



Jillian Rudes

# MANGA IN LIBRARIES

A Guide for Teen Librarians

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available at [alastore.ala.org](https://alastore.ala.org)

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# **MANGA**

[mahn-gah] *noun*

Comics that originate  
from Japan

available at [alastore.ala.org](http://alastore.ala.org)



# INTRODUCTION

## Why Manga?

Readers should have access to manga in their libraries because of its emotional and epic storytelling, its unique and breathtaking artwork, its relatable and transformative stories about humanity, and the endless variety of genres, characters, conflicts, and plots found in its pages. Manga is by far the most-read medium in my library, and readers visit multiple times a day to borrow it from the collection. There is definitely no one type of reader; patrons of every age, gender, background, and reading level read manga. So, if readers want to read manga, your library should provide them with access to it.

### **MANGA EMPOWERS READERS**

For many of us, visual storytelling is what makes manga so engaging. We are consumed daily with visual media: television, movies, video games, and social media. These are all examples of visual storytelling, visual media that we are engaged with. Visual media grabs our attention and connects to our emotions, and those emotions are what allow us to make connections to the content. Manga is just another example of the visual media that we consume as a society.

Many of us also read manga to escape the reality of our daily lives and to reduce stress. Runners say that they get addicted to running because their bodies begin to crave exercise. I think the same goes for reading, as our minds also crave exercise. I read every day, and the moment I open a book, my blood pressure drops, my shoulders relax, and my mind frees and expands itself as I get lost in a story. This is something that I tell educators and parents all the time, when they express their concern that a teen is reading “too much” manga. I remind them that we want teens to fall in love with the feeling of reading. Reading manga is pleasurable, safe, and freeing for readers.

## INTRODUCTION

I also think what engages many manga readers is that one can find a personal affinity for or a personal connection with a character. Manga usually focuses on the story of a main character, and the reader follows that character and lives through their experiences. Manga allows readers to be exposed to different perspectives, to the representation of diverse lived experiences, and to the conflicts and growth that will support their own personal development. I think this is particularly helpful for readers who are still trying to find their way in the world. It helps readers to understand themselves and their relationship to the world. Manga can also carry universal human truths and that may be why it is read all around the world.

Essentially, manga can empower readers. Through visual storytelling and character connections, manga can help build a reader's confidence and independence. Readers can develop their critical thinking skills and become responsible decision-makers. They can also make emotional connections that motivate them to persevere.

## **MANGA ENHANCES LITERACY**

Reading manga can lead to a lifelong love of reading. Manga not only engages a community of readers, but it can also create new readers. Manga can increase reading engagement and boost the reading confidence of readers. Manga readers are among the most dedicated and voracious of all readers. They read more because there are multiple volumes in many manga series, and they read consistently because manga connects to their personal stories.

### **MANGA SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF LEARNING STYLES AND LITERACIES**

Manga allows readers to build visual literacy skills, which includes understanding and interpreting the reading direction, frames, text bubbles, visual clues, and Japanese Visual Language. This language is the visual vocabulary and the visual representation of a character's emotions and thoughts. This visual information gives readers context clues so that they can decode and infer character motivation, conflict, and resolve.

Manga stories are complex and allow readers to engage in an analysis of literary devices such as plot, theme, symbolism, foreshadowing,

conflict, and character development (through emotions, thoughts, words, and actions), which allows for a higher level of critical thinking.

Manga also helps readers develop verbal literacy and communication skills, especially since there is not an overwhelming amount of text on a page like prose. As such, readers can build their vocabulary and comprehension skills by pairing the visuals and the text to make inferences and interpret meaning.

Manga offers readers an opportunity to reflect on the storyline and characters, as well as the art style of the *mangaka* (manga artist). Readers can focus on the format and the style of manga, which includes panel (size and design), shading, tone, patterns, textures, imagery, and the relationship between the text and the art. Not only can readers enhance their art appreciation skills, but they also can enhance their art technique skills by engaging in lessons about the manga art style.

Age-appropriate manga can also be a support system for the social-emotional development of readers. Manga can often reflect the lives of readers and their lived personal experiences, which can help them find self-acceptance, as well as build empathy and interpersonal skills. Many titles focus on issues like friendships, dating, and sex, as well as bullying, anxiety, and overcoming obstacles.

Manga also provides readers with the opportunity to become culturally literate. Manga is often a lens into Japanese culture where readers can learn about school life, food and cooking, religion, history, fashion, holidays and celebrations, music, sports, and more.

\*Excerpted from Jillian Rudes, "A School Librarian's Journey through Manga Collection Development," *Knowledge Quest* 50, no. 4 (2022): 37-38.

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## **MANGA TRANSFORMS LIVES**

Everything we want readers to learn and experience can happen through manga. It is our job as librarians to make sure that we continue to offer these opportunities for readers to not only read manga but also to reflect on what they have read, to share what they have read, and to celebrate what they have read.

# MANGA 101

**IN JAPAN, MANGA WAS INITIALLY CREATED TO** entertain and provide literacy support to readers, but manga has since spread throughout the world, and there is now a widespread awareness of this global phenomenon. There is a lot to learn about building a manga collection, designing manga programming, and providing equitable manga services. To make the best decisions about developing a library culture that celebrates manga, it is essential that you have a foundational knowledge of this popular medium.

## WHAT IS MANGA?

*Manga* (pronounced mahn-gah), which means “whimsical pictures,” are comics created and published in Japan. The term *manga* originated in the nineteenth century but did not apply to manga as we know it until the twentieth century. The panels and text bubbles in manga are read from right-to-left in the Japanese style, in contrast to Western comics, which are read from left-to-right. Manga is published in black-and-white, although sometimes manga can include pages with color.

Manga is often published and sold in *tankobons* (individual volumes). These individual volumes include multiple chapters and are often one part of a series. These multiple chapters usually first appear in installments in weekly or monthly Japanese print or digital magazines. Manga series can have multiple *tankobons*, so make sure to consider the space available in your library and your budget before building a manga collection.



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE VISUAL STORYTELLING

Japan has a long history of visual and narrative storytelling. Dating all the way back to the Nara period in Japan were *emakimono* (picture scrolls). *Emakimono*, created on long rolls of either rice paper or silk, were horizontal and often included calligraphy and illustrations to depict the sequence of everyday life events of the Japanese people. *Emakimono* were told in chronological order, and the scrolls were slowly unrolled as the story progressed. There was also *sumi-e* (ink-and-brush painting), which was brought to Japan by Zen Buddhist monks. *Sumi-e* was horizontal, monochrome, and consisted of simply lined ink-and-brush paintings that combined calligraphy, poetry, and nature. *Sumi-e* was used to capture the beauty and complexity of the natural world.

Advancements in visual storytelling led to *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) during the Edo period in Japan. *Ukiyo-e* depicted the interests of the people in Japan, which included samurai, geishas, kabuki actors, sumo wrestlers, and supernatural folktales. *Ukiyo-e* was created by carving a design into a woodblock, then inking and pressing the woodblock onto Japanese mulberry paper; colors were then added by hand. Woodblock printing led to the creation of *kusazoshi* (illustrated books). These books were about ten pages long and made up of folded and bound paper that depicted the events of everyday life in Japan. Dominated by illustrations, these books were color-coded by genres. There were *kibyoshi* books for adults, identified by a yellow cover; and there were *akahon* books for children, identified by a red cover. *Akahon* was a popular form of entertainment, but with the advent of the printing press, it would soon be replaced by *manga*.

There were also the performance arts, another type of visual storytelling in Japan. *Kabuki* theater (Japanese drama) included all sorts of audiovisual performances such as dancing, miming, and singing, as well as music on the *shamisen* (a three-stringed instrument). There were also elaborate costumes, wigs, and *kumadori* (stage makeup for kabuki actors). The *kumadori* allowed actors to visually express emotions on their face, with exaggerated lines around their mouth and eyes, and symbolic colors that represented human emotions. During the Great Depression, *kamishibai* (paper theater), also known as street theater, became a popular form of storytelling. *Kamishibaiya* (storytellers) would create hand-painted original art on storyboards and combine these illustrations with narrative storytelling. These small wooden

stages for *kamishibai* were transportable on bikes so that the *kamishibaiya* could easily ride around neighborhoods. This form of Japanese visual storytelling provided entertainment for both children and adults. Many *kamishibaiya* would later become *mangaka* (manga artists).

The sequence of events in *emakimono*, the monochrome and simple lines of *sumi-e*, the exaggerated facial expressions of *kabuki* actors, the wood-block-printed *kusazoshi* that brought entertainment to the masses, and *kamishibai*, which was an incubator for talented *mangaka*, all had an impact on the manga art form today. In many ways, it seems that *manga* evolved from a long history of Japanese visual storytelling. But we must also consider that in the 1850s, when Japan opened to the West, the people of Japan transitioned to the modern world, which had a huge impact on their society, technology, arts, and culture. Later, the development of manga was influenced by Western comics, as Japanese artists were looking to emulate the West and therefore adopted the style of cartooning and graphic narratives found in newspapers and other mediums. After WWII, the people of Japan were seeking affordable entertainment, and this led to the mass production of manga magazines and books. This demand for entertainment influenced the Japanese publishing industry and the manga that we now purchase for our libraries.

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## THE HISTORY OF MANGA

To learn more about the history of manga, read *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, by Frederik L. Schodt. This book dives into the culture of comics in Japan, as well as its origins, its evolution, and its value in a global market. You can also read *Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History* by Eike Exner. This book challenges the idea that manga developed from traditional Japanese visual storytelling, and instead argues that manga was influenced by foreign comics. Also, check out *The Citi Exhibition: Manga* edited by Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere and Matsuba Ryoko. This book will provide an understanding of Japanese visual storytelling and how to read, interpret, and analyze manga.

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## HOW TO READ MANGA

Many readers have experience reading Western comics, so they are likely comfortable with that style of visual storytelling. But for readers who are new to manga, there can be quite a challenging transition. Western comics are read from left-to-right, but the pages, panels, and text bubbles of manga are all meant to be read from right-to-left.

### Manga Panels

When following the panels in a manga, start each page in the upper-right corner. Then move to the left to the next panel or move down to the following row of panels starting on the right. (See figure 1.1.) *Yonkoma* manga, or four-panel manga, is read by starting with the panel at the top of the page, then moving down to the next panel below.

### Manga Text Bubbles

When following the text bubbles in manga, start each page in the upper-right corner of the upper right panel. The text bubbles should be read in a right-to-left and up-to-down order (see figure 1.2).

FIGURE 1.1 | Manga Panels

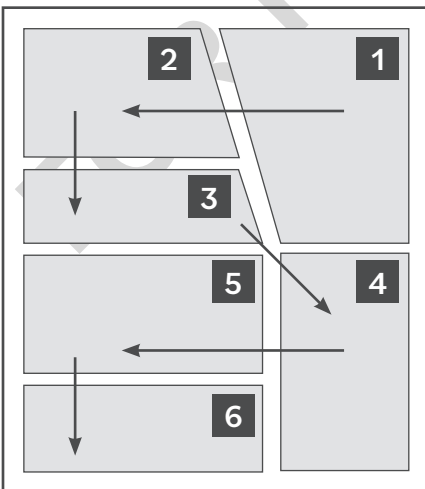
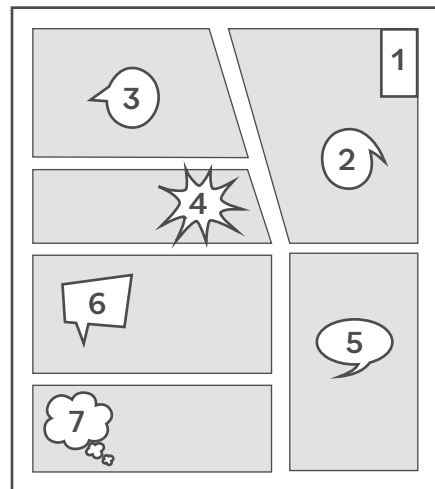


FIGURE 1.2 | Manga Text Bubbles



# APPENDIX B

## Manga Book Lists

### CHAPTER 1: Manga 101

*Adachi and Shimamura*

*Ascendance of a Bookworm*

*Attack on Titan*

*Berserk*

*Bleach*

*Bloom into You*

*Boys Run the Riot*

*Bungo Stray Dogs*

*Cardcaptor Sakura*

*Chi's Sweet Home*

*Creepy Cat*

*Death Note*

*Erased*

*Given*

*Golden Kamuy*

*Horimiya*

*I Want to Be a Wall*

*I'm in Love with the Villainess*

*Jujutsu Kaisen*

*Kaiju Girl Caramelise*

*Kaiju No. 8*

*Knights of Sidonia*

*Laid Back Camp*

*Little Witch Academia*

*Mobile Suit Gundam*

*Monthly Girls' Nozaki-kun*

*My Hero Academia*

*My Love Mix-Up!*

*Naruto*

*Neon Genesis Evangelion*

*Nicola Traveling Around the*

*Demons' World*

*One Piece*

*Our Dining Table*

*Our Dreams at Dusk*

*Perfect World*

*Pokémon Adventures*

*Princess Jellyfish*

*Sailor Moon*

*Sasaki and Miyano*

*So I'm a Spider, So What?*

*Sweetness & Lightning*

*Tokyo Ghoul*

*Ultraman*

*The Way of the Househusband*

*Whisper Me a Love Song*

*Witch Hat Atelier*

*Wotakoi: Love Is Hard for Otaku*

*Yo-kai Watch*

## CHAPTER 2: Manga Collection Development

*Asadora!*  
*Ascendance of a Bookworm*  
*Attack on Titan*  
*Beauty and the Beast of Paradise*  
*Lost*  
*Bleach*  
*Blue Lock*  
*Blue Period*  
*Cardcaptor Sakura*  
*Cat Massage Therapy*  
*Chi's Sweet Home*  
*Creepy Cat*  
*Death Note*  
*Demon Slayer*  
*Dr. Stone*  
*The Elusive Samurai*  
*Erased*  
*The Evil Secret Society of Cats*  
*The Fox and Little Tanuki*  
*Fruits Basket*  
*Fullmetal Alchemist*  
*The Girl from the Other Side*  
*Haikyuu!!*  
*Horimiya*  
*Jujutsu Kaisen*  
*Kaguya-sama: Love Is War*  
*Kaiju No. 8*  
*Little Witch Academia*  
*Look Back*  
*Lovely Muco!*  
*My Hero Academia*  
*My Love Story!*  
*My Love Mix-Up!*  
*My Neighbor Seki*  
*My Neighbor Totoro*  
*Naruto*  
*Nicola Traveling Around the  
Demons' World*  
*One Piece*  
*One-Punch Man*  
*Ouran High School Host Club*  
*Perfect World*  
*Penguin & House*  
*Pokémon Adventures*  
*A Polar Bear in Love*  
*The Promised Neverland*  
*Ranma 1/2*  
*Rooster Fighter*  
*Sailor Moon*  
*A Sign of Affection*  
*A Silent Voice*  
*Splatoon*  
*Spy x Family*  
*Toilet-Bound Hanako-kun*  
*Tokyo Ghoul*  
*A Tropical Fish Yearns for Snow*  
*Wandance*  
*The Way of the Househusband*  
*Witch Hat Atelier*  
*Yokai Watch*  
*Yotsuba&!*  
*your name.*

**CHAPTER 3: Representation in Manga**

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Apple Black</i>                       | <i>Disorders</i>                      |
| <i>Attack on Titan</i>                   | <i>My Hero Academia</i>               |
| <i>Beastars</i>                          | <i>My Wandering Warrior Existence</i> |
| <i>Bleach</i>                            | <i>One Piece</i>                      |
| <i>Cardcaptor Sakura</i>                 | <i>Overlord</i>                       |
| <i>Carole &amp; Tuesday</i>              | <i>Perfect World</i>                  |
| <i>Clock Striker</i>                     | <i>The Promised Neverland</i>         |
| <i>Doughnuts under a Crescent Moon</i>   | <i>QQ Sweeper</i>                     |
| <i>Dragonball</i>                        | <i>Queen's Quality</i>                |
| <i>Even Though We're Adults</i>          | <i>Real</i>                           |
| <i>Fire Force</i>                        | <i>The Rose of Versailles</i>         |
| <i>Fruits Basket</i>                     | <i>Saigami</i>                        |
| <i>Haikyuu!!</i>                         | <i>Sailor Moon</i>                    |
| <i>Hammer</i>                            | <i>Satoko &amp; Nada</i>              |
| <i>How Do We Relationship</i>            | <i>Sex Education 120%</i>             |
| <i>Hunter x Hunter</i>                   | <i>Shino Can't Say Her Name</i>       |
| <i>I Hear the Sunspot</i>                | <i>A Sign of Affection</i>            |
| <i>I'm in Love with the Villainess</i>   | <i>Skip Beat!</i>                     |
| <i>Kimi Ni Todoke</i>                    | <i>Slam Dunk</i>                      |
| <i>Komi Can't Communicate</i>            | <i>Snow White with the Red Hair</i>   |
| <i>March Comes in like a Lion</i>        | <i>Soul Eater</i>                     |
| <i>My Brain Is Different: Stories of</i> | <i>Still Sick</i>                     |
| <i>ADHD and Other Developmental</i>      | <i>Sweat and Soap</i>                 |

**CHAPTER 4: Social-Emotional Learning and Manga**

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Beastars</i>               | <i>Love in Focus</i>          |
| <i>Boys Run the Riot</i>      | <i>Our Dreams at Dusk</i>     |
| <i>Demon Slayer</i>           | <i>Perfect World</i>          |
| <i>The Golden Sheep</i>       | <i>The Promised Neverland</i> |
| <i>Haikyuu!!</i>              | <i>A Silent Voice</i>         |
| <i>I Think Our Son Is Gay</i> | <i>Wandance</i>               |
| <i>I Want to Be a Wall</i>    | <i>Yuzu the Pet Vet</i>       |
| <i>Komi Can't Communicate</i> |                               |

**CHAPTER 6: Teaching with Manga**

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*Boys Run the Riot*

*Komi Can't Communicate*

*Tokyo Ghoul*

*Yuzu the Pet Vet*

FOR REVIEW ONLY

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