

# Manga essay samples

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## History of Developing Manga

Isao Shimizu, author of 'the history of Manga' / 'Manga no Rekishi', cites drawings from the 12th and 13th century as the first manga texts. Today manga is part of the pop culture in Japan and the world over. It comprises of story-driven narratives (usually a complete novel-like work of an author), composed with stylized illustrations, flexible use of linguistic text (onomatopoeic and spoken) and discursive frames. It uses visual designs manipulated to function as iconographic. Manga has identifiable vocabularies and registers temporal spatial relationships into the characters in the narration to give them multiple voices, personalities and mental states to set variety/ specificity in ambience and perspectives for the readers. Therefore, manga refers to any printed cartoon while manga magazines are inexpensive collections of serialized stories that are often disposed of after one read (Bryce et al, 2010).

The biggest contributors to the growth of manga and comics are magazines and newspaper who ran comic strips to gain readership. Following their cue, monthly comic magazines emerged in the 60's that had 10 to 20 series installments of the same in each edition. Following the collapse of its economic bubble (1989), Japan shifted its focus from traditional academia to the more contemporary aspect of its culture. Thus, this new scholarship builds on the heterogeneity of Japan's dynamic pop culture as an expression of contemporary society. The 90's saw a growth of interest in manga by western academia a not only an object of research, but also learning aide to understanding the Japanese culture.

This growth marks the cultural flow of the Japanese culture from Japan

throughout Asia and into North America and Europe. It shifts the loci of globalization using visual culture from western countries by virtue of international appeal and trendsetting to represent manga as a complete visual culture that reflects the consumption patterns influenced by globalization. Japan then becomes the link between the West and Asia. Through the spread of manga, its glocalization (global localization) and appreciation into the western culture, the manga industry continues to grow and tap into the consumer market. In Japan, people who grew up in the 80's kept reading manga and publishers raised their target age to retain them. A good example of this trend is the popular comic; Shukan Shonen Jump's which translate to 'Dragon Ball' which until 1995 ran for 10 years (Bryce et al, 2010). The publisher recognized the growth of his readership, added more manga to suit the adults, and achieved a 6million circulation on 1995. Note that in Japan, children are in the habit of buying manga unlike in America where parents buy comics for them. This makes it natural for these children to buy manga when they become adults since it second nature to them.

## **Production process and industry practices**

There are four major steps in reproduction of manga on an industrial scale, typesetting, artwork, proofing, printing, cutting and binding. In the pre-war era, all these processes were handled in by individual enterprises but after the war, printing and binding were separate. To date, many publishers divide their work between competing press companies to prevent them from establishing a monotony in the market. Before printing, publishers have to place work orders with their preferred printers. They also buy the paper and arrange for its transport to the printers. Companies use specially printed

papers that cater for manga printing. Cheap paper is for high circulation and dyed to improve its dull appearance. In the postwar period, manga was a solution to cheap entertainment that children craved. However, this practice continues to cater for the explosion in demand by readers.

Another production aspect of manga is its tie-in with other industries. For example, 'CoroCoro' a popular manga magazines has text reference to video games such as 'street fighter II'. This type of practice gives manga magazines an edge in making financial gains of advertisements which industry players (video games and toy companies use to reach the extensive market manga has. Despite the obvious concern over commercialization of manga magazines, it gives them a chance to remain relevant in an era when video games are popular.

Manga magazines reflect the new trends of the contemporary society that their readers identify with. For example, many Shojo magazines have gay heroes in their narratives. Female readers identify with this since it offers them the option of having male heroes with feminine qualities, a departure from what Shonen magazines print. Another is in the context of the range of stories they capture, there are three distinct groups of manga publication. Each caters exclusively to its market, children, adult Shojo, adult Shonen and the independent magazines such as 'Garou'. Independent manga magazine give artists the freedom to experiment with different styles while the others aim to conform to publishing content that is specific to their target markets.

## **The Concept of Closure**

Closure is a concept of visual literacy (Kidder, 2012). In his acclaimed book 'Understanding Comics', McCloud (1994) conceptualizes closure, as the

assumption of reality even in a non-realistic representation such as is the case in manga. It is the perception of the whole when observing the parts. He illustrates this by having panels where his avatar (which takes the reference of Scott henceforth) appears in a three-part sequence. In each panel, the reader infers to their presence of Scott's legs despite the panel framing only the top half of his body.

McCloud further explained this concept by standing in between two panels that formed a gutter as his avatar Scott. The gutter being the space in between the two panels, this space according to him was quite literally the closure site (McCloud, 1994). He explained that the element of limbo in the gutter enables two separate images of human imagination to be transformed into one. This analogy clearly explains how in a very real sense comics achieved the state of closure. Although the closure appears to happen in the mind, there are strong implications that it actually happens physically in the gutter. Groensteen illustrates that in the incidence that there is no gutter but only a simple line separating two images, then the semantic relationship between the two images are bound to be the same. This only helps to explain further the closure concept in McCloud's sense since even without the presence of the gutter between the panels; they are still able to close. Apart from these basic explanations, there also theories on the borderless panel that is closely discussed in Will Eisner's *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*.

However, in McCloud's explanation, images and text imply strongly of a much literal meaning of the gutter. A factor Groensteen evidently objects to when he asserts that the gutter is essentially but an empty space and does not play any real significant role. However, from a close observation,

<https://assignbuster.com/manga-essay-samples/>

McCloud's concept bases its explanation on the gutter. Groensteen argued that the fact that the space in the gutter can be generative, allows for an element a narrative of lyric meaning since it creates a series of imagined panels that can be placed between the initially drawn panels.

In both cases, what McCloud calls "closure" definitely happens and the physical space that is the gutter would seem to be unnecessary to the process. McCloud is a popular scholar and therefore probably does not feel compelled to provide the kind of precision that academic scholars aim for. It seems likely that he takes for granted that the gutter merely symbolizes the viewer's reconstruction of the events implied by the panels and is not the physical site of it

McCloud refers to closure as an evolutionary trait that we develop over time. In comics, panels fracture time and space to show unconnected moments at a staccato rhythm. Therein comes the role of closure. It engages the reader/viewer in connecting these moments into a continuous unified reality via his imagination. The reader provides the details, movements and causality of events unlike the case of watching film. For example, McCloud (1994) uses two panels to depict a murder. In the first panel, he has an axe-wielder while the next panel has a blood-curdling scream against a cityscape.

It is therefore legitimate to conclude that closure essentially refers to the transition between the panels in the literal and visual presence of the gutter. They are like metaphors always vulnerable to attacks if taken too literally. Groensteen argues that although arthrology happens in the mind, it is able to describe the linguistic connection because the semiotics already.

The reader's imagination therefore determines who drops the axe, who screams and why or how hard the axe blow was. Just like what readers fill in

<https://assignbuster.com/manga-essay-samples/>

the details when reading a book, they fill in the blanks between the space panels.

## **Framing, word balloons, sound effects, Time and Panel Transitions**

Manga is usually comprised of story-driven narratives that are composed with exaggerated and flexible use of different, discursive and diverse frames together with linguistic texts that are often onomatopoeic or spoken. Various visual designs of specific color and font schema are manipulated to function as iconographic. As a result, they have instantly identifiable vocabularies that register and install the spatial and temporal relationships that are existent together with multiple perspectives and voices.

Both manga and comics share similarities in these aspects despite the use of different languages. The onomatopoeic character of the Japanese language makes sound effects fit better into word balloons look better than a print of the same in the English language. The lettering in manga is styled to express sounds that fit the situation. This enables the reader's build their imagination to hear and follow the changes in the characters emotions. It uses frames, which start the reading flow from the top right frame to the bottom left.

Word balloons also express the feelings of the characters and they change shape to suit the situation (Kidder, 2012).

Space translates into time. The staccato rhythm of frames in manga and comics provides the reader with a chance to transition from one particular moment to another. The reader relies on the content and context to create the period that events take place in. panel progression depends on the arthrology of the narrative. A restrained arthrology uses a bidirectional linear

panel sequence. This employs a multiframe to tell the story. This implies that surrounding panels have a significance in how the reader develops the story in his/ her mind.

Both manga and comics provide readers with a chance to examine the conflict with self and the society in escapist fashion. The reader defines the rules and determines what happens between the panel transitions without them conforming to what the society demands of them. Both genres develop stylized language and visual representations that immerse the reader into the world of manga and comic superheroes. It forms the basis of the visual pop culture that has seen the birth of these characters into mainstream media such as animations, video games and toys.

In Manga, when the uncaptioned narrative sequence together with the distinctive visualization of the sound effects are highlighted through effects like onomatopoeic words, the its difference to the Anglophonic comics is clearly defined. However, to fully understand it range of difference as well as relationship, it is significant and vital to consider the multimodality nature of manga that allows it to function print medium. Print mediums are perfect candidates that can be analyzed in terms of their creative and aesthetic development. This goes along with the different modes of resources that are semiotic as well as the counter-trends in manga that are all utilized to represent sound, subjectivity and movement through sequential storytelling.

## References

Kidder, O. (2012). Theories of Sequence: Narrative Construction in Comics. Academia. edu. Retrieved October 16, 2014, from [http://www.academia.edu/3410889/Theories\\_of\\_Sequence\\_Narrative\\_Construction\\_in\\_Comics](http://www.academia.edu/3410889/Theories_of_Sequence_Narrative_Construction_in_Comics)

<https://assignbuster.com/manga-essay-samples/>



McCloud, S. (1994). *Understanding comics: the invisible art*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Bryce, M., Davis, J., & Barber, C. (2010). *The Cultural Biographies and Social Lives of Manga: Lessons from the Mangaverse*. :: SCAN | journal of media arts culture :: Retrieved October 16, 2014, from [http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal\\_id=114](http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=114)