

## Omnivorous Reader

# YDC recommends remembrance books in April

OR observes Holocaust Remembrance Month by reviewing three books, each famous and interesting in its own right. The Holocaust was one of the greatest tragedies in human history, and OR dedicates this issue to all the survivors of the Holocaust, and all those who perished.



### Night – A stark, short memoir that started out as 865-page personal history

*Night* by Elie Wiesel is a riveting and emotional autobiography about his experience in the Nazis concentration camps throughout World War II. Wiesel was born Sep. 30, 1928 in what is today Romania. Hungarian authorities let the German army deport his Jewish community to concentration camps in 1944, when he was 16. He was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp to die.

During his extraordinary imprisonment Wiesel went through some of the most unimaginable conditions in human history and came out no more a child but as a man. As a 17 year old, I cannot imagine the horror and tragedy that this man went through at the same age. Reading this quote my heart sank in my chest as if never to rise again, “From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes as they stared into mine has never left me.”

After reading this powerful book I have a better understanding of life in the Holocaust on a more personal level than ever before. This book is a real indication of what life really was like and a true depiction of a boy’s determination to stay alive. Elie Wiesel has received many awards, most notably the Nobel Peace Prize. Others include the National Jewish Book Award for Modern Jewish Thought & Experience, Medal of Liberty, National Humanities Medal, Lifetime Literary Achievement Award, Presidential Medal of Freedom, and U.S. Congressional Gold Medal plus dozens of honorary doctorate degrees from American universities. Through all the awards there is nothing more rewarding than life.

*Che Demczuk, 17, is a junior at the Lab School of Washington in the District of Columbia.*

### Maus: A Survivor’s Tale – the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize

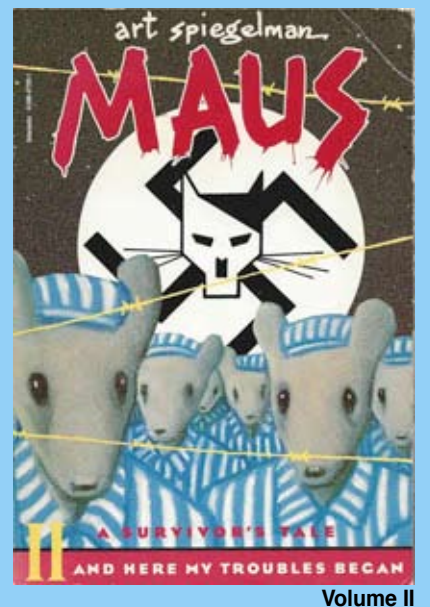
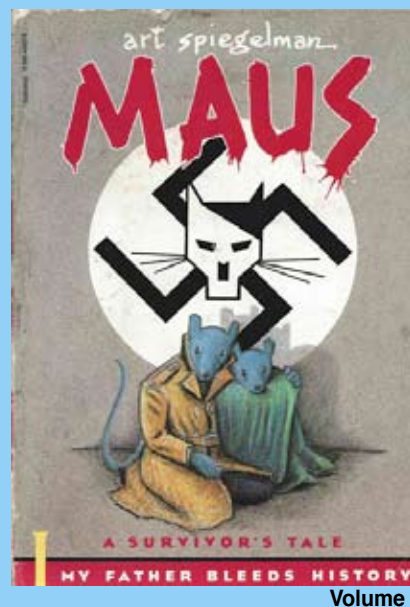
If you haven’t heard of *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* by Art Spiegelman, you should learn about and read it immediately. *Maus* is a two-volume black-and-white graphic novel revolving around the story of the author’s father’s experience during World War II, with anthropomorphic animals including mice, cats and pigs.

The first volume, *My Father Bleeds History*, strongly reflects what it was like to be a Jew in Nazi-occupied Poland. *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began*, reflects Spiegelman’s father’s time in Auschwitz towards the end of the war. Compared to the first book, I consider the sequel to be more uplifting, through it showing characters’ survival.

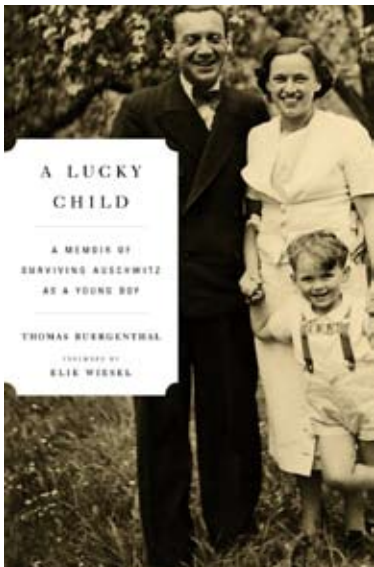
Although not all of it is happy – it is about the Holocaust – *Maus* contains a nice message that even with traumatizing experiences, the central character and his fellow survivors have gone on to live happy lives.

The story pervasively kept me in suspense, and I couldn’t stop reading. I strongly recommend these books to those who enjoy graphic novels and want to learn more about the Holocaust and World War II.

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### A Lucky Child – 60 years afterward, a prominent human rights expert looks back on the hope and hard work that helped him survive



*A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy* is the touching survival story of Thomas Buergenthal, who went through the infamous Polish death camp at the tender age of ten. Separated from his mother and then his father, he relied on his wits and Aryan looks to make it through ghettos, camps, death transports and even a stint in the Polish Army.

Young Thomas was first sent to the ghetto in Kielce in central Poland, where he was only saved from death when he volunteered himself for labor, saying, “Captain, I can work.” At his arrival at Auschwitz, there was no selection (the process where inmates are either admitted into the camp or sent directly to the gas chambers to die), because the transport Thomas was on had come from a work camp, so the Nazis assumed the weak and frail had already died.

In the camp, Thomas became an errand boy for the head Kapo (guard) of the bathhouse, or sauna, as it was sarcastically

called. By working hard and staying out of sight during selections, Thomas managed to survive through the notorious Auschwitz Death March to another camp and more transport, which started just nine days before the Soviets would liberate the Auschwitz. The march was in January and winter took its toll on him. By liberation in April 1945, he was in the German Sachsenhausen camp just 22 miles from Berlin.

Thomas Buergenthal went on to a distinguished legal career as an international human rights expert. He served on the International Court of Justice in Europe from 2000 to 2010. Today he is on the faculty of George Washington University’s law school.

*A Lucky Child* is a terrifying, and yet encouraging, tale of perseverance, hardiness and, most of all, good fortune.

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