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Manga as Education, Recreation, and Emotional Intelligence

“By stripping down an image to its essential "meaning", an artist can amplify that meaning in a way that realistic art can't.”

-Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*

Many people all over the world are intrigued about manga and find entertainment in these small books read from right to left full of astonishing pieces of art. These books allow the reader an escape into a different reality and offer creativity for the lonesome mind. Although some see graphic novels as immature and empty-headed, however, like manga, it should not only be seen as children's book but as a space for guidance, emotional intelligence, and escape from reality. With manga already becoming part of the American culture, how is manga influencing its readers? Could manga be seen as a tool that fosters insight and experience along with battle controversial issues?

In many situations, manga has been labeled as the same name as anime, a style of animation originated and heavily centered in Japan, in which case they are not the same. As one originates from the English word animation, where the other isn't animated nor fully colored. Then in this case, what exactly is manga? In some cases, it is seen as a mass media production that draws a huge number of consumers, and some see

it as an unwanted medium where violent and sexually explicit content undermines integrity. However, there is more than one accepted definition of manga. According to Oxford dictionary, the definition of manga is a style of Japanese comic books and graphic novels, typically aimed at young adults as well as children. According to the book “God of Comics”, the term manga refers to Japanese comics, cartoons, and caricatures of any kind and has been used since the seventeenth century. Manga is a medium and another form of storytelling that can cover many topics including history, mystery, politics, romance, and bibliographies to various works of classical literature. Visual learners often find it beneficial to learn through the use of images and storytelling to absorb difficult topics such as physics, calculus, or economics. Manga can, therefore, address these subjects through its use of visual language and story-based communication for readers to assimilate pieces of knowledge together.

The use of clear facial expressions and common demeanor allows for people who have a hard time distinguishing emotions in traditional text, be able to learn through the depiction illustrations of a person’s face or body language. As Robert Rozema’s *Manga and the Autistic Mind* states, “Indeed, manga typically caricatures emotional states: angry characters are drawn in grotesque distortions; sad characters are shown with tears streaming down their cheeks.” With the use of clear distinctions between one facial expression to another. Graphic novels could serve as a guideline to perceiving human emotions in order to foster better connections to others. In *Making Comics*, Scott McCloud explains eight techniques he found in manga storytelling: iconic characters, sense of place, wordless panels combine with aspect to aspect transitions, subjective

motion, genre maturity, character designs, small real-world details, and emotionally expressive effects; these elements have made manga successful in Japan and North America. “All of these techniques amplified the sense of the reader's Participation in manga, feeling of being part of the story, rather than simply observing the story from afar” (McCloud 217). Manga is also faster to read than normal textbooks, owing to the fact of its relatively limited use of text, powerful illustrations, intelligent spacing, and cinematic techniques. It also tends to be very compelling as it can be physically or digitally drawn from many angles, allowing readers to become immersed in the story and be interpreted more deeply by a wider audience.

While people of all ages read manga, it is largely popular with people in their early teens to mid-twenties as it serves as another form of entertainment that takes one away from a busy day at work or allows one to find comfort. In *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*, manga expert Frederik Schodt agrees that manga has the power to express people's hopes and fears: “[Manga is] where stressed-out modern urbanites daily work out their neuroses and frustrations. Viewed in their totality, the phenomenal number of stories produced is like the constant chatter of the collective unconscious, an articulation of a dream world.”(5) It is quite similar to being lost in a Harry Potter book or exploring another chapter of Treasure Island as your mind runs free with imagination and thought. People seek a different experience from their usual routines and reading a story can help one find it. Schodt continues, “...manga still maintains then to link up or fill in the gaps between frames, to create the story in their minds. Readers can apply their own colors and voices to the characters.”

(5) Manga remains a valuable medium for stress relief and allows one to foster his or her own creativity something already produced.

Many autistic individuals perceive images better than words and find it easier to learn through mediums such as manga thanks to the illustrations, limited text, and picture-specific storytelling. According to “Manga and the Autistic Mind,” “manga often features highly detailed, photorealistic drawings of buildings and landscapes, employed as backgrounds or as stand-alone, scene-setting panels” (Schwanz). Adolescents with ASD can find these realistic buildings captivating, and this idea could lead school educators to consider bringing school-friendly graphic novels to the education system for the reason of having teens use more cognitive skills rather than only text reading. The use of imagery for storytelling has the potential to be more than childish, becoming a panel-to-panel literary piece that can focus on the real-world dialogue of two people with contradicting opinions and humanizing differences. For social studies courses such as History, students are often asked to observe what a political cartoon is saying during the time it was drawn. With this, we are already putting learning through images and illustrations into our education, so why not try bigger pieces of work that have the potential to cover an entire play?

With its widespread access, manga can be found almost anywhere, such as libraries, bookstores, and online. People everywhere have found ways to not only enjoy and learn from mangas, but to cope with one's problems and find a place to explore their individuality, or to protect it. “These students are using their reading to help them deal with issues in real life, which Freire (1983) argued to be one of the purposes of

education and literacy” (Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy). There is a wide range of manga that relates to school and real life issues that can occur in one’s developmental years. These topics include bullying, relationships, making friends, self-identification, and finding courage. Young teens and adults are able to find compassion or similarity in a character’s situation and their own, therefore helping them to handle with struggles that they can encounter every day.

Not only is it a strong storytelling medium, it is a strong weapon that provides the people of Japan the voice of an author who is fighting for a controversial issue. Based on the article “Serial dissent: why comics are at the vanguard of transgender rights in Japan”, a Japanese comic called *Wandering Sons* has brought a sympathetic story to a mass audience. Attention was given to once a small community considered as aliens, to a bigger culture that connects them to others. Creating a change of perspective of the minds of readers to a face the explanation of how young boy who wants to be a girl could be sane. In the words of Britt Peterson, the writer of the article, “...echoing the preoccupations of Wandering Son's characters--the Japanese Education Ministry issued a broad set of protections for transgender students, including the right to choose a male or female school uniform and locker room.” With the influence of this controversial manga, it has shed some light on harder to approach topics in Japan and created stepping stones to possible solutions to social issues. On the contrary, LGBT rights of modern Japan has not improved with just this manga and remain quite the same to this day, such that there are no equal rights for transgender adult workers, it has helped the

younger age group in terms of education and has brought a source of hope for those who wanted to wear a headband instead of short hair.

Another benefit manga could bring would be that it is translated into several languages and in styles of Chinese(Manhua) and Korean(Manhwa) which are very similar to Japanese. They provide an opportunity for non-native readers to pick up some of the language or cultures of the country. Due to the fact it could be translated and be mass produced to be sold in other countries, America has been one of its greatest customers because of accessibility. A problem with printed manga and manga magazines is that they are no longer as consumer friendly as they were ten years ago.

Manga sales have dropped by 47% since 2007 and magazines printing companies have declined in production and consumption, some even ended up bankrupt. Advances in technology also became a factor, as many readers find it more convenient to find it online with a click of a mouse. Video streams, computer games, and the declining birth rate in Japan, along with other mediums pulls one away from going into bookstores that are striving to keep open. Even a leisure read of a physical magazine has dropped. According to “The Death of Manga: Failure to Adapt,” “What was once manga’s greatest strength, is now perhaps one of its greatest weaknesses: its young audience.” The teens or kids in school have been big readers for big magazine corporations, however since they don’t have the money, fewer magazines get purchased and editors of these companies have not kept up with the new trend of fast and free online access. Therefore, less manga is being purchased at stores. Yet another reason would be copyrighted issues since artist risk getting their work pirated and used online by other websites that offer it

without purchase. Although print copies are starting to lose their popularity, online reading has risen exponentially. There are still millions of people who would go online to read the latest chapter of popular mangas no matter where their location is.

With the background information of the influence of manga on individuals and in Japan along with how it is doing in the present day, how has manga managed to become so dominant among foreign audiences? First, let's look at the roots of modern manga as seen by a massive pop culture movement in Japan during post world war two. An important figure in the beginning of Japanese comics was a man who published approximately 150,000 pages of comics of many different genres, created a very popular animated series that started airing September 1963 known as Astro boy and is considered the god of comics. Who is he? Osamu Tezuka. A manga artist, cartoonist, animator, film producer, and activist. He was a great influence on modern comics and used techniques such as cinematic storytelling that no other comic artist would have thought to use. It is and has been the popular work of mass art producers such as Osamu Tezuka that has caught the interest of comic and animation enthusiast from other parts of the world as it continues its legacy not only in its own country. This, therefore, encourages globalization to spread the mainstream medium of manga to an American audience.

Osamu Tezuka has been one of the few bridges that brought Japanese mediums and stories to an American audience, hence creating a bridge for each side to bring over their own works of arts and mediums. As the result of successful airing and viewing in America, manga and Japanese animations works has received popularity and received a

spot in the many medias everyone goes on a daily basis. Mass productions of manga have allowed few to become world-famous, drawing in more interest in Japanese comics, literature, and culture. Manga, however, didn't really become more accessible in the United states until translations became faster and accessible. From the data borrowed from Wikipedia, a very well known present series would be *Naruto*, a manga about a world of ninjas and a boy trying to fulfill his dream. First serialized in 1999 and has sold approximately 220 million in profit with a total of 72 volumes, *Naruto* still continues living through animations. The top selling manga to date would be the manga about the world pirates, namely *One piece*. With a total of 80 volumes thus far, it began in 1997 and has around 380 million copies sold in sales. These two series are examples of very successful manga not only in Japan but throughout the world. Both these authors spend a great amount of their time creating manga because of the high demand and the ability to produce more. Not only do they risk massive health problems, with a sleep schedule ranging 2 to 5 hours a day, they risk the support of readers and the possibility of series being cut if they don't create authentic manga. However, in the note's of manga authors and rare interviews, along with being a reader, I assert that the active readers and the thought of them, addition to the ability to connect thoughts or emotions with them , is what makes the panel to panel process worthwhile.

In conclusion, manga has reached a wide audience that connects the authors with it's readers despite language barriers and the many benefits to it. Aside from it providing emotional understanding, a new way for of learning, and different worlds to explore, it is being developed into big productions of animations that have gabbed a wide audience.

Manga has also spread its accessibility and consumption to a diverse audience through globalization. Although there have been many flaws behind the distribution of it through technology and print, it still remains a popular medium that gets viewed by hundreds of people daily and will always be a more complex place to explore than a children's book.

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Rubric for the Innovator Research Paper:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Focus	There is little or no sense of argument, and the paper wanders as a result. Generalizations and inconsistencies disorient the reader.	Central question(s) and thesis statement are present but fairly obvious. Argumentative focus is not consistently maintained or suffers from generalizations. The purpose and relevance of the discussion are not consistently clear for the audience.	Writer establishes central question(s) about the topic and a clear thesis (although it could be more complex). Writer typically maintains this argumentative focus throughout the paper. The audience gets a sense of purpose and relevance, although the argumentative structure could be better defined.	Writer establishes compelling central question(s) about the topic and a clear, argumentative thesis; this argumentative focus is honed throughout the paper. Writer communicates a clear purpose, making the relevance of the argument distinct for the audience.

<p>Content / Organization</p>	<p>Introduction neither hooks the reader nor establishes appropriate context for the thesis. Body paragraphs are underdeveloped or lacking. Conclusion is missing or does not clearly bring closure to the paper. Transitions are incorrect or missing. Quotations are missing or are dropped into the text. Sentence structure and vocabulary are in need of serious improvement.</p>	<p>A hook is attempted, but ineffective. Context for the thesis is either thin or overdone. Body paragraphs might show some of the writer's original thinking about the topic, but they are underdeveloped or inconsistent. Conclusion basically restates the main argument but does not bring a meaningful sense of closure to the discussion or leave a lasting impression. Transitions are effective sometimes, but in other places they are incorrect or missing. Quotations are mostly dropped into the text or are not integrated smoothly.</p>	<p>Introduction hooks the reader and establishes context for the thesis, although these elements could work more effectively. Body paragraphs develop the writer's thinking about the topic, but more varied patterns of development would improve the breadth and depth of the discussion. Conclusion makes clear how the central question(s) have been resolved, but could do more to add closure to the discussion and leave a lasting impression. Transitions are used effectively most of the time and most quotations are integrated smoothly into the text.</p>	<p>Introduction hooks the reader powerfully and efficiently establishes context for the thesis. Body paragraphs demonstrate breadth and depth of thought about the research topic through varied patterns of development. Conclusion is memorable, leaving the reader with a distinct sense of how the central question(s) have been resolved. Transitions link sentences and paragraphs smoothly and quotations are smoothly integrated into the text. Sentences are consistently sophisticated (varied, smooth, creative,</p>
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		Sentence structure and vocabulary clearly need more development.	Sentences tend to demonstrate sophistication in a couple of the following areas: variation, flow, creativity, mature vocabulary.	mature vocabulary).
Use of Sources	<p>Research sources are lacking or off-topic.</p> <p>Writer may string together quotations without taking time to paraphrase, comment, or analyze.</p>	<p>Research sources are fairly one-dimensional, focusing on a single perspective.</p> <p>Writer's own words are not consistently balanced with quoted material.</p>	<p>Research sources establish a couple of perspectives on the topic, but could be more thorough/varied.</p> <p>Writer does a good job of maintaining a balance of own words and quoted material.</p>	<p>Research sources are thorough and varied, establishing different perspectives on the topic.</p> <p>Writer balances own words (paraphrasing, commentary, analysis) and quoted material compellingly.</p>
Mechanics	Writing is seriously obscured by spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.	Writing contains many errors. Errors affect reader's understanding.	Writing contains some errors, but not at the expense of understanding.	Writing is polished, free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Grade: C+

For my revision grade, I would give myself a B plus or A minus.