1) Introductory paragraph

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* attempts to create a system of signs, both visual and linguistic, in order to understand the construction of and to undermine notions of Jewish and German identity. The narrative and its historical context become the structures through which Spiegelman addresses a tradition of discourse about the nature and creation of racial identity. Spiegelman's presentation of the tension between the visual and the linguistic, the deconstruction of structures of narrative and historical logic, and the role of imagination in the construction of categories, both physical and conceptual, implicate the reader in his or her understanding of the text, and compel the reader to read, quite literally, between the lines. Using Daniel Itzkovitz's essay, *Passing Like Me*, this essay will attempt to explain the usefulness of Spiegelman's creative approach to identity and the progress it has made in the discussion of Jewish identity.

2) Weaving together multiple texts and making them speak to one another

The film quickly switches from "Hanukkah Past" to "Hanukkah Present," and depicts Mordechai as a popular, heroic figure in his community. In this characterization as the "Hebrew Hammer", Mordechai appears to fit in with modern culture, unlike he had when he was a child. Particularly, Mordechai's language changes to resemble that of Black Americans. This, Itzkovitz argues, is one of the most deceptive parts of performance: "Language becomes the central symbol of the corruption" (51). The use of language here reflects both similarities and differences to Itzkovitz's description of Jews using blackface performances. It is different in that the depiction is positive rather than negative. Yet it is similar in that it is clearly a performance and an exaggeration, particularly for the use of comedy. This, as Itzkovitz describes, reflects the "always unstable shape-shifting" of Jews, which is what makes their identity so elusive (43). The ability of Mordechai to so quickly shift from a marginalized Jewish boy to a popular superhero

reflects Itzkovitz's idea of chameleonism and social fluidity. He explains how this was a common theme in popular culture: "The commonsense notion that Jews were 'highly imitative and adaptable,' as one *Atlantic Monthly* author put it, permeated American culture in films, high-modernist texts, popular fiction and the press" (45).

3) Citing Class Discussion

Much like the linguistic identity that Jay describes, religious background also necessarily contributes to the establishment of one's perspective. The power that religious background has over imagery perception is a particularly powerful example of the aforementioned influence. For instance, grave concern has long been expressed regarding images considered to be "fraught with background," (class 9/24). Such images are seen as lacking an instructive narrative, effectively creating an opportunity for sacrilegious veneration of the subject, itself (class 9/24).

People rely on narratives to contextualize what they see (class 9/24). But each individual grows up in slightly different home, community and religious environments; thus, we create a context for a given subject, based on our distinct experiences, religious or otherwise.

4) Setting up a quote

Example #1:

Adler portrays a theology in tune with the continuing revelatory capacity of God's presence that is always pluralistic and personal:

> As I understand it, theology's task is to allow the texts of the tradition and the lived experiences of religious communities to keep revealing themselves to one another so the sacred meanings both of text and of experience can be renewed. In the course of this process, God becomes present in our midst.

Theology enables two modes of religious expression—the lived experiences of religious communities, and the texts of a particular tradition—to emerge before each other.

Example #2:

In the Song of Songs, a polysemous sexuality overcomes a sexualized, objectified body:

> The Song's capacity to give a voice to its female protagonist is directly related to its polymorphous experience of sexuality. Polymorphous eroticism, in which feelings of pleasure are distributed over the entire surface of the body, was regarded by Freud as the most primitive infantile developmental stage (oral-passive) . . . . Linking woman's desire to polymorphous eroticism, and to the entire playground of bodies in relationship, denies this foundational assumption of male sexual dominance.

No longer a body resonate with the "sexual iconography" of genitalia, the feminine figure in the Song of Songs enjoys a "polymorphous eroticism" that opposes the objectifying male gaze.

5) Use of passive voice

When it works:

For I do not gaze at the icon; instead, the icon sees me: "I look, with my invisible gaze, upon a gaze that envisages me; in the icon, in effect, it is a matter not so much of seeing a spectacle as of seeing another gaze that sustains mine, confronts it, and eventually overwhelms it." This is seeing as unseeing—far less a vision than a relational experience of the Levinasian other as face. Robyn Horner describes this encounter in the appropriate passive voice: "what is made visible in the icon is the gaze of the invisible other." Iconic seeing really is a being seen by an Other.

When it does not work:

"The encounter is described by Robyn Horner in this way . . . ." Or: "When persons gaze at an idol, the idol is seen by them as an object of their visual field."

Assignment for Second Paper:

Analyze how visual images or visual language make an argument in one of the texts we have read within the "Bodies" or "Food" section of the syllabus. You want to make an argument about how images or visual language function in your chosen text. The implicit claim here is that images and visual language do more than verify or confirm an argument; they can actually take part in or conflict with that argument. In other words, images do things, and I want you to explore in this paper how they do things. You may use material from the Moodle or blog posts, but you are not required to do so. The focus of this paper should be on one text, and a particular section of that text.