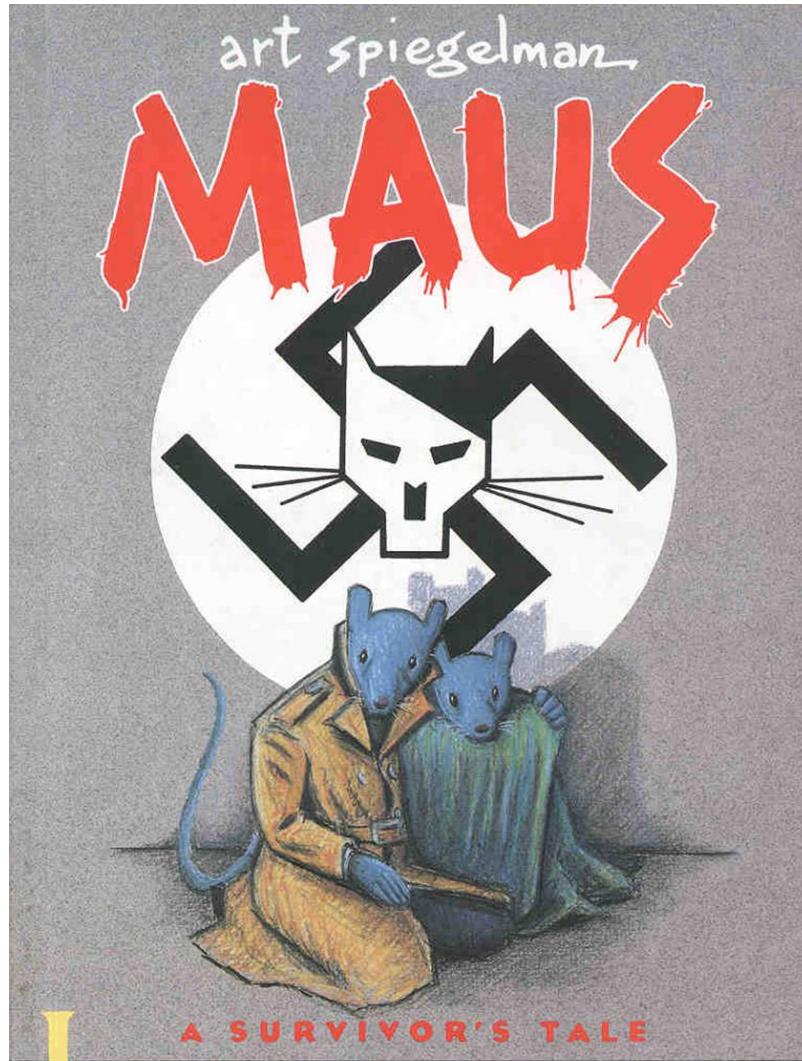


# Using a pluriliteracies task for qualitative assessment in higher education

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# Task based on Maus (Art Spiegelman, 1996)



Task: design an alternative book cover for Maus, and write about it

Purpose: raise student awareness of the two central semiotic modes of pictures and language (Kress, 2010)

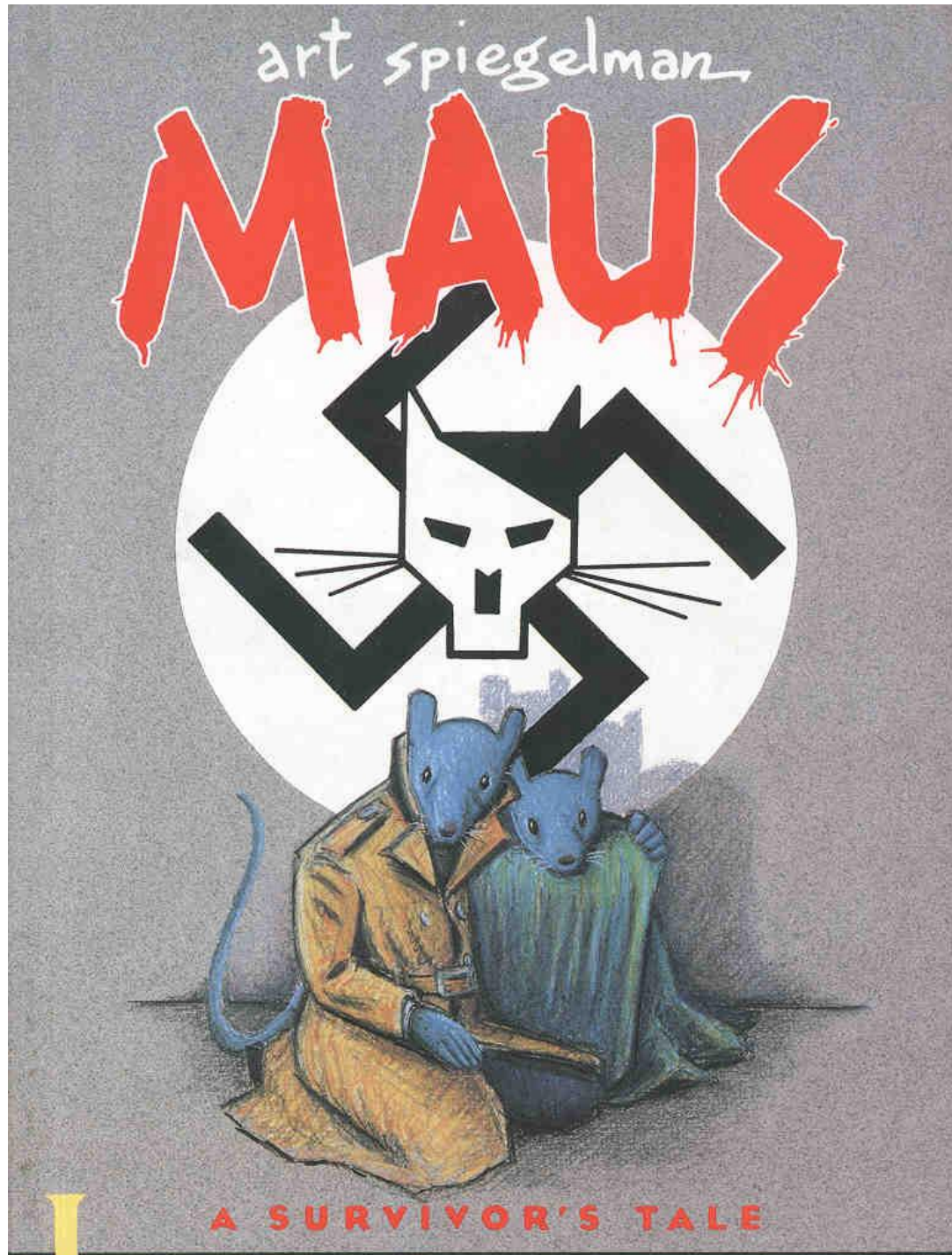
Assessment purpose: these modal ensembles of picture and text give evidence of the learning process

“The assumption that the sign — as the motivated relation of form and meaning — is made on the basis of the sign-maker’s interest, legitimates a ‘reading back’ from signs made in all and any modes to uncover the meanings and values attributed by the sign-maker to the cultural/semiotic resources used (Kress 2015)”

Corpus: 46 alternative book covers  
and their texts

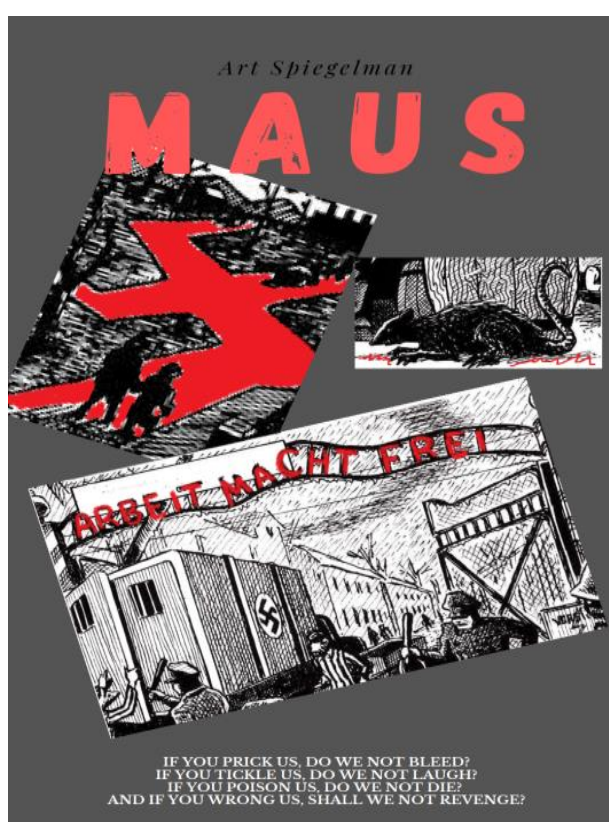
Contrastive analysis of a selection of  
four samples – two more effective  
and two less effective choices for the  
pictures and texts (Berry, 1995,  
Christie & Derewianka, 2010)



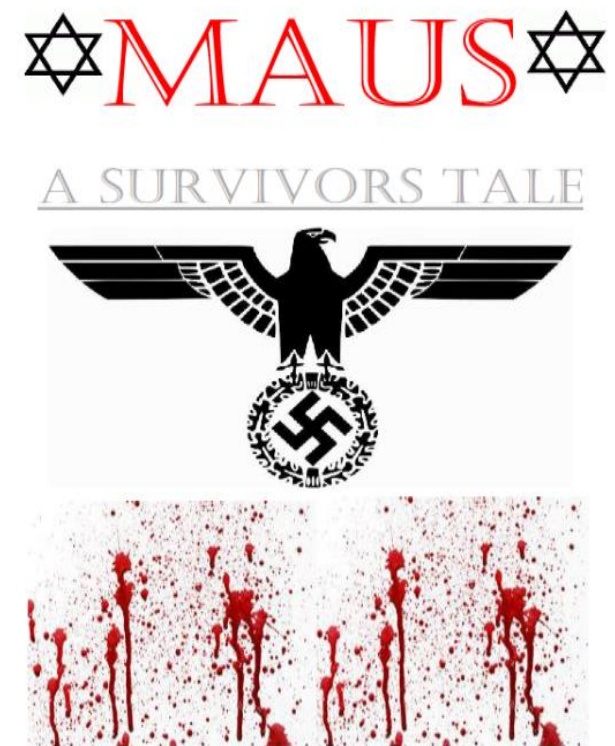
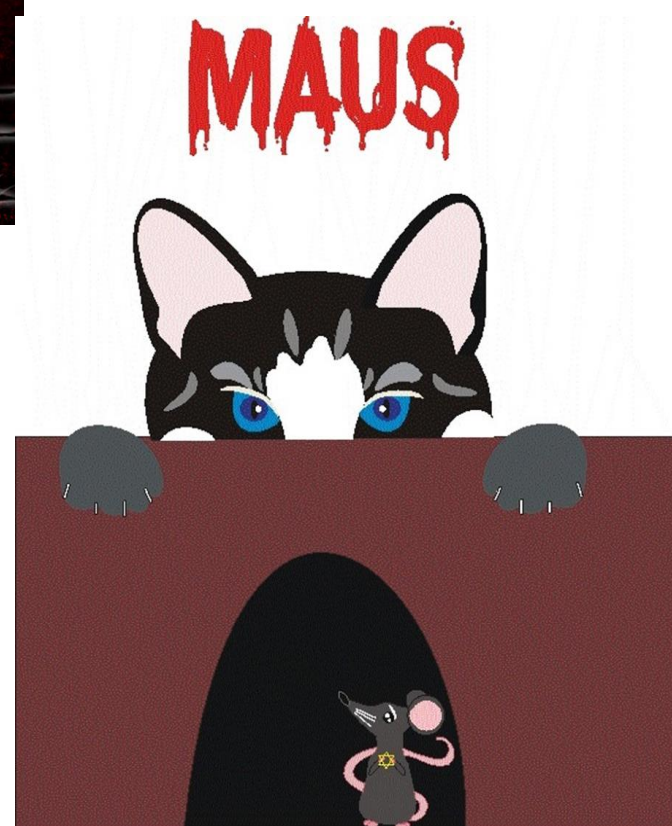
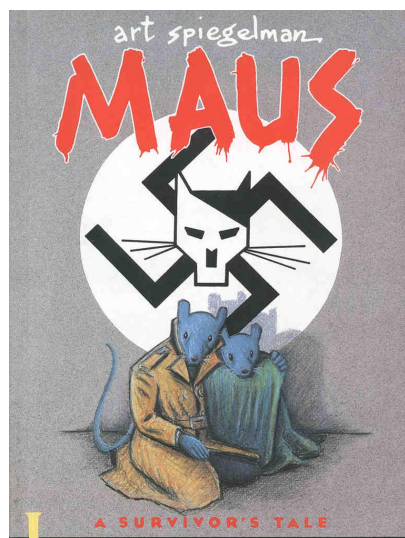


The original cover





The redesigned covers



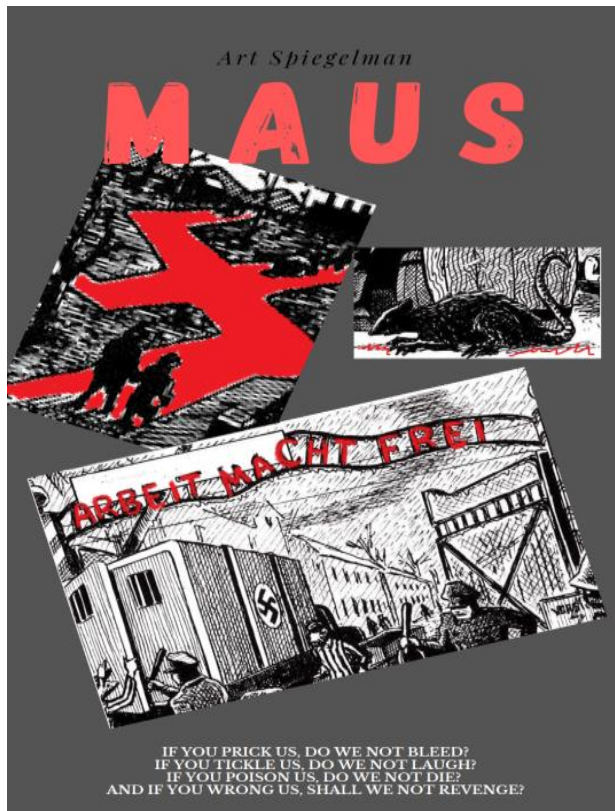


The two most effective covers

Red is used in imaginative ways...

The sign of the swastika is built in unconventionally...

Sophisticated intertextuality...



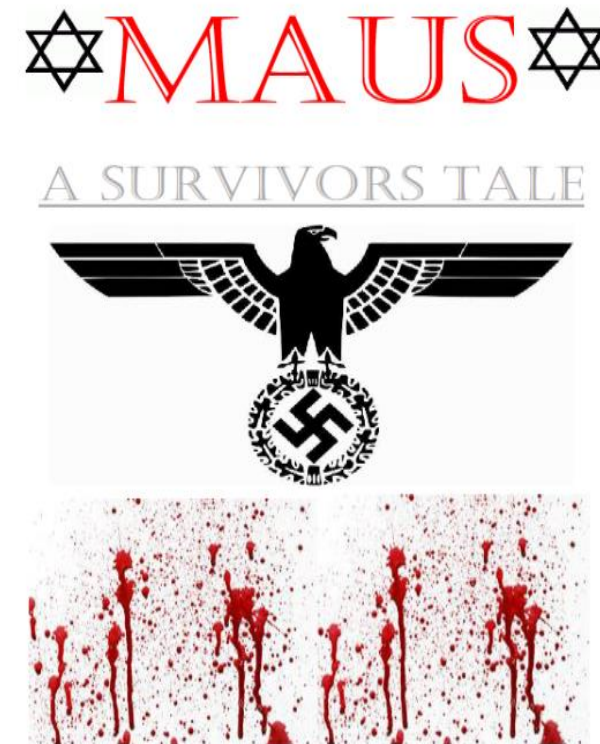


The two less effective covers

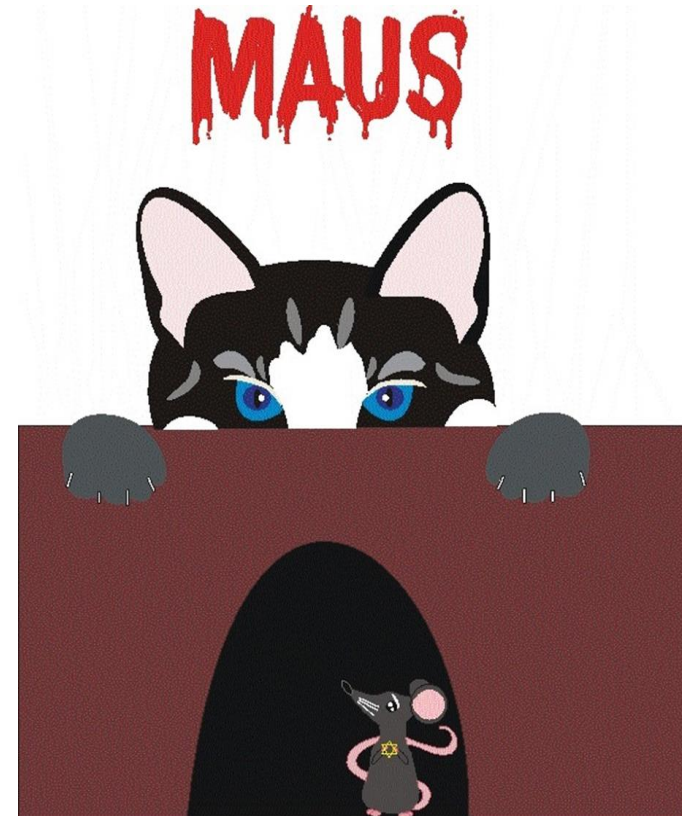
Red just represents blood...

Absent or highly conventional swastika...

Conventional intertextuality (star of David)...



The cat and the mouse... same choice but...  
More and less effective convers contrasted ...



# The texts

The most effective visual cover choices were accompanied by well-developed written observations



# The texts: effective modality

The most effective covers make a sophisticated use of modality with clear personal involvement

St 1: “I decided to include”, “As a way of reflecting”, “I think”, “I tried to maintain” ...

St 2: “I had in mind”, “I wanted to transmit”, “I personally truly liked”, “I wanted to portray”, “I felt”, “I think”, “I wanted to display”, “I decided to add” ...

The texts: less effective modality  
The less effective covers use impersonal constructions that reflect lack of personal involvement. St 3: some involvement such as in “I chose”, “I believe”, “I thought”, but mainly impersonal choices such as in “it is shown”, “was presented”, “are connected”, “there is” ...  
St 4 : one exception, “(I)made”. All the other choices are impersonal: “is”, “there are”, “are”, “represents”, “are”, “is” ...

The texts: effective lexical chains

Lexical chains again reflect the visual choices.

St 1 chooses signs that portray the historic context and centres on the anthropomorphic figures, thus choosing mainly the words

Nazi/Jews. St 2 merges cats/Nazis vs mice/Jews and the predatory relationship between the two. Meanings are coherently complemented in the linguistic and visual repertoires.



The texts: less effective lexical chains

The two less effective grammar choices in the writings reflect the same kind of rather unimaginative meanings of the signs on the covers, sometimes ignoring misrepresentations (such as the haughty mouse posture on one of the covers). Here again, meanings are coherently complemented in the linguistic and visual repertoires.

# Conclusions

Drawing on multimodality and the notion of modal ensembles, the present analysis has shown that effective tasks make bolder visual choices that blend traditional symbols with less established ones, accompanied by well-developed written observations on the meaning-making potential of the choices that were made.

# Implications for teaching

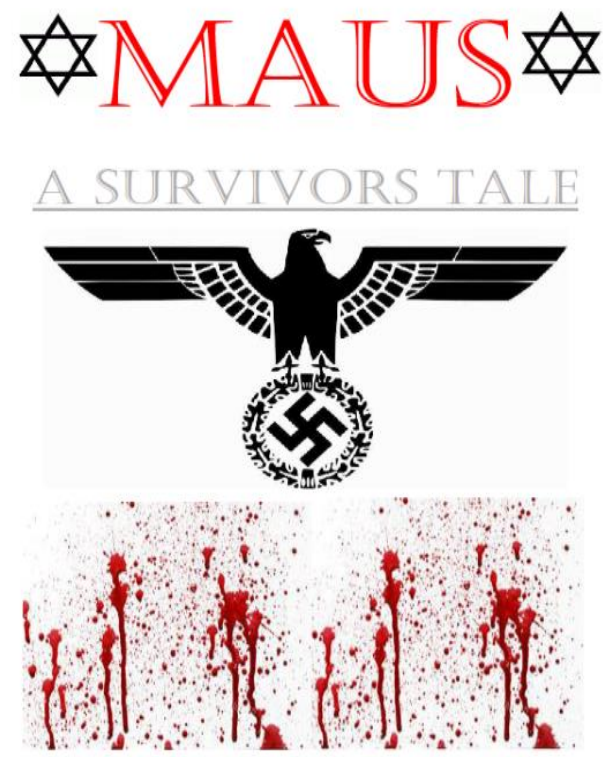
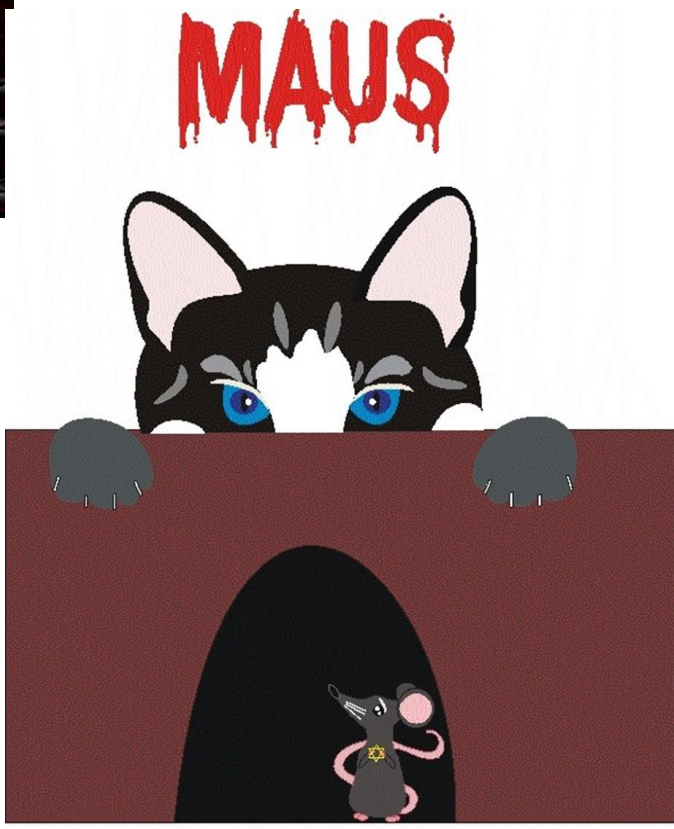
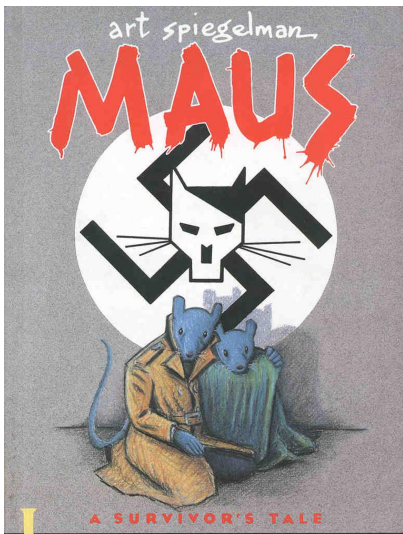
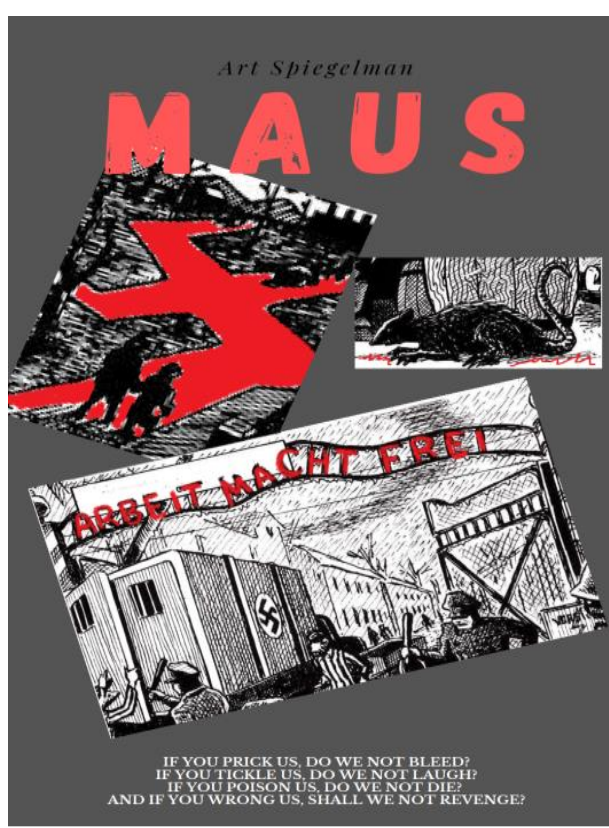
Restricting students to exclusively linguistic means of meaning making runs counter to social justice language education principles based on the provision of relevant and meaningful learning experiences (including assessment) (Okan, 2019).



# Implications for teaching... a few questions

What views of language and learning do teacher education programs in specific contexts project? How are the notions of language and learning theorised in these programs? What kind of educational philosophy supports qualitative assessment using modal ensembles?

Ana y Melina las dos diapositivas siguientes simplemente las dejé por si a caso alguna imagen allí puede servir





art spiegelman

# MAUS



A SURVIVOR'S TALE

