

LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR SPRING 2023

**WORDS AND IMAGES: FOUR GRAPHIC NOVELS AND AN ANIMATED FILM**

**Coordinators:** Sophie Balcoff and Jenny Ross

“You mean comic books for children?” a friend asked when told about this planned study group. Until Art Spiegelman published *Maus* in 1986, comics (apart from Japanese *manga*) were indeed for children; but since *Maus II* (1991), this literary form has blossomed. Our study group reads four graphic novels and we watch an animated film. The combinations of words and images bring a new perspective to serious themes like surviving the Holocaust, life under the Ayatollahs in Iran, closeted gay existence, depression, and PTSD after a brutal war. Not-exactly-comic comics?

**Sophie Balcoff** has been a member of LP<sup>2</sup>/IRP since she retired from high school teaching in 2012. She has coordinated or co-coordinated more than 20 study groups.

**Jenny Ross** taught history and English in high school and college. She is delighted to be coordinating with Sophie for the fourth time.

**Type of Study Group:** Mostly discussion.

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**

Readings:

*Maus I* by Art Spiegelman, (Pantheon);

*Maus II* by Art Spiegelman, (Pantheon);

*Persepolis I* by Marjane Satrapi, (Pantheon);

*Persepolis II* by Marjane Satrapi, (Pantheon);

*Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel, (Mariner);

*Hyperbole and a Half* by Allie Brosh, (Gallery Books).

Film:

*Waltzing with Bashir*, (Amazon and other platforms).

Please note that these books are not available for an eReader. They are widely available in paperback, both new and used, and in libraries.

\*\*\*\*\* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS \*\*\*\*\*

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### WEEK 1

**TOPIC:** How to translate horror to the page?

**READING:** *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*

**QUESTIONS:**

Why does Art refer to his mother as a “murderer” in these pages, then use the same word for his father as the last word of the book? How does the book enable us to see the horror of the events although Spiegelman was not a witness? Why does Spiegelman use the allegory of animals in the book?

### WEEK 2

**TOPIC:** Survival

**READING:** *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*

**QUESTIONS:**

What is the nature of Art’s “survivor guilt”? What skills enable Vladek to survive the Holocaust? What are some of the ironies found in the book?

### WEEK 3

**TOPIC:** Reconciliation

**READING:** *Maus I and II*

**QUESTIONS:**

How does Art try to heal the rift between himself and his father by telling Vladek’s story? How does Spiegelman use dark humor in this book? How does the graphic format capture these events in a unique way?

**WEEKS 4 to 6:** *Persepolis*

**WEEKS 7 and 8:** *Fun Home*

**WEEKS 9 and 10:** *Hyperbole and a Half*

**WEEK 11:** *Waltzing with Bashir*

**WEEK 12:** What is a graphic novel and how does it depart from other forms of literature?

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