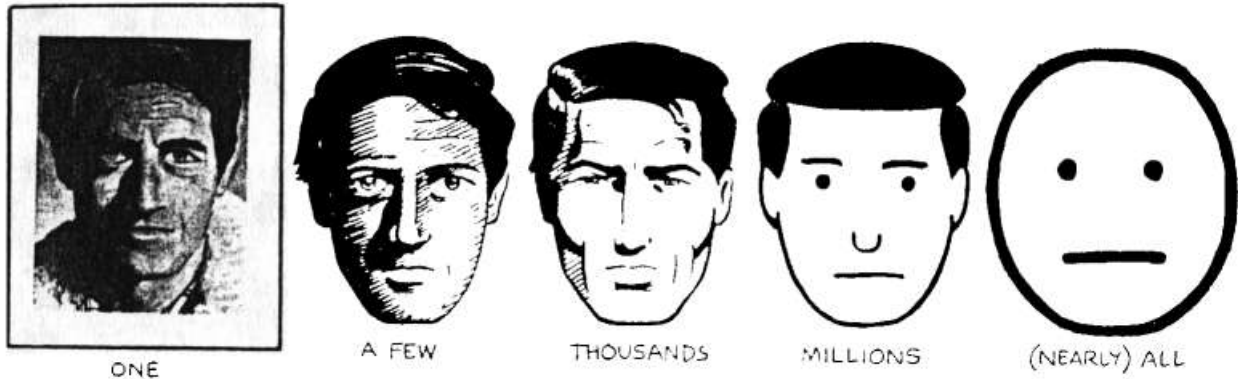Comics Technique

In Understanding Comics, Scott McCloud argues that a face drawn with great detail can represent only one specific person, but that a face drawn with few details—a smiley face, for instance—could be almost anyone.

ONE   A FEW   THOUSANDS   MILLIONS   (NEARLY) ALL

1. Describe the faces in Maus. Are they iconic (could be anyone) or particular (could only be Vladek)?

2. Why do you think Spiegelman drew the characters this way? Hitler reduced Jews to vermin. Is Spiegelman doing the same thing? Why?

3. What adjectives would you choose to describe Spiegelman's artwork? Generally, comics artists draw their works twice the size of the eventual published product. When the artwork is reduced by half, the resulting image is crisp and detailed. Spiegelman drew Maus at its actual size. Why do you think he did? Look carefully at the frames (the lines around the panels) and the gutters (the space between the frames). Gaps in the borders, and lines intruding into the gutters are considered "unprofessional." Why do you think Spiegelman drew Maus this way?

4. Where do you think the artwork is most detailed? Where is it roughest? Is there something about those moments in the story that calls for a particular way of drawing?

5. Choose one panel from Chapters 1-3 and analyze it.
   - Describe characters
   - Describe what other details you notice in the frames
   - What is the overall FEELING you get from this panel
   - Consider the pairing of words in this panel. Do the words match with the drawings in terms of feeling and tone? Explain