Characteristic Of Vladek From Maus: A Survivors Tale By Art Spiegelman

A character from the comic books who has been very meaningful to me is Vladek from “Maus: A Survivors Tale by Art Spielgelman”. Vladek was a character where he described himself as basically being a young ambitious boy one point in his lifetime. He mentioned to his son Artie “I was at, that time, young, and really a nice, handsome boy.” Vladek mentions this because he was trying to get his point across that the war changed him from the nice boy he was to who he has become now. Which is one who seems to be lonely, miserable, and more hostile towards others and himself. Throughout his work in “A Survivors Tale”, one could view how much he has changed from the beginning and towards the end.

Before the Holocaust Vladek was easily able to be persuaded and well-off. He danced with a girl named Lucia who was young and poor. Lucia was really invested in the relationship, where she would initiate engagement. She would mention to Vladek “We have to plan for out futures, and- forget her make me happy!” Although Vladek didn’t see the relationship as she did, he was more so careless for Lucia and her feelings.

During the Holocaust Vladek was loving, protective, resourceful. Whereas Anja was intelligent, wealthy, but unstable mentally and emotionally. Anja was Vladek’s first actual love, but also wife. They survived the war together and both of them made many sacrifices. Vladek was always there for Anja, for example when she wanted to die to, Vladek told her “No darling! To die, its easy… but you have to struggle for life!” “Until the last moment we must struggle together! I need you! And you’ll see that together we’ll survive.” Another example included the

risk of giving up Richieu. “I have a good friend, a pole, who’s willing to hide my son until the situation gets better.” This was at the time when giving the baby was a risk for the safety of it.

After the Holocaust, Vladek became easily disturbed and anxious. The most important part is he became a survivor of the Holocaust. Mala at the time was a survivor as well, but also subordinate and insecure. Their relationship was unhealthy, they experience financial and emotional problems. They would treat one another as servants or easily become angry and irritated with one another. Finances was a problem because they would use it to control one another, as a power tool. “She had to erase a hairbrush from the bill because he wouldn’t pay for her personal items- how could a couple live like that?”

The primary qualities of Vladek is that he was a survivor of the Holocaust. He has sacrificed a lot, but what makes him such a memorable character is that he does not ask for an apology or seem to look for empathy from others. Vladek tells his story of the Holocaust from an outsider standpoint. The way he describes it, it comes from a viewpoint in which it seems like he didn’t really go through it much because he avoids the pain. He speaks of it in a way in which he hasn’t received any tragedy from it, though I believe it is a form in which he may seem numb to it.

Vladek’s experience through the Holocaust shaped him into the person he is. It has made him more specific and fixed about things, such as spending money or things needing to be in order.

He mentions in his reading for example “Wait! Put everything back exactly like it was, or I’ll never hear the end of it!” This represented how OCD or a neat Vladek is, this was said when

Mala was yelled at Artie to put things back in order, before Vladek sees. Apart from being OCD, Vladek is also very money insane.

Although Vladek seems to be this way because of the Holocaust, but he also has attributes that are impacted simply by his own personality. For instance, Vladek can be emotional at times, there was an example in the reading in which Vladek shows character traits of being very emotional during his heart attack. He tells his wife and Artie about his heart attack because he wanted Artie to call him back. This is due to who he is as an individual and not limited to the Holocaust having an effect during certain parts of the novel. Page 11 of the novel showcases an example of this side of him. Since Vladek lost or missed a young part of his life, his personality traits are affected by this, but not limited his experience in the Holocaust. He lost Richieu and Anja, which does play a small effect on why he acts the way he does as well.

The Holocaust changed Vladek over time, he is petty at times when problems come up. For example, on page 20 of him and Artie getting into an argument that seems to be petty about a box of matches. Vladek seems to be petty throughout that page throughout the novel, he mentions “Jeez! I’ll buy you a whole box of Wooden matches!” and “Always Artie is nervous- so like his mother- she also was nervous.” Vladek gets stuck on unnecessary problems that are not much of a big deal.

At times Vladek can be inconsiderate of Artie as well making him feel guilty. He showcases this personality trait by telling Artie that he shouldn’t be smoking because he doesn’t like it, it’s bad. When Artie wants a cigarette and coffee, Vladek becomes demanding and

emotional because Artie leaves Vladek to. This was because he wanted to save the matches, since he doesn’t like things to go to waste or waste them himself. This also had a little to do with the Holocaust, since he had very few during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust has played a huge role in why Vladek has emerged into the person he has become. The way he interacts with his son for instance shows a great deal of hostility. He mentions on page 73 of the comic book “You only would break me the rest of my plates.” Vladek cannot seem to leave the Holocaust behind, his experience in the Holocaust hinders his everyday life. It has an impact in how he interacts with others and his son Artie is an example of it. When Vladek mentioned “You only would break me the rest of my plates”, it showed characteristics of possessiveness from the war.

The physical affects that the Holocaust had on Vladek were just as much of an impact as it had on his mental state. An example in the comic book that displayed this was “No. Everything Vladek went through. It’s a miracle he survived. Uh-Huh but in some ways, he didn’t survive. He ran out of the hospital against his doctor’s advice he says that he doesn’t trust the doctors here… Its crazy. He looks like a ghost!” Although, Vladek survived the Holocaust because he was still living, his state of mind and physical appearance showed the impact the Holocaust has on him.

Vladek deals with burden because of his experiences in the Holocaust, as well abandonment issues due to Anja for example. He has many pictures of Anja around his desk because he feels

such a loss. Vladek relies on people and generally needs them as well. Vladek's

experience in the Holocaust has really took a toll on him and deals with the aftermath effects from it. Although the Holocaust was very tragic and difficult to overcome, he values the experience of it. Vladek wants his experience and story of the Holocaust to be heard, but he will not admit to it.

Vladek's characteristic is a combination of the Holocaust experience and his own personality as well. Vladek knows what it is to have a lot and to have nothing as well. He knows what it is to have love, but also to have lost, for example with Anja. Although Vladek can be

impatient and rude at times, he at one point was not like that. He is one who has learned and become a survivor in difficult time like the Holocaust.

When comparing and contrast who Vladek was before and after the Holocaust, one could say he used has become very tidy and OCD like after the Holocaust. Before the Holocaust he was protective and after he has become more so controlling than before. He has become frugal and on a savings mode like. The Holocaust has highlighted some of his characteristcs that he has had a few before, but also gained new ones as mentioned.

There are always different authors that impact a character in a novel and for the character Vladek, that seemed to be an artist named Max Ernst. The styles and pieced from Max Ernst were used during the graphic novel of Maus. The way that Max Ernst impacted the character was by piecing together photos of time periods to show the story of the Holocaust. Max Ernst impacted Maus work in a great way, because it helped him create such a style that was different in a way adding a style known as collagist.