



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
OISE | ONTARIO INSTITUTE  
FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

January 28, 2022

Mr. Parkison,

I hope you and your family are well. I write to share my objection to your school board's recent decision to remove the graphic novel *Maus* from the eighth-grade curriculum in your district.

I am a literacy researcher, teacher educator, and a grandson of Holocaust survivors. Although I currently teach at University of Toronto, I grew up in Oklahoma and regularly visited Tennessee. In my 20-plus years as an educator, I have taught *Maus* to hundreds of students and teachers, co-designed curriculum for the book, and published articles with youth and teachers about their work with *Maus*. With my co-authors, we share examples of how to teach *Maus* in our book, *Teaching Literature to Adolescents*, which is in its fourth edition and currently used in over 60 university-based teacher education programs nationwide.

After reading several national news articles about this decision, I read the minutes from your recent board meeting. I commend Mrs. Julie Goodin, Mr. Steven Brady, and Mrs. Melasawn Knight for their arguments about the instructional value and necessity of Art Spiegelman's memoir. As they persuasively state, there is, simply put, no more powerful text to teach the Holocaust to students in grades eight or nine.

Unfortunately, their presentation about the importance of this text did not persuade your board. Mr. Pierce moved to remove *Maus* from the curriculum because of its use of several "vulgar" words and, as Mr. Shamblin noted, "one picture."

There is no sound pedagogical or curricular rationale for this decision. On the other hand, as any eighth-grade student knows, much harm comes from censorship. I urge you and your board to reconsider.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Simon'.

Rob Simon  
Associate Professor  
Academic Director, Centre for Urban Schooling  
Director, Toronto Writing Project  
Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning  
OISE/University of Toronto  
252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON M5V 1J6  
[rob.simon@utoronto.ca](mailto:rob.simon@utoronto.ca)