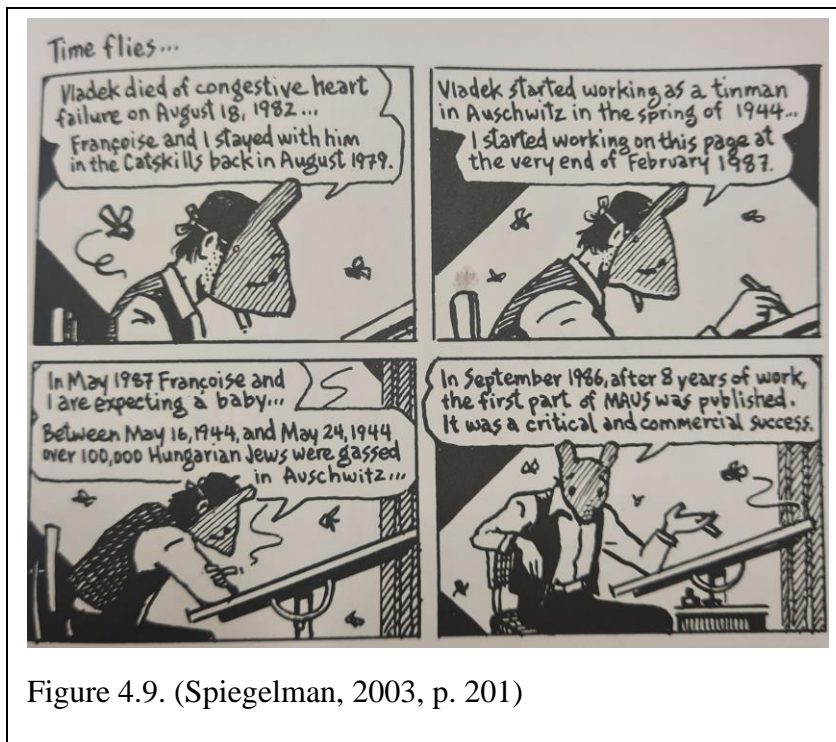


Figure 4.9. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 201)

The critical reflection surrounding the commercial and critical acclaim of the graphic novel further strengthens the aspects of perspective-taking in the graphic novel. The breaking of the metaphor Spiegelman portrays in the panels on page 201 can illustrate Art's feelings about his cultural and ethnical heritage and the fact that

human traits are carried into *Maus*. As this section deals with the emotional toll that creating *Maus* has had on Art, it is also in the light of this self-reflection that the perspective-taking is made most evident. Due to the nature of the panel and the clear illustration of Art's human characteristics, it can show that he is hiding behind the mouse mask and removing himself from the events of the story. This stripping down of the iconic characterization of Jews in the graphic novel reminds the reader that the mice in the story are human characters. Thus, it reinstates the aspect of humanity that is lost through the use of anthropomorphic animals.

4.2.2 Pigs

The Poles in the story are represented as pigs. By looking at the hunter-hunted metaphor in *Maus*, the distinctions are clear. Cats hunt mice, mice hide, and then dogs hunt cats, which makes the pigs stand out compared to the rest of the animal characters as they do not fit into the food chain. Spiegelman comments on his use of pigs to represent poles in *Metamaus*, stating "if I think of Hitler as my collaborator, in his plan for the Thousand Year Reich, the Slavic races, including Poles, were not meant to be exterminated like the Jews, but rather worked to death" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 121). Furthermore, Spiegelman puts the representations of Jews and Poles in context to life on a farm. Pigs are usually bred for food or for the function of meat production. This entails keeping them fed and raised before eventually slaughtering them. Mice, on the other hand, are vermin. The sympathy given to pigs compared to the brutality shown towards mice would uphold the metaphor set in place by Spiegelman without taking away the suffering shown to the Poles during WW2.

However, Spiegelman comments on how the representation has in later years caused both outrage and controversy in Poland, as is seen by the demonstration over *Maus* when it was initially published as a comic in the newspaper *Gazeta* after its translation into Polish (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 122). Pigs are often associated with filth, tactlessness, or excessiveness; if used as an insult, they can also be associated with gluttony. The associations with pigs, although Spiegelman might not have intended this, remain to the Poles of the story. This is, however, counteracted by multiple Poles in the story as they took significant risks in harboring both Anja and Vladek during the purge of the ghettos, as can be seen in figure 4.10, and the assistance offered to Vladek and Anja in Auschwitz.

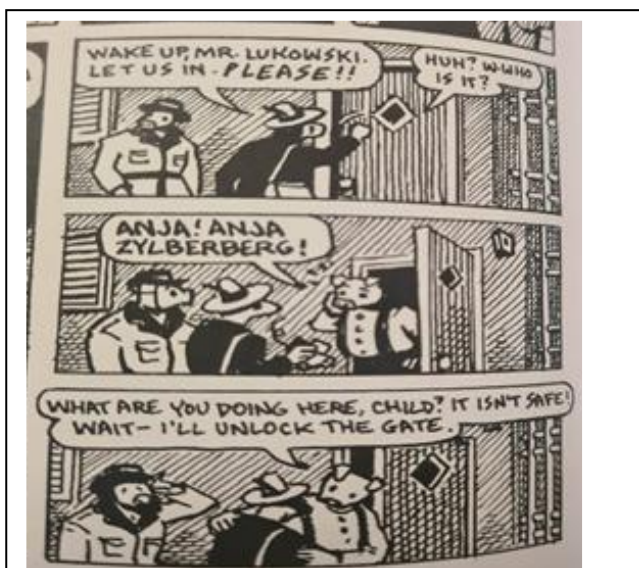


Figure 4.10. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 138)

Therefore, the function of representing Poles as pigs can be hinted towards a similar fate as the mice represented for the Jews. However, most of the pigs in the story are either victims, perpetrators of brutality, or bystanders within the story. One of the ways this is represented in the graphic novel can be seen in figure 4.11.

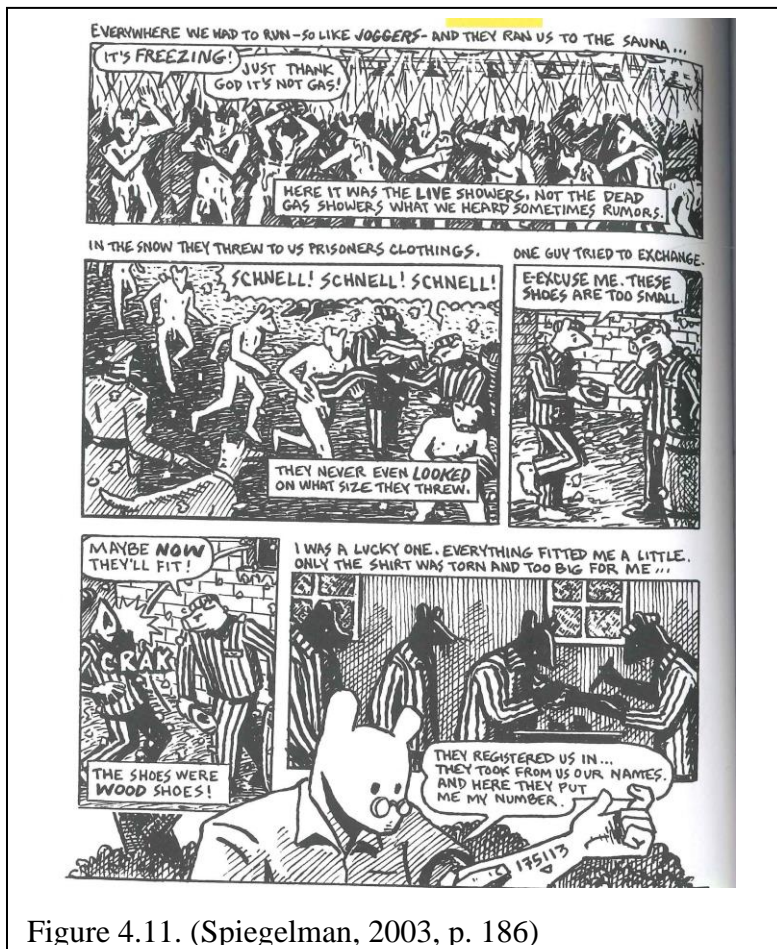


Figure 4.11. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 186)

Figure 4.11 shows Vladek's first encounters when arriving in Auschwitz and illustrates how the Polish prisoners of war were treated in comparison to the Jewish prisoner. Panels four and three of figure 4.11 show the Polish prisoner as a kapo, which had the function of working as a supervisor in Auschwitz (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 190). The position of kapo grants the prisoner a higher value in Auschwitz and allows for that individual to deal out

punishment, as can be seen in panel four of figure 4.11. However, to illustrate further that the Poles were not a part of the German plan, as can be illustrated in figure 4.12.



Figure 4.12. (Spiegelman, 2003, p.

The representation of the Polish population as pigs in *Maus* shows the different manners in which the population had to act to be able to survive. Furthermore, by showing the reader characters such as the kapos and how they contributed to the cruel treatment of the Jewish population that was sent to Auschwitz as a part of the Final Solution, the reader is offered a deeper understanding of the historical context of the time. This can be beneficial for the reader to

understand the conditions of the Holocaust and the participants that made it possible.

4.2.3. Cats

The Nazi representation as cats in Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* further drives the point of the hunter-hunted metaphor. Spiegelman comments on the inspiration for the cat representation as being drawn from his childhood and the fame of Tom and Jerry as he writes, "Tom and Jerry are not, on any level, equal. Tom looms large and even if Jerry is a smart, crafty little creature, he only comes up to the top of Tom's paws" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 118). Furthermore, Spiegelman comments on the different aspects of biological advantage present in nature when dealing with the metaphor of cats and mice in *Maus* and the difficulty of accurate representation. Spiegelman states, "I liked working with a metaphor that didn't work all that well though I certainly didn't want my metaphor to work as an endorsement of Nazi ideology, or as an implicit plea for sympathy, like, 'aw lookit the cute defenseless little mouse'" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 118). By implementing the metaphor of the cat and mouse, hunter-hunted symbolism, the connotation of cats and mice is further solidified by the cats' brutality and cunning in hunting mice. Furthermore, Spiegelman comments on the drawing style of the cats as "even in the way that they're drawn, the cats have the most human of the face" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 128). One example of this can be seen in figure 4.13.

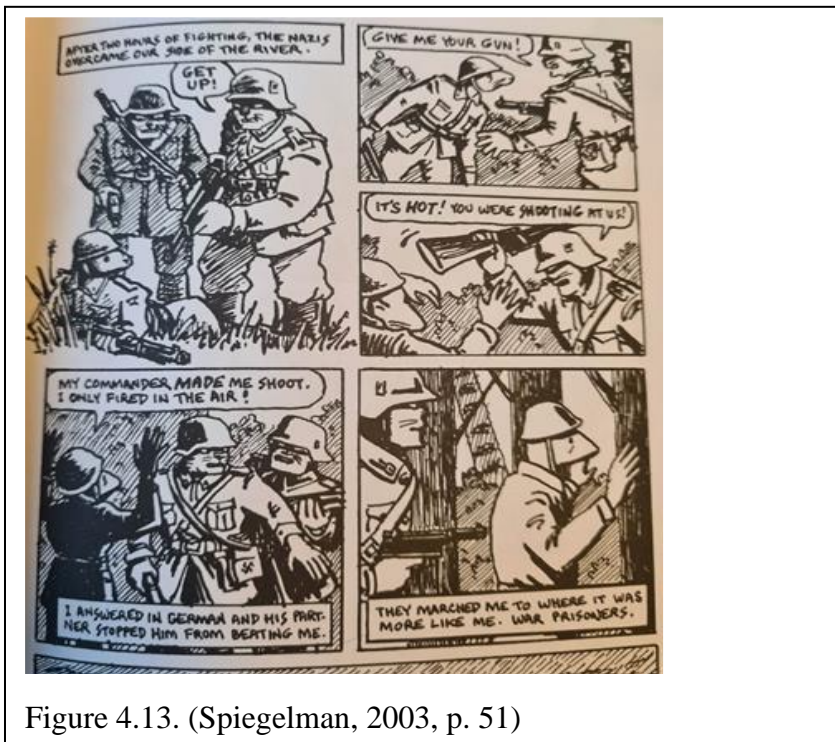


Figure 4.13. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 51)

Figure 4.13 shows Vladek's capture during the German invasion of Poland and his subsequent surrender. One of the interesting aspects of this figure is related to Spiegelman's thoughts on the difference in stature in comparison to Tom and Jerry, as is illustrated in panel one of figure 4.13.

Furthermore, the cat representation is that representation grants anonymity and universality to the Nazis in *Maus*. The illustration of the Nazi soldier in figure 4.13 with little to no significant detailing of the face and the fact that they are illustrated in uniform contributes to the aspect of anonymity and universality. Evidence of the Nazis as distinctly human but faceless, uniformed cats is ordinary throughout *Maus*, as shown in figure 4.14.

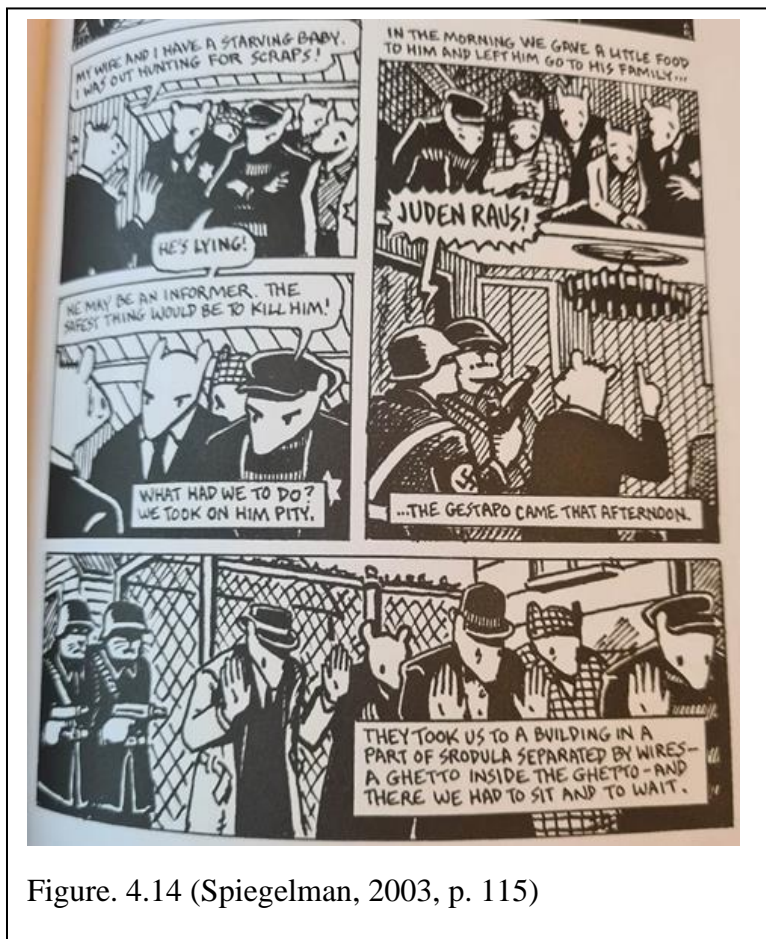


Figure. 4.14 (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 115)

Figure 4.14 illustrates the capture of Anja and Vladek during the seizing of Jews and forced relocation to the Polish ghettos. Figure 4.14 also further illustrates the lack of detail given to the illustration of the Nazis. By building on the foundation that is outlined by McCloud when discussing universality as “when you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face – you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon – you see yourself.”(McCloud, 1993,

p. 36). The point can be made that the lack of details present through the illustrations of the Nazis can signify that anyone could be a Nazi.

Although *Maus* includes other animal variations to show ethnicities, as the Americans of the story are represented as dogs, to further drive the hunter-hunted metaphor and the inclusion of the French as frogs, this thesis will not do more than mention them as they are not as pivotal to the story. The representation of the different ethnicities within *Maus* presents the theme of othering in a manner that the reader easily identifies as it is a more accessible manner of viewing different ethnicities. One of the more explicit examples of this can be seen in figure 4.8, which depicts the German prisoner begging for his life in Auschwitz. Examples like the

ones presented previously offer the reader the ability to distance oneself from the actual trauma through the dehumanization of the characters. Furthermore, the ability to explore the text through the lens of universality is shown to the reader. It is also through the clear distinctions between ethnicities that allow the reader to see how anti-Semitism and prejudice were embedded into society during the Second World War and how these different forms of othering and dehumanization lay the groundwork for the brutality that would affect the Jewish population.

4.3 Brutality

The theme of brutality is an underlying element that is present throughout *Maus*. The theme is explored through Vladek's testimony, and the brutality of the Holocaust is pushed to the forefront of the graphic novel. The brutality perpetrated by the Nazi regime against the Jewish populace offers the historical context of the text. The inclusion of the theme serves the purpose of not lessening the experiences that Vladek suffered. Instead, it relays Vladek and his family's actual treatment under the Nazi regime in Poland. The brutality and often extreme violence that the Germans inflicted upon the civilian population and the later treatment of



Figure 4.15. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 195)

prisoners in the concentration camps are relevant to human rights and the removal of citizenship, as these are necessary prerequisites for the atrocities. One aspect of brutality in *Maus* is shown through the character of Mandelbaum, as shown in figure 4.15.

The death of Mandelbaum, shown in figure 4.15, is a powerful symbol in relation to brutality. The notion that Vladek does not know what happened to his friend reinforces the gravity of the conditions in Auschwitz. The not knowing of

Mandelbaum's death illustrates the uncertainty that the victims of the Holocaust lived with throughout their imprisonment, and it adds to the brutality of the conditions, as Vladek contemplates that "you see how they did?" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 195) bringing in the added effect of demoralization. The misgivings of Mandelbaum's death enhance the uncertainty that is an underlying theme in *Maus* as it can be related to who can be trusted and whether early rumors of Auschwitz are reliable. The manner in which Vladek tells the story of Mandelbaum's death through the realistic portrayal of how Mandelbaum could have died leaves a lasting impression on the reader. Mandelbaum's death illustrates to the reader the amount of luck or lack thereof that was the critical factor in surviving the Holocaust and the disappearance of Mandelbaum, in contrast to Vladek's firm belief of his death expands on the fear that is present in the graphic novel.



Figure 4.16. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 110)

Another example of brutality can be seen in figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16 shows the reader the purge of the Srodula ghetto to Auschwitz and highlights the effect that the Nazi occupation had on the children of the Holocaust.

What is particularly gruesome is the two final panels of figure 4.16 and the execution of children, or as Vladek says, "most they took were kids- some only 2 or 3 years" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 110). Including the purge of the ghettos in *Maus* is important to the discussion of historical accuracy and representation. The depiction

of the horrendous act of murdering children in a brutal fashion is shown in the final two panels of figure 4.16. Furthermore, figure 4.16, through panels two and three, can illustrate

the helplessness that accompanied the brutality shown by the Germans. This can be explored through the representation of the Jews being surrounded by barbed wire, physically incapable of intervening.

An important element highlighted in figure 4.16 is how it is illustrated with more darkness within the panels, as can be illustrated by panels seven, eight, and nine. The stark use of black in the panels shows the reader the harsh living conditions, as the darkness symbolizes the lack of hope or joy. Spiegelman's use of darkness in showing brutality and death can be further illustrated by figure 4.17.



Figure 4.17. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 232)

Figure 4.17 shows what Vladek describes as “black work” which included the burning of corpses and disposal of the prisoners that had gone through the gas chambers of Auschwitz. In a similar manner to figure 4.16, figure 4.17 is illustrated with a more considerable degree of black to show the events of the work detail. Additionally, one of the benefits of the graphic novel as a genre is made evident through figure 4.17, in Vladek's description of the mass graves as “the holes were big. So like the swimming pool of the Pines Hotel” (Spiegelman, 2003, p.

232). Illustrating the actual size of the grave in figure 4.17, from both the perspective of the workers and the victims in panels four and five, shows the reader the magnitude of the event, and this is particularly the case with the final panel of figure 4.17. The illustration of the burning bodies in the mass grave is a horrific image and a clear example of brutality in the

text. However, what adds to the brutality is missing from the image. The exclusion of screams, any visual other than the fire and the bodies, but rather just the visual representation of those screams and the solid framed speech box of Vladek describing the burning of dead and alive prisoners linger with the reader. In a similar fashion, panel four contributes to showing the violence of the black work by the exclusion of light. The use of darkness and light in panel four does not clearly distinguish the ground and the bodies as the entirety of the panel is packed with visual imagery of the work, which shows the reader that the work cannot be constricted to just one panel.

Another factor that makes the themes of brutality evident in *Maus* is highlighted through Vladek's description of the events. For example, Vladek's narration in figure 4.17 compares the extreme depictions of brutality and violence of Auschwitz's mass graves to the mundane of a hotel swimming pool, shows how the visual and textual elements combine in the meaning-making process. The comparison allows the reader to fill in the gap and compare the enormity of the mass grave to something familiar. Another comparison is shown in figure 4.18. The prisoners of Auschwitz are taken on a death march towards the end of the Second World War.



Figure 4.18. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 242)

Figure 4.18 shows Vladek's thoughts around the killing of a Jewish prisoner and reflects on how death occurs. Figure 4.18 shows how the narrative of the execution of the Jewish prisoner is connected with the death of the rabid dog, as Vladek compares the dying person to an animal. The placement of the person and the dog in a similar perspective can symbolize that the care taken for Jewish prisoners was similar to the treatment of rabid dogs. Vladek's final thought about the murder of the Jewish prisoner and the comparison made between them leaves an impactful message to the reader about the treatment of

the prisoners. The use of movement in figure 4.18 solidifies the brutality of the scene that is shown in figure 4.18. The prisoner's body is left behind similarly to the way the dog is left in the panel above.

The exploration of brutality in *Maus* offers the reader a historically accurate representation of the Holocaust and the conditions that the Jewish populace was subjugated to while imprisoned. How *Maus* interrogates the topic of historical accuracy will be explored further in chapter 4.5. The importance of illustrating the themes is to reassert the historical context and to illustrate the consequence of democracy failing and how the removal of fundamental human rights can lead to the barbaric treatment of a people. The exploration of brutality and death are crucial elements that need to be explored for a deeper understanding of the traumatic events that led to the formation of the Declaration of universal human rights in the aftermath of the Second World War. The theme of brutality sheds light on the conditions in place as a consequence of discrimination and othering and is fundamental in understanding how trauma is represented and expressed in the graphic novel.

4.4 Trauma

Trauma is one of the main themes of the graphic novel *Maus* and is a key factor in understanding the complexity of the Holocaust and its effect on the survivors. Figure 4.19 shows Francois and Art outside of the summerhouse owned by Vladek and the illustration of Vladek's moans during the night. The significance of Vladek's nightmares and Art's disregard for the moans illustrates the normalcy that Art has placed around Vladek's trauma. It tells the reader that the trauma that Vladek suffered still affects him.

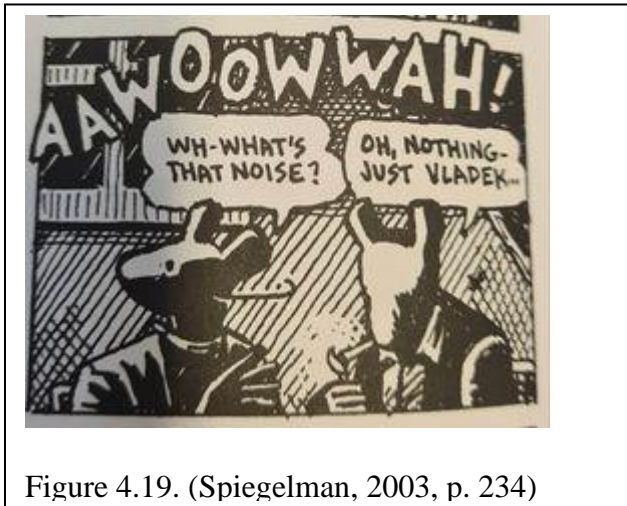


Figure 4.19. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 234)

In the introduction to the graphic novel, the reader is presented to a young Art crying to his father after his skates come undone during a race. Seeking consolation from his father after his friends leave him behind, Vladek responds with, “Friend? Your Friends? If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week... then you could see what it is, friends!”

(Spiegelman, 2003, p. 6). This is one of

the first examples of generational trauma presented to the graphic novel's reader. It is also how Spiegelman sets the tone of the graphic novel, as the Holocaust is a lingering subject that is prominent throughout Spiegelman's life in the graphic novel. To explore trauma throughout the graphic novel, this paper will illustrate how trauma is represented through different characters. This will be explored through the main characters of Vladek, Anja, and Art, as they all have different manners in which trauma is shown to the reader. Through the character of Vladek, the aftermath of his Holocaust experience is made evident in how his personality evolved after the Second World War. In the case of Anja, the depression and suicidal tendencies presented to the reader through *A Survivor's Tale* are brought to a conclusion through her suicide and the emotional, mental, and physical toll this has on Art and Vladek in the aftermath. Lastly, Art's trauma is mainly represented in the present day through interviews with his psychologist and recorded conversations with his father. The trauma of the Holocaust is a theme that lingers in Art and Vladek's relationship, and it defines the way Spiegelman portrays both characters.

4.4.1 Vladek

Through the character of Vladek, the reader is introduced to the traumatic events of the German occupation in *Survivors Tale* and the horrific conditions of Auschwitz in *And here my Troubles Began*. The trauma that Vladek suffered physically and mentally can give the reader a clear indication of how the life of Holocaust survivors' was after the second world war. Vladek's trauma can be distinguished into different aspects by exploring the character of Vladek and the trauma he had both pre-, during, and post-war. Exploring Vladek's compulsive nature and thriftiness in the present can shed light on different elements of Vladek's complex personality and characteristics. Vladek's compulsiveness, ingenuity, and thriftiness were some of the foundations for Vladek's survival during the Holocaust. This can be seen in figure 4.20.



Figure 4.20. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 48)

Figure 4.20 shows the steps that Vladek's father took to ensure that Vladek would be exempt from the Polish army. The traumatic experience of being starved and sleep deprived were elements that would later be common in Vladek's time in Auschwitz. One of these personality traits that become apparent throughout is Vladek's obsessive behavior, his reluctance to use money or discard things that do not necessarily have value, as can be seen in figure 4.21.

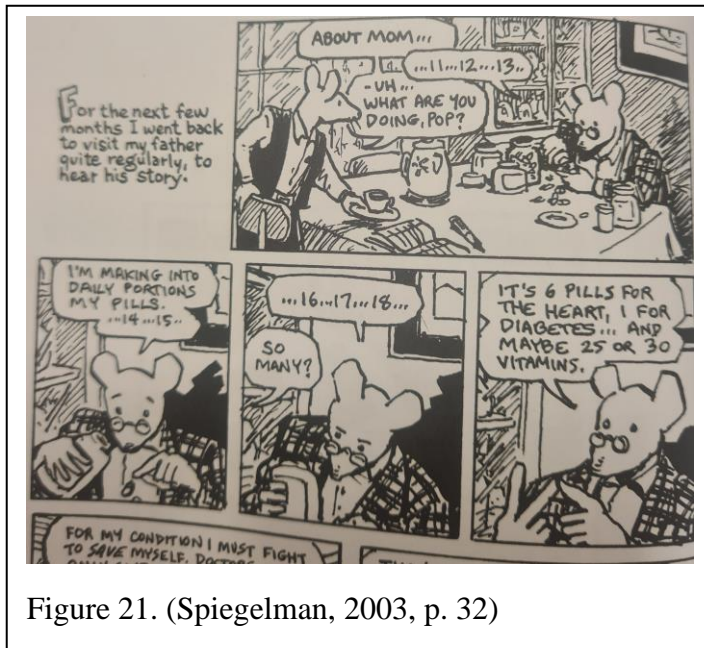


Figure 21. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 32)

Figure 4.21 shows the first instance of Vladek’s compulsiveness in the story, as he is counting out the medications he needs to take for his multiple health problems. As Vladek is explaining what each different pill is, the pill bottle is knocked over, and in responses to Art with, “no! you don’t know

counting pills. I’ll do it after... I’m an expert for this” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 32). This illustrates to the reader the compulsive manner that Vladek has and how the compulsiveness is a lingering after-effect of his survival during the Holocaust. Evidence of this is also present later in the novel, as can be seen in figure 4.22.

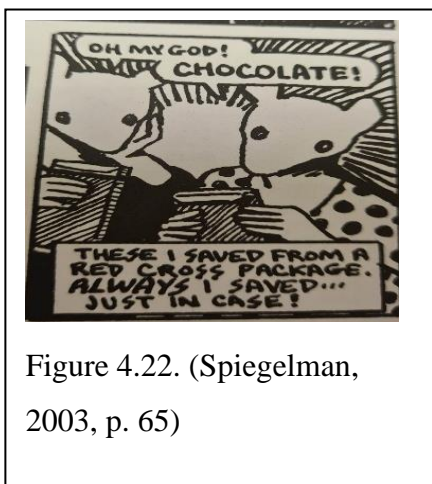


Figure 4.22. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 65)

The panel that is shown in figure 4.22 is the result of Vladek’s ability to be resourceful. The bar of chocolate, which he presents to the daughter of Orbach after he is released as a prisoner of war (POW), shows his appreciation for the lengths gone to have him released. Vladek’s ingenuity and meticulous saving are one of the elements that helped him survive the Holocaust and are still elements that are highly present in his life after the Second World War, as can be seen in figure 4.23.



Figure 4.23. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 118)

The panels shown in figure 4.23 show how Vladek's compulsiveness is clearly illustrated as a factor of annoyance for Art. The effects that the Holocaust had on Vladek are transferred into the present as they discuss Vladek's experiences before being sent to Auschwitz. This is also

one of the instances where the reader is exposed to the effect that the Holocaust has had on the relation between Art and Vladek, as the pair bicker over the wire hanger in panels five and six.

Furthermore, these first instances have been examples of the emotional and mental trauma that Vladek had suffered and how they affected the present and his relationships. Two of the most important aspects of the trauma that Vladek has is represented through the loss of his loved ones and the survivor's guilt and PTSD that he has in the present. The death of Richieu,

his first born son, and Anja, his wife, are factors that haunt Vladek, as can be seen in figure 4.24.



Figure 4.24. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 129)

Figure 4.24 illustrates the momentous effect that the death of Anja has had on Vladek, as he breaks down during a visit to the bank. These panels are once again related to Vladek's unwillingness to use his available resources

in his constant need to save for later use. This culminates in Mala later leaving Vladek. And his reluctance and cheapness become the subject of Art in a discussion with Mala about his unwillingness to use his resources, as can be seen in figure 4.25.



Figure 4.25. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 133)

The interaction between Art and Mala that is shown in figure 4.25 illustrates to the reader the difficulties that become apparent from Vladek's trauma, although Mala disagrees with Art's description of Vladek as a pragmatist and that Vladek is the way he is because of the war. In response to this, Mala says, "All of our friends went through the camps. Nobody is like him!" (Spiegelman,

2003, p. 133). This example can be used to show the multitude of different manners in which the trauma can present itself in different survivors and is an important aspect to include to show the complexity of that trauma. This can also be connected to Art's wife, Francois, who says, "but in some ways he didn't survive" (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 250) when discussing his compulsiveness. The isolation and detachment from other characters like Mala can therefore be understood through the different experiences that Vladek had during the Holocaust, where his resourcefulness and saving mindset saved him. The thought that Vladek did not come back entirely from the Holocaust is shown to the reader, as can be seen in figure 4.25.

Because of the graphic novel's narrative, which moves between the past and present, it is made evident to the reader that the experiences of the Holocaust still plague Vladek's life in the present. Although this section has mainly focused on the mental trauma that Vladek suffered, the aspects of physical trauma are also made evident through Vladek's different uses of medication, his moans during the night, and his compulsiveness. By relating these aspects to the framework of historical empathy, such as perspective taking and affective connection, the reader can understand the different circumstances that Vladek, as the historical figure,

lived under and the different decisions that led to his survival in the Holocaust, which will be developed further in chapter 5. It can also support the readers' understanding of the complexity of the Holocaust and how it altered both the individuals' lives and the lives of the people surrounding them.

4.4.2 Anja

Anja is one of the characters who illustrate mental health and trauma when analyzing trauma within *Maus*. Anja suffers from depression pre-war, and her mental health issues are brought to the forefront of the narrative from the early start of the graphic novel, which can be seen in figure 4.26.

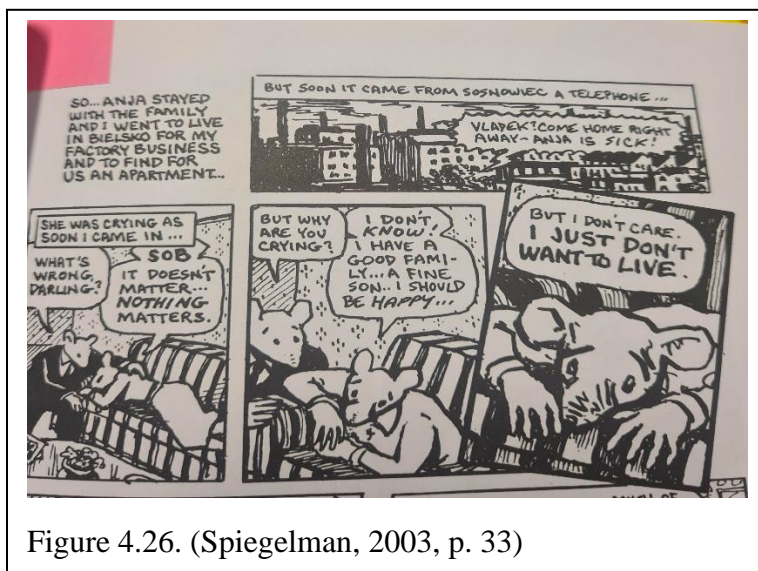


Figure 4.26. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 33)

Anja's declining mental health within the panels of page 33 also show how her mental health is worsening as the panel that portrays her suicidal thoughts is askew and out of place compared to the neat boundaries kept by the others. Another interesting aspect is that this panel is a close-up of Anja's

face, and it breaks the panel and enters the gutter, which can illustrate that Art's thoughts of his mother bleed into the present and are not only retained in the past. Furthermore, Anja's mental health and story become 'lost' as Vladek burns the journals she had kept of her experiences from the war, shown in figure 4.27.



Figure 4.27.(Spiegelman, 2003, p. 161)

Figure 4.27 shows the confrontation between Art and Vladek after it is discovered that Anja’s journal has been destroyed, and Art virtually loses his mother for a second time.

One element of how Anja’s mental health affects Art and Vladek is the inclusion of Spiegelman’s comic *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*. This comic depicts the aftermath of Anja’s suicide and how it affects Vladek and Art. Due to her suicide before the release of *Maus*, the character of Anja, similar to Art’s brother Richeieu become ghosts within

the story and illustrates how generational trauma is affirmed in the graphic novel. It is also here that the reader is presented with Vladek’s selfishness in lieu of the trauma related to Anja’s death. Nancy Miller writes, “Art learns the truth, he can’t believe that his father, who saves everything (strings, nails, matches, ‘tons of worthless shit’), would throw these notebooks away” (Miller, 2007, p. 50). Because Anja and her journals are lost, the story's narrative can be added to the trauma that Anja suffered. This means that the mental health crisis suffered by Anja throughout the graphic novel reflects not only her emotional and mental health of Anja but also serves as a signifier for Art’s mental health. Miller writes, “although Vladek tells the parts of Anja’s wartime experiences that overlap with his, what is missing is her own self-narrative, her chance to refigure herself” (Miller, 2007, p. 49). As the Miller quote illustrates, the aspects of Anja’s experiences of the war are included in Vladek’s testimony of the Holocaust as can be seen in figure 4.28.



Figure 4.28. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 124)

Figure 4.28 shows one of the instances in the graphic novel where Anja has a mental breakdown, after Lolek, Vladek and Anja's nephew, refuses to hide from the nazis. Although these panels offer the reader a direct look into the way that the trauma of the Holocaust is affecting Anja, the most interesting aspect of the page is the two final panels. The comparison panel between the past and the present can be an illustration of how the ongoing memories of Anja still haunt Vladek, as both panels contain a close-up shot of Vladek's face.

Although it is clear to see in the final panel of the page, although it is not as detailed, that the pain of the memory of Anja lingers, the reader can also draw a line between the past and present by the speech bubbles being connected but not flowing into one another, and by this illustrating to the reader that the words spoken by Vladek in the present is what was said in the past. The trauma presented by Anja as a character can be used to explain the difficult relationship between Vladek and Art while also illustrating the difficult moral and ethical dilemmas that Art has while writing *Maus*.

4.4.3 Art

The character of Art in Spiegelman's graphic novel offers the reader the perspective of the effect the Holocaust has on the families of Holocaust survivors and the momentous place that the Holocaust plays in the structure of the family. As Art is the frame narrator of *Maus*, it offers the viewpoint of his generational trauma associated with the Holocaust. One of the most interesting aspects of the graphic novel is the different manners in which Spiegelman deals with his depression throughout the graphic novel and the fame, acclaim, and notoriety that he received after the success of *Maus*. The first instance of this is his inclusion of the comic *Prisoner of the Hell Planet*, which is the comic Spiegelman made that showed Anja's suicide and the metaphorical jail that Spiegelman places himself in, as he is consumed by guilt. *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* is a comic that was previously released by Spiegelman that is recontextualized into *Maus* after his father, Vladek finds and reads the comic. *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* is an interesting inclusion to add when reading *Maus* as it highlights some of the guilt that Art feels, by including close-up shots of Art's face in figure 4.29 and the image of

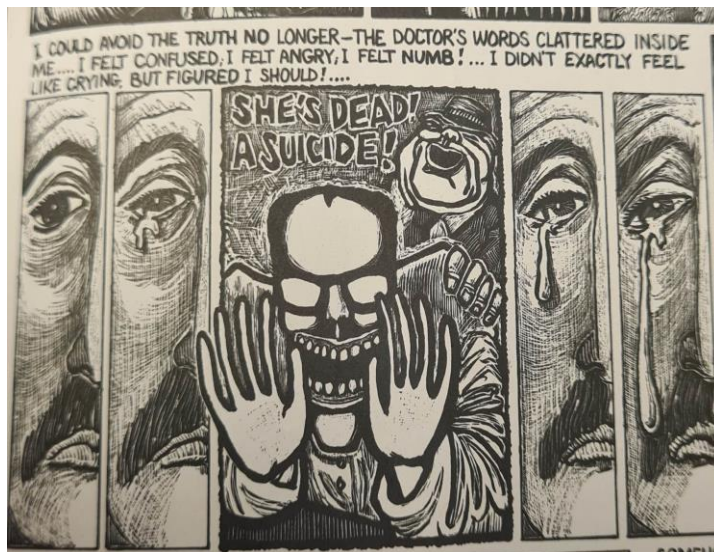


Figure 4.29. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 101)



Figure 4.30. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 105)

Anja's suicide in figure 4.30.

The *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* is included within *Maus* because it is a conscious break from the mouse metaphor Spiegelman establishes in the graphic novel. The break is not only done through the use of human characteristics in the drawing of *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* but it is also achieved through the amount of detail present in the frames of figure 4.29. While Art's face is realistically represented in the panels, the psychiatrist that tells him of his mother's

suicide has few to no distinguishing qualities, although it is also a close-up of his face. By looking at the differences between the illustration of Art and the psychiatrist, Art is constrained to the panels that show his face and agony, while the psychiatrist breaks the frames with his hands, as seen by the third panel from the left. This break from the constrictions lends thoughts of the emotional toll that Art suffered while receiving the news of the suicide; it might also be why the psychiatrist is represented with human qualities that have been extended, as is evident by his mouth. The sinister representation of the two other characters in the *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* can contribute to the exploration of Art's trauma as the way Spiegelman chooses to include the comic and by using the illustration of his mother's suicide with the possible reasons for her decision.

Anja's suicide is an important aspect of the trauma that Art revisits in *Maus*. The illustration presented through the *Prisoner of the Hell Planet* and her second death in the burning of her journals are both aspects that linger with Art. The consequences of the Holocaust that his mother had is also represented in the images shown in figure 4.30. The compilation of pictures can be seen as an oxymoron as you have frames of the dead from the Holocaust, the tattoo from Auschwitz, and the razorblade in the same frame as Anja is reading a bedtime story for Art. The way that Spiegelman has chosen to present himself in the fashion of the Auschwitz prison uniforms can also reaffirm the momentous toll that the memories of his parents' experiences play in Art's life. This is especially made evident in the aftermath of Vladek's death, as can be seen in figure 4.31.



Figure 4.31. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 207)

Figure 4.31 shows Art at his writing desk as he is reviewing the tapes of Vladek's testimony. This section is the fact that as the bickering between Vladek and Art starts, Art regresses to his child-self, and the mouse metaphor is altered as he wears a mouse mask rather than

the ethnic characteristics which he has previously been represented with. The visual metaphor of Art's regression into a child again as he is bickering with his father also shows the reader that the relationship between Art and Vladek still affects Art's mental health. Another interesting representation of this can be seen in figure 4.32.

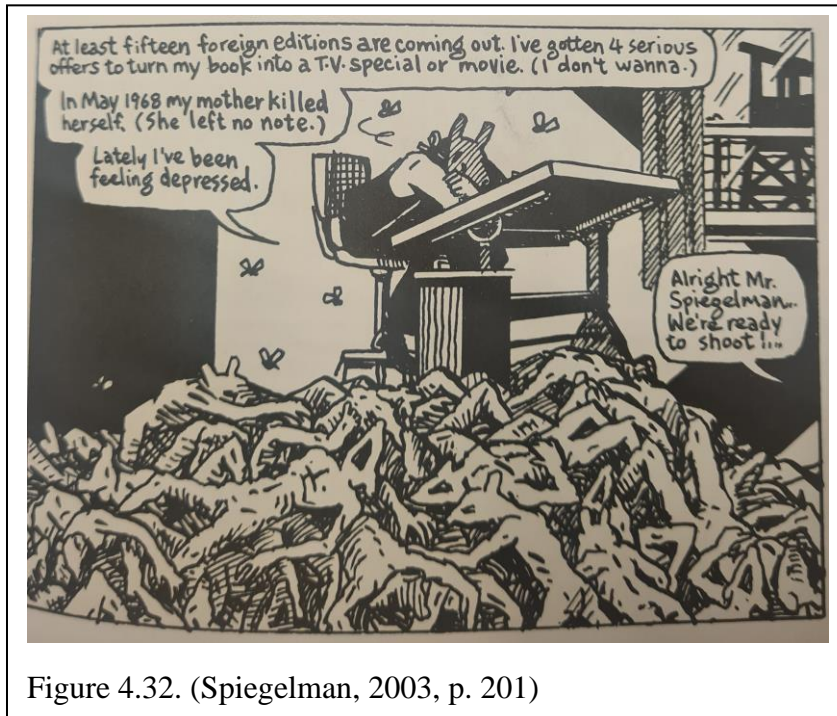


Figure 4.32. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 201)

Interestingly, as can be seen in figures 4.31 and 4.32, there is a break from the narrative style established earlier on in *Maus*, as this is one of the instances where Art speaks directly to the reader about his own depression. The image that is presented to the reader in figure 4.32 can also show some of the

trauma that the Holocaust had on Art after the critical acclaim that *Maus* received, as well as being one of the instances where the past bleeds into the present. Miller comments on this as “Spiegelman’s strategy for crafting his piece of this challenge to the ethics and materials of popular culture is first to personalize the enormity without reducing it” (Miller, 2007, p. 46). The image of Art sitting on top of hundreds of dead mice is a powerful metaphor for the guilt that Art has, as he is profiting from his father’s trauma and experiences and the anger that Art feels towards his father. This can also be seen in figure 4.33 in Art’s conversation with his therapist Pavel.

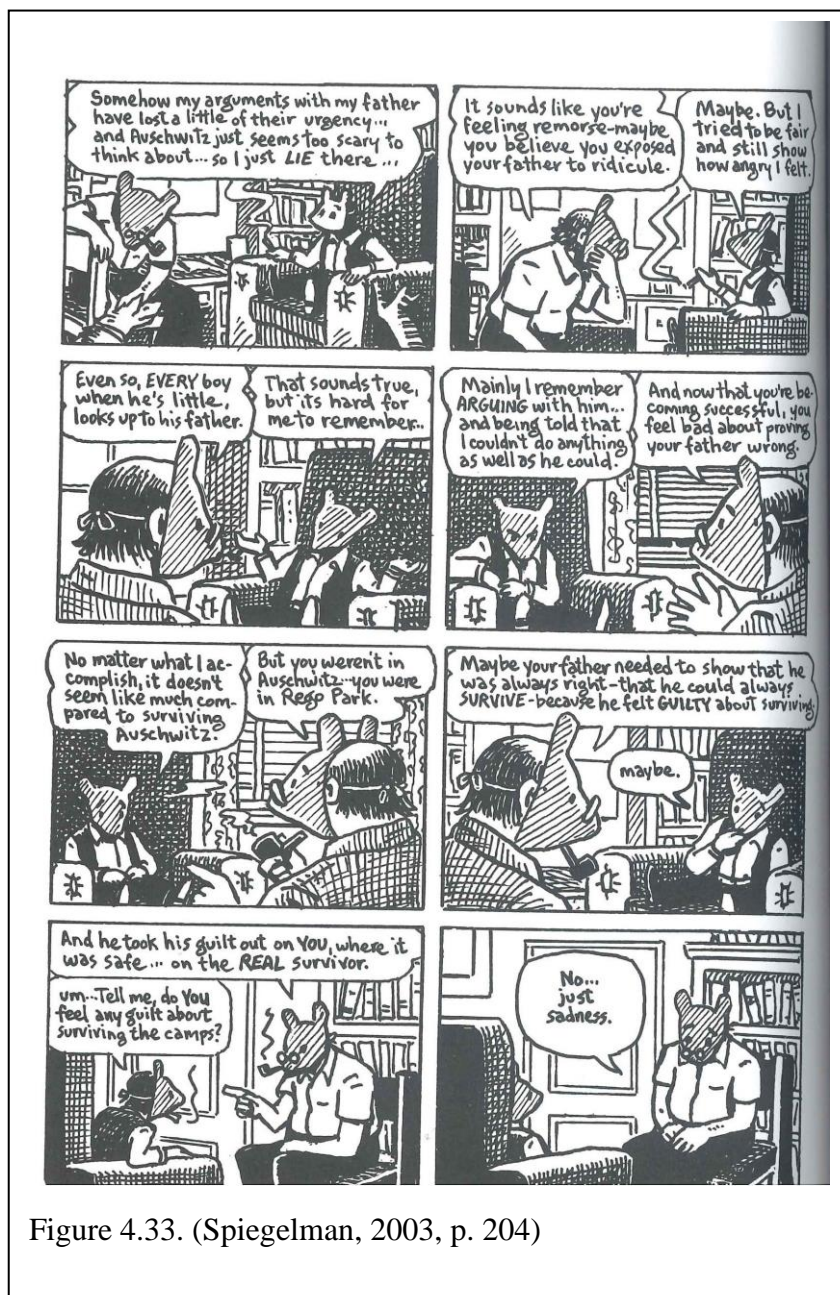


Figure 4.33. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 204)

Figure 4.33 shows the therapy session with a child Art in discussion with his therapist. One of the most interesting aspects of the panels shown in figure 4.33 is the inclusion of strict borders in the therapy session. The conversation that is being held between Pavel and Art is related to the Holocaust and Art's relationship with Vladek. It is also drawn from these panels how Vladek's trauma is transferred onto Art, as Art expresses in panel four "mainly I remember arguing with him... and being told that I couldn't do anything as well as he could" (Spiegelman,

2003, p. 204). This in interplay with Spiegelman's depiction of himself as being reduced to a child – literally shrunk to child size – in meeting with his therapist as he is discussing the trauma of telling his father's legacy. This is evident by figure 4.31 where he is once again reduced after revisiting the tapes of his interview with Vladek and his survival of Auschwitz.

Art's justifiable anger with his father is a theme that is explored in figure 4.33 as the thoughts of Vladek's own guilt for survival is investigated, and Pavel ponders over Art's comparison between himself and Vladek, stating that Art is a survivor and that his pain matters. The first two panels of figure 4.33 illustrate the trauma that Art has, as he says, "maybe. But I tried to

be fair and still show how angry I felt” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 204). Art’s guilt and trauma stem from the relationship he shares with Vladek and Anja and his reflections on the characterization of his father as a Holocaust survivor but also as a person with faults and flaws.

The final aspect of Art’s trauma is through the memory of Vladek and Anja’s first child Richeieu, as can be seen in figure 4.34.

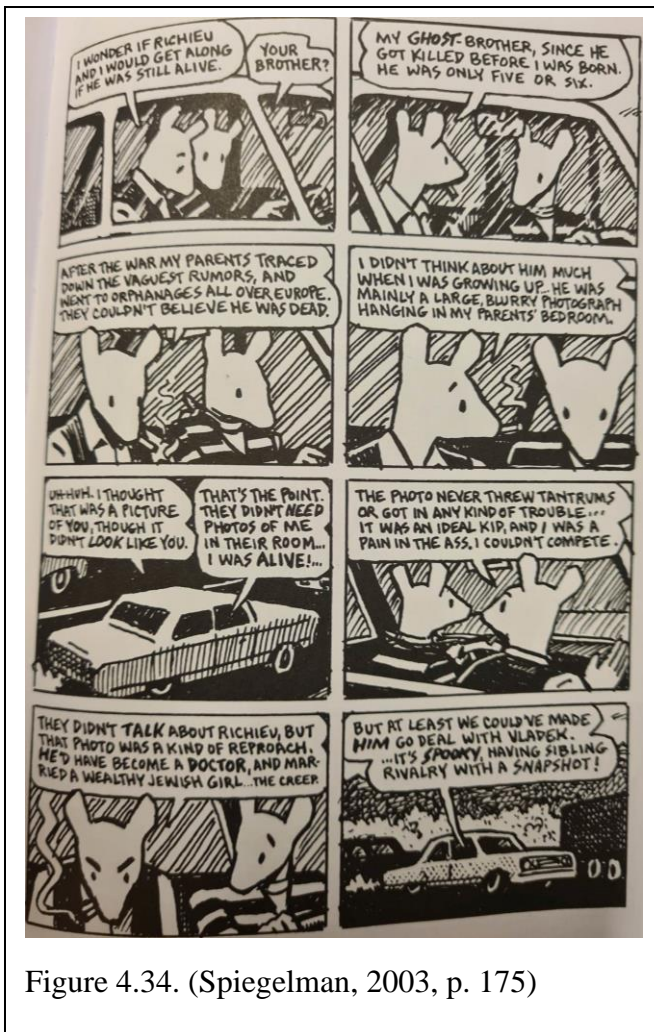


Figure 4.34. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 175)

Figure 4.34 shows Art in conversation with his wife, Francois, and illustrates the trauma and resentment that Art harbors for his older brother. Figure 4.34 also illustrates the struggles that Art faced during his upbringing as a child of Holocaust survivors, who had lost a child, or in Art’s words, “the photo never threw tantrums or got in any kind of trouble... it was an ideal kid, and I was a pain in the ass. I couldn’t compete” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 175). The resentment that Art feels towards his ‘ghost-brother’ has shaped his family history, which was never discussed but always present, like the Holocaust itself. Hamida Bosmajian states that “frame narrator Artie’s relation to his parents is ambiguous

because disastrous history has a disastrous effect on relationships between parent and child” (Bosmajian, 2007, p. 27). Furthermore, figure 4.34 also illustrates Art’s craving for acknowledgment from his parents, as can be illustrated by panel number five in Art’s response to Francois “that’s the point. They didn’t need photos of me in their room... I was alive!” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 175). The trauma that Art experiences as a consequence of having a brother who can do no wrong or that will forever be immortalized in his parents’ view creates another dimension to the way in which trauma is represented in *Maus*.

Bosmajian writes, “he wants to hear his parents’ story so that he can understand what orphaned him, but he is not granted such an understanding” (Bosmajian, 2007, p. 30). The quote by Bosmajian illustrates the way in which Art’s trauma with Richeieu is one of the driving factors for the creation of *Maus* and as the telling of the stories of the Holocaust can be an attempt to connect to a father that has been absent throughout Art’s childhood. Art’s description of Richeieu as a snapshot in figure 4.34 and the comparison to what his brother might have been can also signify that Art lives in the shadow of his dead brother in his father’s eyes which is cemented in the final page of the graphic novel as Vladek says “So... let’s stop, please, your tape recorder. I’m tired from talking, Richeieu, and it’s enough stories for now...” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 296)

The exploration of trauma as a theme within *Maus* is an important aspect to consider when writing about the graphic novel. Looking at the different manners in which trauma can be seen through the characters of Vladek, Anja, and Art provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and the characters in the graphic novel. By exploring the theme through Endacott and Brooks framework of historical empathy, the reader can discern the affective connection needed for historical empathy to be developed. It is also through the exploration of the character's viewpoint and experiences that the reader can develop perspective-taking by viewing what the aftermath of the Holocaust meant for the survivors. Finally, through the exploration of trauma, the reader can be shown the importance of historical accuracy, and the reliability of Vladek as a narrator can be questioned.

4.5 Historical Accuracy

When exploring the potential for teaching text that explores the Holocaust, the importance of that text being historically accurate is to not glamorize or relate false information about the conditions of the Holocaust. The notion of representing Vladek’s testimony and being true to the events as well as the characterization of his family, is a subject matter that Spiegelman emphasizes throughout the graphic novel and in his choices to accurately portray the past. Arlene Fish Wilner comments on the role of memory and accuracy that “by acknowledging the inadequacy of stories and also the necessity of telling them, Spiegelman’s painstaking memorial insists – as Emil Fackenheim maintains we must – on the ‘blasphemy’ of seeking a *purpose* in Auschwitz and the inevitability of seeking a *response*” (Wilner, 2007, p. 119). One such example of Vladek’s testimony is shown in figure 4.35.



Figure 4.35. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 214)

The two first panels of figure 4.35 show the reader a disagreement between Vladek and Art as they are discussing Vladek's time in Auschwitz. The inclusion of the camp orchestra is disputed by Vladek in panel two and can be explored in light of the other themes, such as the effect of brutality and trauma. By looking at Vladek's explanation that "no. At the gate I heard only guards shouting" (Spiegelman, 2003, p.

214) the reader can explore ideas as to why Vladek would not remember the orchestra, as it is well documented. Spiegelman's inclusion of the orchestra in the background of panels one and three reiterates the importance of historical accuracy and can be an example of how the graphic novel as a genre can include elements that would otherwise be kept out. Due to the visual elements of the graphic novel Spiegelman manages to keep the historical aspect of the camp orchestra, although Vladek does not necessarily remember hearing or seeing them during his time in Auschwitz. Spiegelman comments, "What is really important here was allowing Vladek to say that – because the actuality is, he probably didn't walk out through the main Auschwitz gate when he'd go to work in a tin shop" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 30).

Furthermore, figure 4.35 introduces Vladek as an unreliable narrator to the reader, as his memory of Auschwitz differs from the historical text, which can be a result of the graphic novel being made in the 1980s, 40 years after the events of the Holocaust. The question of historical accuracy is an issue that Art questions Vladek about in figure 4.36.



Figure 4.36. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 228)

Figure 4.36 is another illustration of questioning the narrator about the accuracy of the testimony. The conversation between Art and Vladek is partially covered by the timeline that is present outside of the panels shown in figure 4.36. The breaking of the panels as Art is trying to piece together the duration of time that Vladek spent in Auschwitz is itself broken by Francois, which obscures some of the timeline, leaving the exact time that Vladek spent in Auschwitz as unknown.

Vladek’s explanation of “so? Take less time to the black work. In Auschwitz we didn’t wear watches” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 228) ends the discussion. Spiegelman comments, “I remember my frustrations when he would recite almost word for word an event he’d told me before. I guess that’s how memory works though – it gets replaced by language” (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 28). That Vladek’s memory of the Holocaust may be incomplete or inaccurate does not, however lessen the experience of the events that unfolded during the Holocaust, as can be seen in figure 4.37.

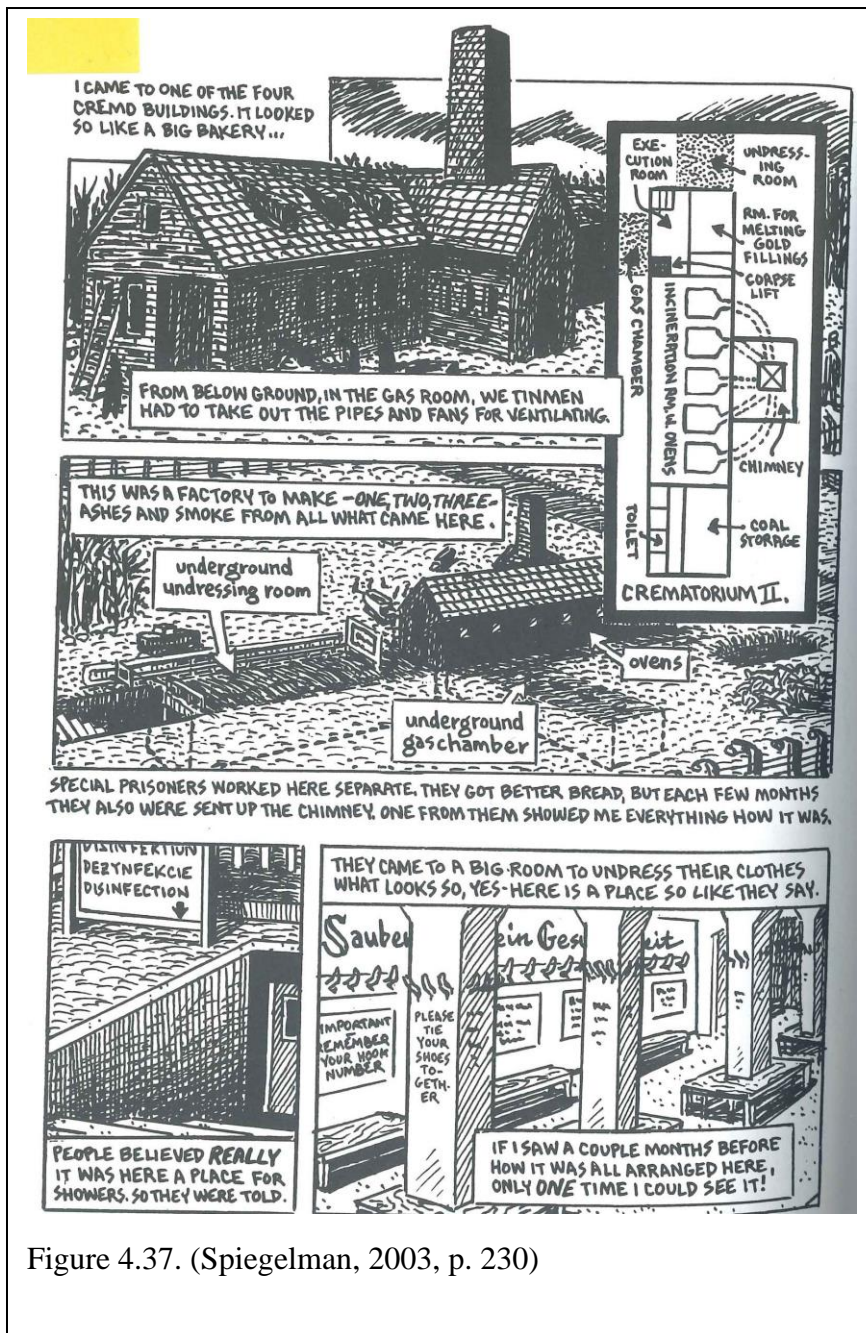


Figure 4.37. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 230)

Figure 4.37 depicts the buildings which housed the gas chamber in Auschwitz and the way it functioned. The section of the graphic novel that is illustrated in figure 4.37 shows the way that meticulous research collaborates with Vladek's testimony. One element that sticks out in figure 4.37 is the schematic of the crematorium that exists outside of the panel, in similarity to the timeline shown in figure 4.36. However, the schematic of the crematorium is not obscured to the reader as the timeline of Vladek's time in

Auschwitz was, to remove any semblance of doubt to its construction. James Young comments on the interplay between memory and factual representation, such as in figure 4.37, as "together the facts of history and their memory exist side by side, mutually dependent on one another for sustenance and meaning" (Young, 1998, p. 697). Young illustrates the importance of Spiegelman's choice to include Vladek's faulty memory as an important factor of the story, as the elements of Vladek's testimony are key in the narrative.

Furthermore, the illustration of figure 4.37 is a part of selling the lie that Auschwitz posed with its gas chambers, as can be illustrated by panel 4 in figure 4.37. The signs on the wall,

“important. Remember your hook number” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 230) or the amount of light present. This is also represented in figure 4.38, which shows the rest of the gas chambers and the delivery system for Zyklon-B



Figure 4.38. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 231)

Although both figure 4.37 and 4.38 illustrate the most famous and possibly brutal aspect of the Holocaust, Spiegelman’s use of light and dark breaks from the depictions of brutality that has previously been established. This may signify the importance of the accurate portrayal of the killing chambers and the break from the established way in which the present is illustrated side by side with the past, both figure 4.37 and 4.38 only shows the past events of the Holocaust. The reason for this can be because of Vladek’s

statement, “you heard about the gas, but I’m telling no rumors, but only what really I saw. For this I was an eyewitness” (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 229). In *Maus*, aspects of historical accuracy which can be illustrated in figure 4.37 and 4.38, contribute to grounding the graphic novel in reality and where it otherwise distances the reader from reality through the use of anthropomorphic animals, the inclusion of schematics and illustrations of the gas chambers and how they function in a documentary-esque progression of the panels shows the reader the horrific reality of Auschwitz. Furthermore, these aspects of brutality and the function of how

the gas chambers worked and operated is further cemented by Vladek's "co-worker," for lack of better words, as can be seen in figure 4.38, panels three and four.

Historical accuracy when using texts related to the Holocaust is an important aspect to consider, and Spiegelman's inclusion of the faulty reliability of memory can contribute to exercises in critical thinking and critical literacy. Exploring different aspects of memory in relation to historical facts, such as figure 4.35, can potentially be beneficial in the exploration of the interplay between memory and history and can shed some light on the conditions that were present during the Jewish populaces' imprisonment in Auschwitz. By illustrating that the characters of *Maus* are shown as flawed, complex, and human, it reinvigorates and contextualizes the story of the Holocaust so that the reader can understand the absurdity of the event in relation to Vladek. Spiegelman comments on Vladek's thoughts about the interview process. "But at the end he grabbed the microphone as if he was broadcasting on the radio, and said: So now you can know what happened, and God forbid we must never let this should happen again!" (Spiegelman, 2011, p. 23). The inclusion of historical accuracy as a theme within *Maus* allows the reader to question the reliability of Vladek without adding doubt to the events of the Holocaust and can contribute to the important aspect of critical thinking in the meeting with the text.

4.6 Concluding remarks

Chapter four is an analysis of the themes of ethnicities, brutality, trauma, and historical accuracy. As is illustrated throughout chapter four of this thesis, the importance of the different themes that have been analyzed all contribute to the full understanding of the text and will be used in chapter five of the thesis to determine the didactic benefits of the genre of the graphic novel as well as *Maus*. Through the exploration of trauma, this thesis has asserted the manner in which the trauma that was experienced by Vladek affected the relationships around him in the present. Furthermore, the way in which trauma is illustrated to the reader as can be seen by Anja's mental health through her despair during the Holocaust, Vladek's compulsiveness and night terrors, and Art's declining mental health throughout *Maus*, it shows the reader the aftermath of the Holocaust and its effect on the survivors and their families. Similarly, the link between the mental trauma that is shown to the readers can be drawn directly to the theme of brutality and death and how these themes connect and intertwine with one another. The spotlight that is given to trauma, brutality, and anti-Semitism are all aspects that can be linked to the affective connection of the development of historical

empathy and the understanding of how these elements of the story as both themes but also underlying threads throughout Vladek's retelling.

Furthermore, the connection between the themes of ethnicities, brutality, trauma, and historical accuracy can further show how the elements of themes are interconnected. Spiegelman's conscious choice of representing different ethnicities as anthropomorphic animals further drives the theme of anti-Semitism and othering through the narrative. As anti-Semitism and othering are elements of the dehumanization of *Maus*, they visualize the groundwork of how Nazis justified the atrocities that were committed during the Second World War. Through the exploration of ethnicities and anti-Semitism that is presented to the reader in *Maus*, the reader is shown the pre-emptive foundation and legitimization of the Holocaust. The use of anthropomorphic animals in Spiegelman's *Maus* grants the reader a deeper understanding of the concept of othering, racism, and anti-Semitism through, for instance, the use of the mask metaphors and by Spiegelman breaking the metaphor entirely by including mouse masks over clearly human characteristics.

It is through this use of anthropomorphic animals that allows the reader distances themselves from the thematic notions of brutality, but due to the severing of the mouse metaphor, the reality is reintroduced, and the aspects of historical accuracy that are presented in the graphic novel leaves the reader with a broader understanding of Auschwitz. This grants the reader perspective-taking and historical contextualization and are key elements for the development of historical empathy and can illustrate the potential didactic benefits of *Maus*, which will be discussed further in chapter five.

5. Discussion of the potential didactic benefits of *Maus* in Norwegian upper-secondary school

The analysis of *Maus* highlighted important themes that are present in the graphic novel and how the words, in combination with the illustrations, can help students develop a deeper understanding of both the text and the Holocaust. Therefore, the focus of this discussion will be to explore the application of the previous research that was presented in chapter 2 of the thesis to illustrate how *Maus* can be a tool in the further development and promotion of *Bildung* and the interdisciplinary topic of democracy and citizenship. This chapter of the thesis is dedicated to demonstrating how the themes of ethnicities, brutality, trauma, and historical accuracy are present in the core curriculum of the Norwegian educational system. Thus making *Maus* relevant for classroom use.

The structure of the discussion will be. 5.1 Representation: Democracy and Citizenship in *Maus* will draw upon the analysis of ethnicity and explore how the removal of citizenship in the graphic novel relates to the understanding of democracy and citizenship in the core curriculum and the English subject. This will be done by using specific examples of the graphic novel in relation to the anthropomorphic animals in *Maus* and showing how the theme of human rights, the removal of citizenship, and the way racism and cultural rejection are topics in the graphic novel can lead to a broader understanding of democracy and citizenship as it is stated in the core curriculum. Section 5.2 will discuss the implication that historical understanding is important in the development of *Bildung* and will draw upon the analysis of trauma as well as the importance of historical empathy. 5.3 will discuss the way critical literacy and reader response theory are important aspects that are present in the curricula and how they can be used in a meeting with *Maus*. It will use specific illustrations from the graphic novel to exemplify how to activate the student's critical thinking skills in a meeting with the graphic novel. After this, section 5.4 will discuss the didactic benefits of using multimodal texts like *Maus* in teaching upper-secondary school.

5.1 Representation: Democracy and Citizenship in *Maus*

Democracy and citizenship highlight the importance of participation, understanding different cultures, freedom of speech, and the rights of association, as well as the importance of individual rights (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16). A commonality within these different components is the role of the individual and how this affects the democratic process. The students should therefore be able to identify these different values at the end of their school training, including how the individual needs to be active in order for democracy to function. Since *Maus* shows a society where fundamental rights such as the right to association, free speech and participation are encroached and later fully removed can contribute to the students understanding the importance of these values. It is therefore necessary that the student is exposed to the consequences of ignoring the different tenets that are the foundation of democracy, as can be seen through representation or the lack thereof in *Maus*.

The representation of different ethnicities as animal characters contributes to showing how othering and racism are used as effective tools in the removal of democracy and citizenship in *Maus*. As can be illustrated through the analysis of ethnicities in chapter four, the importance of the dehumanization of the Jewish race during the Second World War was one of the prerequisites for the brutality perpetrated on the Jewish populace. One of the aspects that are

highlighted through this is the continuing elements of total governmental control, segregation, and the loss of individuality that is prevalent through *Maus*, as can be seen in figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 92)

The elements of governmental control and segregation that are on display in figure 5.1 shows the reader crucial elements on the topic of democracy and citizenship. The loss of individuality is an exercise that will be important for the student to explore when dealing with the subject matter of democracy and citizenship in *Maus*. One feature that makes figure 5.1 especially relevant when it comes to the loss of citizenship is the inclusion of the passport and the

stamp of the J present on it. This is one of the ways that individuality is lost throughout *Maus*. The marking of the J to represent Jew in the passport illustrates issues of racism within the society. This also reaffirms the connotations of Jewish people as less worth in their removal of citizenship. For the students, this can be one of the examples of where the human rights of the characters within *Maus* is broken, as it violates the freedom of association. The crucial element with stamping the passport is the systemization and legalization of oppression – its status as official policy and bureaucratic practice can show the students how systematic oppression can be present in countries around the world today. In this manner, the students can connect elements of the graphic novel to the real world and gain a broader understanding of that form of political system.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the consequence of personal accountability when not participating in a democratic process. Biesta writes, "... the idea that citizenship resides first and foremost in a personal responsibility" (Biesta, 2011, p. 20). Biesta's claim emphasizes the accountability of the individual, which in figure 5.1 is non-existent and can be applied to the classroom through discussion of the individual German soldier role in the excerpt. The way it is represented is how the Nazis follow orders in the separation of the crowd and the labeling of the passports. Another example of the removal of citizenship is made evident to the reader through the registration process at Auschwitz, which can be seen in figure 4.11, which shows Vladek outside of the panels as he is placed in the foreground and explains how a number replaces his name. Excerpts such as figure 4.11 can spur discussions in the classroom and question why the Nazi regime used tattoos in the concentration camps and what it means to have your name replaced by a number. Lenz comments on the importance of critiquing established norms and the multitude of power dynamics present in society (Lenz, 2020, pp. 60–61). The exploration of power is an element that can be explored through excerpts, as seen in figures 5.1 and 4.11. Moreover, elements of power are illustrated to the reader through figure 4.11 and link to one of the democratic principles. The refusal of the prison guard to enter a discussion in figure 4.11 to discuss the problems relating to the uniform given to the prisoners is connected to a deeper refusal of open communication within *Maus*. The lack of communication or control shown to Vladek throughout his time at Auschwitz is a central element of the removal of citizenship. It also illustrates that the Jewish populace is most affected by the removal of individual rights. This can be deduced from Spiegelman's use of the Poles in figure 4.11. The constrictions placed upon the mice by the pigs or the cats during the imprisonment emphasize how the mice are placed under a strict authoritarian regime within Auschwitz and can be applied in a discussion surrounding the role of power dynamics within society. The critique of power dynamics as an aspect of teaching democracy is highlighted as essential and is supported by Lenz. Lenz argues that the student needs to be able to identify the power dynamics within society and how the people who hold power use this to maintain their power (Lenz, 2020, p. 61).

Furthermore, it is stated in the subject curriculum for English teaching that the goal of democracy and citizenship is "...to help the pupils to develop their understanding of the fact that the way they view the world is culture dependent" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). Moreover, highlighting the importance that culture has when exploring how democracy contributes to the conservation of minority cultures within society is featured as a

fundamental concept in the teaching (Lenz, 2020, p. 66). In this instance, *Maus* can be beneficial in the exploration of not only the cultural aspects of pre-war Poland but also through the exploration of how societal problems affected the United States in the '80s and contribute to the students gaining a deeper understanding of problems in modern society which is shown through *Maus*. This can also be related to the notion of critical literacy, as the student is exposed to literature that deals with subject matters that require the student to be able to critically reflect.

This is also explicitly stated in the core curriculum as students “shall train their ability to think critically, learn to deal with conflicts of opinion and respect disagreement” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16). *Maus* can therefore be used as a gateway to show the students how important it is to be aware of the consequences of the removal of democracy and citizenship and contribute to the notion that democracy needs to be developed and cannot be taken for granted as stated in the core curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 16). Due to the importance of democracy and citizenship within the Norwegian educational context, it is evident that the representation in *Maus* can be advantageous in highlighting the individual's rights and the relation between losing fundamental human rights and the importance of active participation as a countermeasure against this.

5.2 Historical understanding and *Bildung*

In this section of the thesis, the main discussion will focus on historical empathy and understanding of the Holocaust and how it can be related to *Bildung* in both the theoretical field and the core curriculum. This will entail using some of the examples used in the analysis of *Maus* with a particular focus on Endacott and Brooks thoughts on the dual-dimension of historical empathy through the factors of historical contextualization, perspective taking, and affective connection (Endacott & Brooks, 2013, p. 43). These aspects will also be discussed through Eisman and Patterson's thoughts on direct instruction and reflection as a base of historical empathy (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, pp. 135–136). Finally, these aspects from the framework of historical empathy will also include elements of the previous research, as presented by Kokkola, through the establishment of the correct amount of pedagogical scaffolding.

When teaching the Holocaust and trying to gain an understanding of how the event has had an impact on the world, it is necessary for the teaching scenario that the students are aware of the events of the Holocaust and what it means. The pedagogical scaffolding is, in this instance, the same as the direct instruction that Eisman and Patterson present, as previous knowledge of

the Holocaust and the political system in place is a prerequisite in the development of historical empathy (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, p. 133). Similar to many other historical events, the Holocaust is a subject matter that many students will have previous knowledge about, but perhaps in a clinical and sterile way. Throughout the process of instruction through pedagogical scaffolding, the student's thoughts and knowledge will be challenged to ensure an interplay between the material and the individual to develop *Bildung* and empathy. The pedagogical scaffolding needed to teach the Holocaust would include information such as knowledge of the political landscape, how Hitler rose to power through a democratic process, and the different players that were a part of the war. Moreover, the students would need to be introduced to *Maus* and its author Art Spiegelman to understand that the graphic novel is a Holocaust testimonial and that the events depicted show a realistic portrayal of the Holocaust and Vladek's experience. However, the graphic novel itself can serve as a tool in the scaffolding of both the Second World War and Spiegelman as it is a mixture of historical testimony and family history.

The main objective of historical empathy is that the student can place themselves in the social and historical context of the historical figure to understand the person's actions and thoughts (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Perspective-taking can be viewed through the theme of violence and how it is represented. Through the theme of anti-Semitism, historical contextualization can be attained in the accurate viewing of the socio-political climate of pre- and post-war Poland. Furthermore, the affective connection can be deduced through aspects of trauma.

The theme of brutality in *Maus* is underlying throughout the entire narrative of the graphic novel. It is also how the reader is shown the complex nature of Vladek's character, through his ingenuity, at times, selfishness, and incredible survivor's instinct. Brutality can contribute to perspective-taking due to the realistic portrayal of the conditions in which the Jewish populace was subjugated. This can be seen in figure 4.15, which depicts the death of Mandelbaum. The brutality of Mandelbaum's death can contribute to the understanding of fear and randomness that were significant factors of survival and give the reader an insight into how this affected Vladek throughout his time in Auschwitz. By using examples such as figure 4.15 that illustrate some of the more brutal aspects of the Holocaust, it can contribute to the student's understanding the randomness and the luck that would be central to survival in Auschwitz. These different factors that ensured Vladek's survival in Auschwitz may justify some of the more selfish aspects of his character through the graphic novel and build upon the

student's understanding of Vladek's experience and how these influence his choices in both the past and the present.

Looking at how racism and the elements of othering show the historical context of WW2, these factors can broaden the student's understanding of the differences between the political landscape of the past and the events that led to the extermination of Jewish people. In addition, the knowledge about the norms surrounding the build-up to WW2 is also something drawn to the forefront through *Survivor's tale*, as can be seen in figure 4.2, which depicts how the Jewish populace was run out of their businesses and beaten.

Figure 4.2 is especially suitable in historical contextualization because of the lack of onlookers or bystanders to what the different panels depict. This can initially illustrate that the norm in Germany was that Jewish people were the enemy, which can help solidify how power was held during that time. Another element is that most of the information that lays the groundwork for the illustrations is based on stories of what happened in Germany. The inclusion of the *Survivor's Tale* where the preamble of the Second World War is not only illustrated but is an introduction and foreshadowing of what will follow later in the graphic novel offers the student the ability to see how society changes in Poland and how the German occupation affects the citizens. The historical contextualization promoted through *Maus* can be used as direct instruction, as presented by Eisman and Patterson, the information presented from *Survivor's Tale* functions as the groundwork for the historical contextualization that is needed (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, p. 133). Using examples from the text, such as figure 4.2, can connect to the previous knowledge that the student has about the Second World War and contribute to the development of historical empathy.

Another element that can illustrate the historical contextualization is seen in figure 4.8, which depicts a German soldier who is turned into a mouse. Figure 4.8 offers an accurate historical perspective due to his transformation into a Jew both visually and metaphorically. This can illustrate to the students how the scapegoating of Jewish people was to create a generalized form of undesirable citizen, and it is through examples such as figure 4.8 that illustrate the dehumanization process that the prisoners of Auschwitz and the Jewish population went through.

The affective connection to develop historical empathy is displayed through Spiegelman's representation of trauma both in the past and present in *Maus*. Affective connection is how the student can relate the lived experiences of the historical figure to their own life. One of the

reasons trauma can be the connecting factor to the concept of affective connection is due to the representation of mental and emotional trauma illustrated, such as figure 4.26, where Anja has a mental breakdown after Lolek refuses to hide with her and Vladek. Although the concept of hiding from the Nazis is not necessarily something that the students have had any experiences with, the basis of disagreement with family members where the consequences are major can be relatable to the students. Due to the different representations of trauma as shown by Vladek, Anja, or Art, the student can have an affective response to the subject matter as moments such as the one in figure 4.26 illustrate how *human* the characters are. Due to the way that trauma is represented through the different characters of *Maus*, it can also feature how different forms of trauma can show itself in different people, which can give the students a better understanding of how mental health differs based on the person who is experiencing it. Through this the student can draw connections between the experiences lived by the person in the past and how the affective connection that the historical figure had interplay with the choices that the individual makes. Because *Maus* is a multimodal text, the student is not entirely dependent on the textual element of the graphic novel but can rather reflect on what *is* or *is not* shown in the visual mode. The interplay between the visual and textual elements and how the narrative is shown through sequenced panels further contributes to building an affective connection.

The reflection of historical empathy presented by Eisman and Patterson, offers the importance of critical thinking and reflection around the subject matter to establish long-term benefits for historical empathy (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, p. 135). This can be seen in relation to *Bildung* as one of the key elements of *Bildung* is to critically reflect, as stated in the core curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 8). Furthermore, how the student works with the text through the main characters is beneficial as history becomes more personal rather than just facts and figures and the visual illustrations of the text show the reader an accurate representation of the conditions. In this manner, the student is exposed to different cultural elements and societal norms at the time. The main objective of reflection is to ensure that the students develop empathy. Through reflection of the different aspects of perspective-taking, historical contextualization and affective connection, the student can be made aware of the impact the Holocaust. The knowledge that the students' are left with after the reading of *Maus* can help the student of grasping the historical significance of anti-Semitism in Europe and how the Third Reich used this as an advantage for the extermination of Jewish people throughout Europe. This interplay between history and culture is highlighted in Principles for

Education and All-Round Development in the core curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12), as the student are challenged to face the difficult themes presented in *Maus*. Through the analysis of these themes and by trying to relate to Vladek or Anja, the student becomes aware of the importance of compassion, responsibility and gain insight into history as it is highlighted in the core-curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 12).

Furthermore, the English subject curriculum highlights that the student must be aware that the way they view the world is culturally dependent, and through the meeting with different cultures be able to show understanding for that culture (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020, p. 3). Cultural understanding or the lack thereof is one of the elements that is present in



Figure 5.2. (Spiegelman, 2003, p.188)

Maus and the way that the exploration of Jewish faith and culture can be a potential gateway for a deeper cultural understanding. This can be illustrated by the use of religious motifs throughout *Maus* as can be seen in figure 5.2. Figure 5.2 illustrates Vladek's despair at being sent to Auschwitz and is directly after his registration as a prisoner of the camp. Figure 5.2 illustrate a priest showing Vladek a glimmer of hope within Auschwitz as he explains what the numbers on his tattoo represents within the Jewish faith. The students can therefore see how powerful faith can be in situations that Vladek is in during figure 5.2. The elements that the priest shows Vladek that the total of the tattoo becomes 18, explaining to Vladek that his tattoo is a good omen can show the student different elements of a different culture, and can be a

springboard into exploration of Jewish faith in the classroom and can be a connection to cross-curricular teaching. Figure 5.2 illustrates one of the manners that *Maus* can be used to widen the students frame of reference and therefore expose them to a different cultural framework. Figure 5.2 illustrates the hope that could be found during the Holocaust, and the character that inspires hope in Vladek is a priest not a rabbi. It is also through illustrations such as figure 5.2 that contribute to Kokkola's thoughts on the importance of showing the students the mourning aspect of the Holocaust and to not become melancholic (Kokkola, 2003, p. 171) in meeting with *Maus*. This means, that due to the element such as hope in figure 5.2 as Kokkola writes "they cannot relive the past, but they can be called to act in helping those who are now at the bottom of the heap"(Kokkola, 2003, p. 172). It is through glimpses of humanity like the one illustrated in figure 5.2 that balances the heavy themes of the graphic novel without taking away from the message. It is through these different instances that show humanity, where students can gain perspective and engage in the meaning-making processes for instance, by including aspects of their own lives in their reading of the text and can contribute to the development of historical empathy and understanding of the Holocaust.

Furthermore, the examination historical empathy is directly correlated to Klafki and categorical *Bildung* as it is an interplay between the material and the individual (Lyngstad, 2019). By highlighting and building the students' understanding of direct instruction, perspective taking, historical contextualization, affective connection, and reflection, the student can develop historical empathy in interplay with *Maus*. This can be achieved through the exploration of *Maus* as a Holocaust testimony and how that affects the way the students perceive the text. Additionally, *Maus* offers the possibility to explore different values, cultures and religions through critical reflection and grant insight, not only to the individual but past power structures and gain the ability to see these aspects in society today. By highlighting these different and important aspects of the text, the student can gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and the political system which lead to the extermination of the Jews. Through the different themes that are used to explore the concept of historical empathy, the students will gain a better understanding of the conditions and emotions of the historical figure, which could lead to the further development of the student as a autonomous citizen and further the aspect of *Bildung*. Thus, the student can use examples from the text such as trauma to be able to understand themselves, the Holocaust and the world around them.

5.3 Understanding the Holocaust: RRT and Critical Literacy in meeting with the graphic novel

One of the key aims of this thesis is the exploration of democracy and citizenship and *Bildung* and how it can be further developed through the use of the graphic novel *Maus*. The analysis of the themes of ethnicities, brutality, trauma, and historical accuracy, lays the foundation for how the graphic novel can be used to develop an understanding of the Holocaust and its causes. As critical thinking and critical literacy are foundations of both the concept of *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship, this chapter of the discussion aims to show how reader response theory and critical literacy can be applied to the graphic novel to further develop *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship. This will be achieved by looking at specific examples of symbolism within *Maus* and by examining how the removal of human characteristics can make the novel more relatable, as can be seen in figure 5.3.



Figure 5.3. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 127).

Figure 5.3 can be one of the examples used in a classroom setting as the panel illustrates a crossroad in the shape of the swastika. The use of the swastika crossroads for the illusion of choice shows the reader that all ways lead back to the Nazis and is a powerful symbol. Figure 5.3 excludes any significant roadmap to guide the reader of the options, solidifying that they are not safe anywhere. The panel is a far-away shot of the Spiegelmans and the implication of how the path forward is riddled with danger. Spiegelman continues with the use of the swastika on page 137 but does not allow the reader to figure out which direction they took, leaving it to the reader

to interpret.

One of the possibilities that this specific example can pose can be seen through the scope of reader response theory as the visual illustration of figure 5.3 does not necessarily have a correct interpretation. Analyzing imagery such as the ones in figure 5.3, it is important to meet the student at the level they are and reassure students that there is not necessarily one correct interpretation. Allowing the students to have multiple responses to the same visual imagery can further their critical thinking as at first glance, the crossroads is just a crossroad.

Another example that can be used in the classroom setting in relation to reader response theory and critical literacy can be explored through figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4. (Spiegelman, 2003, p. 239)

The final panel of figure 5.4 shows one of the only times that the past bleeds into the present, as the hanging victims of Auschwitz are present in the trees. This panel can be a useful excerpt to include in a classroom discussion, as the illustration itself can have different interpretations. The bleeding over of the past into the present can be symbolic of just that, or it can be a signifier in the way that Spiegelman shows the reader that what was present has now become the past as the story is finished after Vladek's death. Moreover, it can be a representation of the trauma that Vladek experienced and can be a

signifier for the way Spiegelman represents his PTSD. The reason why examples such as figure 5.4 can be effective in a teaching situation is due to the manner in which students can interpret the multiple meanings of the image.

The way in which the students interpret the visual mode of the text is one of the focus points of reader response theory as well as one of the approaches to critical literacy that is mentioned by Luke, as some of the foundations of critical literacy is the critical analysis of text in as critique of hegemony and encourage the recognition of marginalized communities (Luke, 2012, p. 5). The exploration of illustrations such as figures 4.15, 4.32, and 5.4 can grant students insight into themes of trauma, othering as is the case in figure 4.15, and the toll that the Holocaust had on the families of the survivors, as is illustrated in figure 4.32.

When exploring the imagery of figure 4.32, which depicts Art at his writing desk, and the bodies of mice lying in a tower under him as he addresses the consequences of him writing,

Maus can be fruitful for the students to explore as the illustration itself is such a powerful symbol of the traumatic experiences that Art is going through. In figure 4.32, the elements of the meaning-making process in meeting with the text can further develop the critical analysis of the text and engage the students' ability to think critically and reflect on what the illustration is showing. The visual imagery in interplay with the text of figure 4.32 emphasizes the manner in which graphic novels can depict certain emotional elements that one cannot simply gain from the text. The symbolism that is made evident in figure 4.32, that Spiegelman has become hugely successful on the slaughter of Jewish people, is an interpretation that the students might gain from studying this panel.

One manner in which the teacher could use *Maus* to explore the effect of visual literacy is by removing the text bubbles from the different illustrations, which Rimmereide calls “the vocabulary enricher,” which focuses on the individual aspects of the visual and textual mode (Rimmereide, 2021, p. 212). For instance, with figure 5.4, have the students try to critically reflect on the different elements that are present in the panels and discuss these in the classroom. By removing the written element, the students would have to rely on previous knowledge and critically reflect on what is playing out in the different panels, and reinstating the textual element and reanalyzing figure 5.4 could illustrate to the student the importance of multiliteracies when dealing with graphic novels.

Furthermore, including excerpts from *Maus*, such as figure 4.32, can contribute to the student's reflection on the subject matter of the Holocaust as it shows some of the lingering effects that the creation of *Maus* has had on Spiegelman. This manner of interplay between the student and the text allows for critical literacy to develop. The student's interpretation of the multimodality of visual imagery and text can elaborate on the complexity of the character Art, as is the instance in figure 4.32, and reaffirm the emotional toll and significance that the telling of *Maus* has for Art. This use of different illustrations can be connected to Eisman and Patterson's focus on reflection to gain empathy (Eisman & Patterson, 2022, pp. 134–135). As the students are introduced to Art's lived experiences and his own critical reflection, firstly around his relationship with his father, secondly his father's experiences with brutality and hate, and lastly, how Art's trauma has spawned as a consequence of the Holocaust. All these elements can contribute to the student's development of empathy and social awareness, which can contribute to the student's all-around development.

Additionally, the exploration of truth is studied through figure 4.4, which depicts Vladek's encounter with Polish children who call him a Jew as he is disguising himself as a Pole. One

element of critique in figure 4.4 is the illustration of the Poles saluting Vladek and proclaiming Heil Hitler as the encounter ends. Figure 4.4 visualizes an important meeting between historical accuracy and personal history, which is an intriguing element of *Maus*. In the case of figure 4.4 and the historical facts about the treatment the Polish people suffered under the Nazi occupation of Poland and how the Poles salute and proclaim Heil Hitler may not necessarily be completely accurate. Nevertheless, this does allow for interpretation of the political landscape at the time and can contribute to the student's understanding of what the era was like. This can also lead to discussions of why the Poles would say Heil Hitler in the story's context.

The importance of showing that perspectives of that time can be valid can be explored through the Polish characters in the graphic novel, as many of the Polish people did not share the beliefs of the Nazis but were self-preserving in order to survive. It is also through this that one can discern the importance of the interconnective element of family history in combination with written history. *Maus* offers the reader a viewpoint into the historical and political landscape that allowed for the extermination of Jewish people during the Second World War by linking the struggle of Vladek to the struggle of the Jewish populace. Furthermore, this context can be used to understand that genocide is not simply contained to the Second World War but rather something that can be used as a guideline in critical thinking as the reader can recognize the different patterns used to allow for such atrocities and creates links to other historical and contemporary events.

How *Maus* is narrated can also contribute to elements of critical literacy and critical thinking. Throughout *Maus*, as seen in most of the figures used in this thesis, the way that the interview between Vladek and Art is illustrated is through conversations between Art and Vladek. This does not, however, necessarily depict how the interview took place. Spiegelman illustrates this through the first section of *Maus* and introduces the tape recorder on page 75 of the graphic novel. However, the tape recorder remains absent from the rest of the illustrations within the graphic novel. Using the discussion around the missing tape recorder can actively engage the students to critically assess the rest of the information that the reader is introduced to in Art's depiction of the present. Although it is not necessarily a significant part of the narrative, it can be beneficial for students to explore the *who* and *why* of the story and why the story is told and written in the manner it is. The exclusion of the tape recorder throughout *Maus* is an element that is not necessarily addressed in the graphic novel.

Nevertheless, it is an integral part of the representation of truth within *Maus* as the students can ask questions about how the story is being told. Furthermore, the exploration of the

simplicity of the missing tape recorder can allow for the student's interpretation of why it is not present. As analyzed in chapter 4, the importance of accurate portrayal is a theme that is heavily present in *Maus*, but the active exclusion of the tape recorder is, therefore an element that can be used to activate the student's critical thinking, as to why the tape recorder is invisible throughout the text. This can, for instance, be due to Spiegelman's explanation of his fathers' not being aware of being interviewed or if it is a conscious choice to draw in the reader.

The elements that make *Maus* particularly beneficial in relation to of critical literacy and reader response theory is the combination of the text and the visual symbolism. These elements such as the tape recorder being absent for most of the story, the visual representation of the swastika, and the bleeding over of history, can all be related to aspects of both critical literacy and reader response theory. The way that different student interpretations of the same visual symbolism in *Maus* can spark discussions on how society was under the nazi occupation of Poland and the elements mentioned, such as figure 4.32, can grant insight into the author's own emotions surrounding the creation of *Maus*. When working with a text such as *Maus* in the upper secondary classroom, there are certain elements of the genre can be used in the promotion of critical reflection. The inherent multimodality of the text also allows for the student to be able to interpret the text in a broader sense, Chun offers "teacher talks" as a manner one could discuss the different interpretation as "facilitates discussions that 'talk through' the text of *Maus* so that the students can feel free to display their own capability in producing multiple interpretations" (Chun, 2009, p. 149). Chun builds on the importance of the visual mode as "instead of reading (or attempting to read) official representation of history with passive acceptance or indifference, students' intellects and imaginations are challenged and activated by contact with multimodal text that present alternative representations of history" (Chun, 2009, p. 149). The quote by Chun illustrates one of the benefits that is posed by *Maus* as the students' interpretation of the visual mode of the text can be a springboard into further discussions about difficult topics such as racism and othering.

Through reader-response theory, the readers' experiences alter the interpretation of the text. Moreover, after the re-introduction of historic scaffolding that is needed, the exploration of how the Weimar Republic allowed for the Nazi regime takeover of a democratic state can offer students a critical perspective of how and why the Nazi government gained power and offer discussions on how a democratic country can be turned into a dictatorship. Reflecting on the democratic process that allowed the Nazis their power and the scapegoating of the Jewish

people in Europe are some of the most well-known factors of Hitler's rise to power. In working with *Maus*, the students can gain a deeper understanding of how the conditions were during WW2 and experience it through the eyes of Vladek in an interplay between known history and the complexity of the characters and their decision-making. By exploring how power is held in *Maus*, the students would learn how power can manifest in society if aspects such as racism and othering go unchecked. This could also lead to a discussion of the interplay between the textual element and visual illustrations and highlight how the students' interpretations could change based on the inclusion of both the visual and written mode, and through exercises such as these, the students can use their interpretation in order to make sense of the text, and through this further develop their ability to critically think and all-round development.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

Through chapter five of this thesis the different elements of previous research have been applied to the analysis of *Maus* in order to explore the benefits of the graphic novel to the core and subject curriculum, to determine the benefits of *Maus* to the promotion and development of *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship. Through section 5.1 representation in *Maus* and democracy and citizenship, it is made clear that the different elements of *Maus* such as the use of anthropomorphic animals illustrates to the reader the importance of the aspect of participation and the removal of fundamental human rights. The visual element of the graphic novel in the way Auschwitz, the treatment of minorities within the established society during the war and the brutal conditions. The accurate depictions can contribute to the students understanding of the importance of the democratic principles and that democracy cannot be taken for granted.

Section 5.2 shows how understanding of the Holocaust can contribute to the development of *Bildung* by reintroducing the concept of historical empathy as presented by Endacott and Brooks, and Eisman and Patterson. By exploring the perspectives of direct instruction, perspective taking, historical contextualization, affective connection and reflection the student would be equipped to understand the historical character by interpreting the different situations and choices that the historical figure made and be able to apply this to their own situation. Through the exploration of the different elements of historical empathy the student could gain an understanding for a different culture and through themes such as trauma gain a personal connection with the Holocaust and widen the students ability to understand similar aspects in their own life, thus contributing to the development of *Bildung*.

Section 5.3 further developed the concepts that were outlined in section 5.2 in relation to understanding the Holocaust by introducing the aspects of critical literacy as well as reader response theory. To activate the students' critical thinking skills and make them aware of the effect that individual experiences affect the way that the text is interpreted. As the thought of critical reflection and the importance of the individual are aspects that are heavily present in both *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship this section of the thesis explored examples of the text that could contribute to the elements of multiliteracies and through this critical literacy.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the graphic, multimodal representation of themes such as racism, trauma, brutality and historical accuracy in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and explored the benefits of the graphic novel to *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship in the upper-secondary classroom. Although, there is no concrete way to measure the student development of *Bildung*, it is nevertheless a critical part of the Norwegian educational system. As the Norwegian educational system's function is to promote *Bildung* and create autonomous citizens across all subjects and levels of primary and secondary education in Norway, the importance of choosing literature for students that can contribute to this development becomes essential.

The didactic benefit of multimodality of the text is advantageous in relation to the reading level of both stronger and weaker readers, which could contribute to a better learning outcome for the students. *Maus* also contributes to the exploration of diverse voices through the first-person perspective of the graphic novel and grants the reader a personal look into the Holocaust and its conditions. It is through this first-person narrative and interplay between text and images that can contribute to the discussion of complex themes that are found in *Maus* through analysis of the graphic representation. For the students, this can help reinvigorate their previous knowledge and link the events of the Holocaust to a testimony and contribute to a newer understanding and an appreciation for democracy as they explore a not-so-distance society that lacked it.

Through the focus on historical empathy, the students can become aware of the different elements of historical figures' lived experiences and how these affected those figures' choices

and develop the students empathy. This can be linked to their own lives, thus integrating and developing *Bildung* and historical empathy through the graphic novel.

Furthermore, the exploration of the multimodal representation of themes such as racism, trauma, brutality, and historical accuracy contributes to the understanding of democracy and citizenship as the students are shown how democracy and citizenship are revoked through *Maus*. Because of this the students can become aware of the importance of understanding different cultures and the importance of participation in society by seeing how democracy and citizenship or lack thereof is represented in *Maus*.

The importance of including texts such as *Maus* is to exemplify the consequences that might occur when racism and extremism goes unchecked in society. Due to the rise of right-winged extremism throughout Europe and the world today it is essential that students can recognize the mechanism and dangers that prejudice, racism and discrimination poses to a democratic society and contribute to one purpose of the core curriculum that “all forms of discrimination shall be combated” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, p. 5). Through the inclusion of texts that deal with the ultimate consequence of these aspects, the students can gain an understanding of how these mechanisms work. *Maus* allows the students to gain a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and themselves through its use of complex narrative and visual imagery in the representation of themes and is through this a benefit to *Bildung* and democracy and citizenship.

6.1 Limitations and Further Research

Some limitations of this study are that it is theoretical and that there is a need to implement and test the graphic novel in a classroom to see if any of the values that have been presented can be attained by using *Maus* as a tool. Another possible limitation is some of the themes analyzed and discussed in this thesis. The different themes, especially brutality, anti-Semitism, and trauma, can be difficult for students to experience through *Maus* as it may cause discomfort, but the subject matters that are addressed in the graphic novel are essential in teaching and understanding the Holocaust. For further research, there will be a need to do interviews with students after using the graphic novel in teaching to see if the graphic novel has had the desired effect of promoting cultural understanding, critical thinking and a new understanding of the Holocaust.

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