Japanese manga art

Art and Globalisation

Manga and anime

'Manga' refers to Japanese comics. Although there are several kinds of manga, it has a particular style which is easy to recognise. Manga comics are generally printed in black and white though some artwork is made colourful.

Anime is the animated version of manga. Anime has colour but the style and imagery is always very similar to the original manga comic books.

Popularity in Japan

Manga is an important part of culture in Japan and is popular amongst children and adults.

Manga cafes are places where customers can read from a library of manga for a specified time at a corresponding fee. Guests are free to borrow and return books as many times as they wish within the time limit.
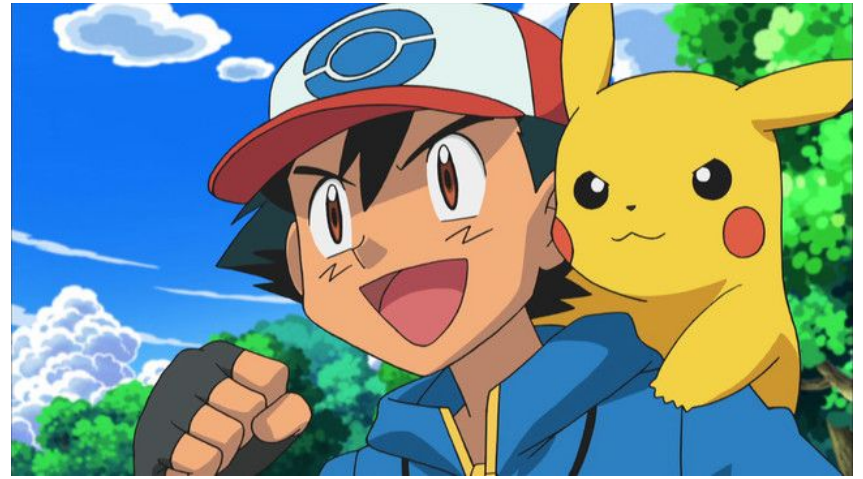
Popularity outside Japan

Manga is Japan's biggest export and is popular all around the world. In Germany, 70% of comics sold are manga comics. Here in the UK you will no doubt have watched cartoons like Pokemon and Dragon Ball Z. You may have also played games like Pokemon Go.

Manga art may have started in Japan but is hugely popular all around the world.

Eyes in manga art

In manga, large eyes tend to be drawn. As such they are a very important tool for conveying the emotion of characters and help the artist to tell the story.

All manga artists draw eyes differently, but there are similarities such as the use of large eyelashes for female characters.

Manga's visual language

Anime and manga have a unique visual language that conveys character emotions and thoughts. Some symbols are easier to understand than others.

Over the next few slides you will develop your understanding of some of these techniques used.

Manga's visual language:
Speed lines

Speed lines are lines that appear in the background or over a character to denote speed.

They are a good way to convey motion in a motionless media.

Manga's visual language:
Abstract background patterns

Sometimes in scenes the background abruptly switches to an abstract background. This swap is used to emphasize what the character is feeling.

Sometimes these backgrounds are animated. Fast animations or twirling spirals show how quickly the character's mind is working. Wavy lines show irritation or upset emotions. Colors such as bright red are used for anger.

Manga's visual language:
Popping veins

Like other symbols, popping veins are exaggerating reality. When some people are irritated or angry veins tend to pop out as their blood pressure increases. Often on their forehead and hands.

Manga's visual language:
Sweat drops

This is another iconic symbol. It means the character is embarrassed. The number and size of the sweat drops shows just how embarrassed they feel. Sometimes these are used with a blush across the character's face.

Manga's visual language:
Cat mouth / fangs

This is one of the odder ones. Abruptly characters (usually female) change to a cat mouth or grow fangs. This means she is feeling "catty." This is yet another literal visual interpretation of a common phrase. Cat fangs or mouths just show the character is feeling mischievous.

Types of manga

Shonen

Literally meaning "few years," "shonen" typically refers to boys under the age of fifteen. A lot of these have a young male hero and are focused on action, adventure, and fighting.

Shojo

Shojo is the female version of Shonen. They almost always have a female lead. It covers many subjects, from historical drama to science fiction, often with a focus on romantic relationships or emotions.

Types of manga

Josei

Anime and manga of the "josei" variety are aimed at adult women. They are often romantic tales featuring adult women, though, in recent years, shonen-like action-adventures have become popular.

Kodomomuke

"Kodomomuke" means "directed at children. These works tend to be simple, imaginative stories that teach morals and other core values to young readers

Akira Toriyama

Akira Toriyama is one of the most famous and successful manga artists.

During his career, Toriyama created over 40 manga series. Akira Toriyama has always been very concerned about his work, not hesitating to redraw again and again the same illustration because he does not find it perfect.

He is most famous for creating the 'Dragon Ball' series between 1984 to 1995. During that 11-year period he made 42 books. These were made into over 500 anime episodes which have been seen all over the world.