

MANGA 101

Manga is a style of comic books that began in Japan. Like comics worldwide, manga relies largely on pictures to tell a story. What makes manga distinct, however, is the style of the pictures. The word manga means ‘whimsical pictures’ in Japanese. Instead of the realism of American comics, manga style includes a common set of characteristics leaning into whimsy, including characters with big eyes for expressing emotion, tiny mouths, simple noses using dots, and round heads with pointy chins.

Unlike American comic books, which are usually printed in full color, Japanese manga are almost always published in black and white. Japanese manga is read right-to-left rather than left-to-right, which is the norm for English language publications

In Japan, manga are typically released on a monthly or a weekly chapter-by-chapter basis through manga magazines. Some of these have been in circulation since 1968. If a series is popular enough, its chapters are then collected and published into volumes called *tankōbon* volumes, which usually feature a few chapters of the overall story.

In the early 20th century, authors created manga mainly for children. By the mid-20th century, however, the market had expanded greatly. Writers and illustrators began creating manga aimed at different groups of people. Today people of all ages enjoy reading manga.

Shonen manga. This type of manga is geared towards young teens between the ages of 12 and 18. Translated into English as “young boy,” it’s full of action, adventure, fancy martial arts, and comic relief.

Popular examples are *Dragon Ball* (1984–95) and *Naruto* (1999–2014).

Shojo manga. This type of manga is the version of manga made for girls between the ages of 10 and 18. Translated into English as “young woman,” the stories are about romance and friendship.

Popular examples are *Sailor Moon* (1991-1997) and *Ouran High School Host Club* (2002-2010).

Kodomo manga. This type of manga is directed at children. The word comes from the word *kodomo* or children. Its goal is to entertain as well as to teach morals and values.

Popular examples are *Doraemon* (1974-1996), *Hello Kitty* (2007-2008), and *Astroboy* (1951-1981).

Many popular manga series, like *Dragon Ball*, *Sailor Moon* and *Naruto*, have been turned into video games and anime, or Japanese animation, for television and movies.

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