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ARNING: The Complete MAUS deals with a very controversial and emotional subject; the Holocaust and how it affected the survivors and their families. MAUS is a very frank and sometimes graphic look at the life of the Polish Jews during World War II and, as such, MAUS is not recommended for the sensitive reader. As a couple who knew survivors of the atrocities it was very difficult to remain objective during the review, although we did our best.

[Overview](#)

The Voyager company is well known for releasing works that they have translated from the written or musical medium to the electronic medium. Works such as Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and the "I Have Heard" series (a series on great composers) have all been put onto CD ROM by Voyager. In late 1994 Voyager released a multimedia version of a controversial comic book series called MAUS. MAUS, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, was considered an important piece of historical work. But do not be fooled, MAUS was no ordinary comic book. It was an account of how Art Spiegelman's father and mother survived Poland and eventually Auschwitz during World War II. Lawrence Weschler, author of Sharpinsky's Karma, Boggs's Bills, and Other True Life Tales (Penguin 1988), puts it much more eloquently;

"Maus is, at once, a novel, a documentary, a memoir, an intimate retelling of the Holocaust

story as it was experienced by a single family-"

Voyager has taken the experience of MAUS one step farther. Not only is the entire book of MAUS on the CD, there is also a wealth of other information that gives readers of MAUS a new way to experience the story. Along with the book are photos of the family and places where it all happened, video of Poland, early sketches of MAUS, maps, recordings of Vladek (Mr. Spiegelman's father), transcripts of the recordings, and documents collected for the work (including a copy of the arrest warrant issued by the Nazi government for Vladek and his wife, Anja). All this supplementary material is woven into the book to allow readers to see hear and experience some of what Mr. Spiegelman experienced during his journey to tell the story.

The CD contains versions of MAUS for both small screens (up to 20 inches), and large screens (21 inches and above). This is so that people with large monitors can see the entire page on the screen at once (a very handy feature). It also contains Quick Time and a HyperCard player(MAUS is HyperCard driven), in case you do not have one. MAUS also includes a set of fonts for you to install in your system folder to make the text of the supplementary materials easier to read.

Installation is as easy as dragging the MAUS folder from the CD to your hard drive. The folder takes up 4.6 MB of hard drive space and contains "The Complete MAUS", the fonts, "The Working Transcripts"(Mr. Spiegelman's transcripts of his conversations with his father), the notebook, and the library (pieces of proprietary software used by Voyager to organize other works, if you have more than one Voyager title).

[The Complete MAUS](#)

The program itself is broken down into different sections. They are; the introduction, the book itself, Art on art, the appendices, and the supplemental information.

[The Introduction](#)

The introduction is an interview with Art Spiegelman that leads the viewer through the steps that were taken to create page 145 of the book (Vladek's arrival at Auschwitz). It is broken down into sections, each section dealing with a different issue of that page.

"Why a CD?" deals with the choice Mr. Spiegelman made to put MAUS on CD. It contains both an audio interview and a slide show. "Interviewing Vladek" tells of Mr. Spiegelman's interviews with his father, using text, a video interview and audio of his father. "Defining the Page", "Researching the Page", and "Refining the Page" all contain text, photos, videos, and interviews with Vladek to convey the tremendous work that went into only one of the 271 pages of the book. "Complaining about the Screen" is a final word by Mr. Spiegelman about some of the drawbacks of putting his work onto a CD-ROM.

[he Complete MAUS](#)

Before we get into the program itself, some history of the story must be told to give the reader an idea of the scope of this book. MAUS first surfaced in 1972 in a cartoon strip called Funny Aimals. MAUS was just a three page story about a father telling his son a bedtime story about his experiences during the war. The big draw to this story was that the father and son were mice and the Nazis were cats. This use of anthropomorphic personification (using animals in the place of people) was not new but it gave the story a new twist, one that the readers seemed to like.

MAUS dropped out of view for a while only to reappear in Raw magazine in 1980, where MAUS became a bigger hit and was expanded, due in large part to the fact that between 1972 and 1979, Mr. Spiegelman interviewed his father and wrote copious notes (outlined in "The Working Transcripts"). Over the next six years Art worked at translating these notes into a story and finally in 1986, MAUS hit the news stands as a book. It jumped up the New York Times best seller list, first as fiction, then as non-fiction (for the full story read about it in the Appendices). There was only one problem with the book, according to it's many fans; the story ended with Vladek arriving at Auschwitz and Art storming off after talking to his father. There had to be more, and in 1991 there was; MAUS II. The second book continued the story through Auschwitz and the end of the war. Vladek was...well, you'll have to read MAUS to find out.

The tale of MAUS does not end here. In 1992, Art Spiegelman won a special Pulitzer Prize for MAUS. This was his crowing achievement.

Navigating through the book is very simple. At the the bottom of the page is a left and right arrow. Between the arrows shows a standard "x of y" pages section. If you click on this, you jump to a "Goto Page" dialog which allows easier access to the various sections of the book. There is also a "zoom in / zoom out" button that allows the reader to zoom in to read the page or zoom out to see the composition of the page. This is a very interesting feature as it allows the reader to get an overall view of some of the page layouts. On the close up level there are two ways to see various parts of the page use the cursor to drag the page up and down, or use the page layout guide.

The page layout guide is a small version of the page in the lower left hand corner of the screen. It has a simplified rendering of the page with a slider on it's left side. You can navigate the page by moving the slider up and down. Some pages also have colored panels in the page layout guide. Clicking on these panels allows the reader to access earlier

versions of the panel as well as rough sketches of it.

There are other icons that show up on various pages. They are; the tape recorder (recordings of Art's interviews with Vladek), the mouse icon (Art leads you through the thought process that lead to the particular scenes), the movie projector (Art's home video of this trip to Poland and Germany), the picture/map icon (documents and still pictures that were relevant to the page), and the pencil scribble icon (drafts of the pages as well as notes that eventually lead to the full story).

These multimedia links lend an air of richness to the work. No longer is it a flat retelling of history, it is now a three-dimensional account of two men struggling to overcome one of the most shocking events in recent world history. These links bring the story to life, and give the story a humanity it could never have achieved as a simple book.

[Art on art](#)

Art on art is an excerpt from an interview that Mr. Spiegelman did in 1993. During the interview Mr. Spiegelman discusses some of his early influences (Mad Magazine and Tales From the Crypt), how he came to publish an underground comic magazine (Raw magazine is published by Art and his wife Fancoise), and his feelings and thoughts about MAUS. This section is full of sketches and drawings of some of Art's other works as well as pictures of the Spiegelman family.

[Appendices](#)

The appendices are full of MAUS related miscellany; mostly articles written by Art Spiegelman about MAUS including the letter to the New York Times that caused them to switch MAUS from the Fiction Best-seller list to the Non-fiction Best-seller list. Another appendix article is actually the original three page strip that started MAUS. The most interesting article is not written by Spiegelman but by Lawrence Weschler entitled "Art's Father, Vladek's Son" [Sharpinsky's Karma, Boggs's Bills, and Other True Life Tales (Penguin 1988)] In this article, Weschler recounts a 1986 interview he had with Spiegelman. It is a fascinating look into the trials and tribulations that Spiegelman went through to create MAUS. This article is a must-read for anyone who owns this CD.

[Supplements](#)

The supplements are a fascinating addition to the work. They give a sense of place and history to all the events chronicled in the books. Included in the supplements are maps of Rego Park, NY; World War II Poland and Germany, Auschwitz and Birkenau (Auschwitz II) and the Catskill region of NY state.

Perhaps the most interesting supplement is the Spiegelman / Zylberberg family tree. It is a standard family tree with mice in the place of the people. It shows the families of Vladek Spiegelman and Anja (Zylberberg) Spiegelman going back three generations and forward two generations. Most of these people we meet or hear about in the book. This is a multimedia tree and certain mice have frames around their picture. When the reader clicks on this frame he/she is treated to a photograph of that person. This lets the reader connect a face with the name. This is another touch that lends humanity to the most inhumane of circumstances.

[Summary](#)

Why does the world need another retelling of the Holocaust? Mr. Spiegelman has created a piece of work that transcends all of the histories that have come before. Up until MAUS, most histories of the holocaust were unappealing to the majority of people because they were too graphic or controversial. MAUS makes the story of the atrocities more accessible to the population by removing the most graphic example of inhumanity and replacing them

with a simple tale of survival against desparate odds. Do not get me wrong, the use of mice in no way trivializes what happened. In fact we come to feel for these mice and this makes the story easier to deal with.

The multimedia links throughout the book allow us to hear the story as it really happened. These links allow the reader to humanize all who were involved. The reader can see pictures of the people involved and the places the events happened. These photographs do not allow you to divorce yourself from the situation. Yes, some of the photos are quite graphic, but they do not overwhlem the reader, mearly offer visual documentation of what really happened.

This program is ideally suited for any teacher who wants to, or more importantly, feels the need to introduce the Holocaust to children. This version is more palatable but no less intense than other histories. Students may not be traumatized, yet they will remeber the people and places, even if they recall the players as mice.

The Complete MAUS is a true work of art. It transports the reader to a world that we cannot forget nor do we wish to remember. It shows us the triumph of the spirit over inhumanity and allows us to experience the struggle to hope in a situation where there is none.

This software is certainly not for everyone; children especially. It is highly recommended for the software libraries of schools, local libraries, and those who are interested in the history of a survivor.

Never Forget.

Pros

- A deep and frank look at a survivor of the Holocaust and his family
- A rich and detailed multimedia package
- Tons of supplementary material

Cons

- NOT for the sensitive reader