

Itai
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Humanities
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A Survivor

Vladek Spiegelman is a holocaust survivor, but only in a physical manner. He managed to survive WWII, P.O.W. camp, ghetto, concentration camps and a death camp but he was influenced heavily by those. He survived the war because of his skill, mind and surviving ability. These traits still influenced him heavily but not necessarily a good way- he wanted to do everything for himself and because of his age it hurt him physically. After the war he became even more of a perfectionist than before, and after Anja's death- he started to suffer even more from depression. He married another woman that he didn't love and thought was useless and seems ill and lonely without Art. His traits made Mala leave him and almost caused him death once. He was a great survivor of the Holocaust, but it affected him heavily.

When the war started, Vladek was sent to the front lines in the Polish defence against the Nazis. When the Nazis captured him and sent him to a P.O.W. camp, he knew what to do in order to get released. When he got back to his home he knew how to trade, get jobs and papers and to avoid the Nazis. In the ghetto, he found food, made bunkers and stayed alive. In Auschwitz, he avoided being sent to death, got food, sent messages to his wife (which is what kept her alive), got jobs in the camp and survived everything that the Nazis did in attempts to kill him. Those deeds didn't save only him, but also his wife, family and friends. He used his survival skills in order to survive, but the experience changed him a influenced his adult life.

After the war, Vladek followed his childhood dream and moved to America with his wife. At that time he started acting different, the calm and kind Vladek was replaced by a perfectionist and selfish one. In the beginning of Maus II, Vladek and Art are filling bank reports

Comment [1]: He still acted kind to Anja

Comment [2]: but i don't to change it now

and they miss by one dollar. Art says it's good enough but Vladek (that has more than enough money) goes crazy. A similar thing happened when Art wanted to throw out a box of cereal with barely any cereal left. Those things happened because for years, during the war, Vladek never threw away food or wasted money during the war. This is an example for how his traits that would have been useful during the Holocaust affected him badly in the rest of his life. Another example is when Art lights a cigarette using a wooden match and Vladek gets angry because he wants to save them even though Art suggests to him more (Maus II p.20).

All of these show that Vladek was a great survivor. In order to survive the horrors he went through during the Holocaust, he needed a specific mindset, and he clearly managed to achieve it. But, he kept this mindset after the Holocaust and became even more perfectionist person. These are the traits that caused his son to fight with him and his second wife to leave him. Vladek was a great physical survivor but he didn't survive mentally.