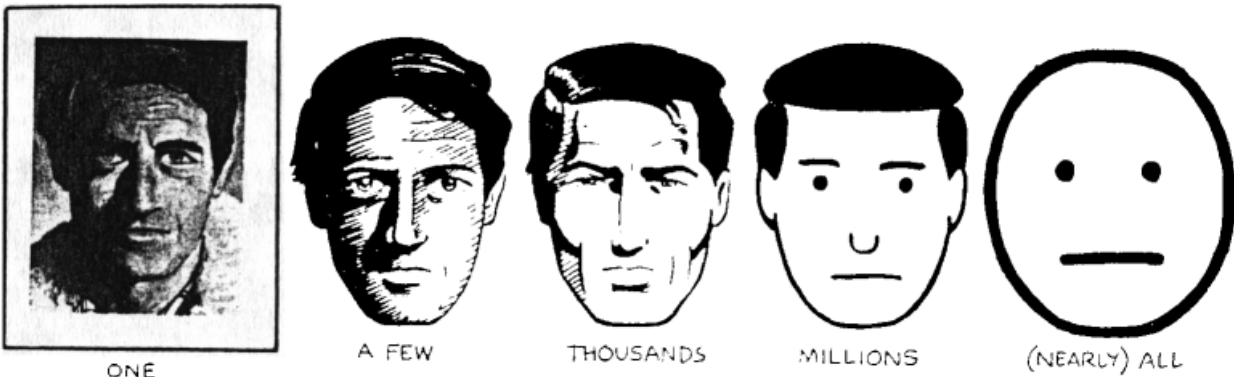


## Comics Technique

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.



Source: Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (DC Comics, 1999): 31.

1. Describe the faces in *Maus*. Are they iconic (could be anyone) or particular (could only be Vladek)? Why do you think Spiegelman drew the characters this way? Hitler reduced Jews to vermin. Is Spiegelman doing the same thing? Why?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. In the terminology of publishing, an image "bleeds" if it extends to—and implicitly beyond—the edge of the page. Where in book one does Spiegelman use a "bleed"? (See page 157, book one.) Why? Most panels are contained in frames. What effect does a frame create, and what effect does a bleed create? Explain the subtitle: "My Father Bleeds History." (Also look for the bleed in book two.)

Taken from the Chicago Humanities Festival Study Guide for *Words & Pictures*, 2001.