Ellie’s position is that *Maus* is not really—finally—about the Holocaust. Here the Holocaust is simply a background to Artie’s personal/familial problem. Read the excerpt from Ellie’s paper first, then Blair’s response to Ellie, and then Lauren’s response to Blair. Then decide the extent to which you agree with Ellie on this point.

**Ellie:** From the moment you open the first page of *Maus*, it is readily apparent that there is really nothing in it reminiscent of other Holocaust works. Written from Spiegelman’s point of view, *Maus* moves beyond an innovative telling of his father’s story to the point where it ceases exist as a work on the Holocaust to become simply his own story.

In the two volumes we read, it begins with a long overdue visit to Vladek’s home, with a caption telling the reader that he hasn’t seen him in two years. To bookend this moment, the second volume ends with Vladek being too tired to continue recounting his story as he calls Art by his dead brother’s name... He complains of feeling depressed, reporters hounding him and how he just doesn’t “feel like a functioning adult” (43). We see him proportioned as a child, going to his therapist and unloading his troubles about writing, his inability to connect to Auschwitz and how he “can’t even BEGIN to imagine what it felt like” (46).

While, nominally of course, *Maus* continues to be about the Holocaust, in the other sense of ‘about,’ it is about Spiegelman himself and his own struggle. As we discussed in class, he has a great inability to access the Holocaust (also seen in the text) and that *Maus* serves as an attempt to fill that gap. However, he struggles to such a great degree with the fact that he wasn’t there and that his father’s stories can’t do it justice (ie the need for his mother’s journals because without them his book is incomplete, or how his father says he will tell the story as Art wants it told) that *Maus* becomes such a failure of any representation that it really only deals with the current day Art and his story, over that of Vladek’s.

Vladek’s story becomes a foil for this... [The Holocaust] is simply background to Spiegelman’s own problem.

**Blair:** “Spiegelman’s intolerance for his father’s behaviors and his pretty much absolute unwillingness to help him with tasks that he is now too old to do on his own, all while insistently trying to glean his father’s story, wearing him out in the process, were really hard for me to deal with.”

**Lauren:** I very much agree with Blair here. I also, (fortunately) have not had a tormented relationship with my father or mother but even so, I’d have to imagine that basing a story about the Holocaust on one’s relationship with the survivor is somewhat irrelevant. If Spiegelman is really trying to use a “new medium” in order to explore the “un-explorable” then perhaps he should try to not be so selfish. The entire story seems tainted to me.