

Practice in Context

Manga, Process, & Case Study

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Name: Lareine Gohi

Student Number: 1912659

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Tutor: Gwenllian Beynon and Louise Burston

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Entertainment comes in various forms of medium. The focus of this report revolves around eastern comics from Japan. The standard paperback and Japanese animated cartoons that have made its way into western culture. Diversifying how *manga*, and *anime* is spread throughout the world. This created a large community that expresses itself in a creative and entrepreneurial way. Whether that is through expressing the people's love for fandoms, selling merchandise, purchasing collectibles, cosplay, and many more. There are numerous ways to expressively show one's love for the phenomenal world of both *anime* and *manga* that Japan has created. With the influence of well known artists in the progression of both *manga* and *anime*. The effects of early published mangas resonated with many individuals who decided to pursue a career as manga artists. As an avid reader of *manga*, I have personally experienced with multiple series the memorable moral lessons that stayed with me since I was a child. This had inspired me to want to create a *manga* too but I think that a lot of people take the process of creating a *manga* lightly. In this report, I will discuss the topic of *manga* and how it differs from comics or graphic novels. Then, I will explain the creative process of a manga artist when producing a *manga* in Japan. Lastly, I will use a case study of a Japanese artist, Eiichiro Oda, to give some insight on who he is and a description about his current *manga*.

Before explaining the creative process for developing a *manga*. It is important to understand what *manga* mean, where it originates from, and how influential it has become in society. First, I would like to distinguish the difference between comic books and graphic novels.

Comic books are stories that are shown in the form of strips that are illustrated over many issues. While graphic novels are completed within a couple of books. They tend to be much longer and more complex in storyline (Graphic Mama Blog, 2020).

The Japanese had taken influence from these two forms to create a style of their own that resembles both western comic books and graphic novels.

This is from the result of the U.S. occupation in Japan, during 1945 and 1952. With the Americans bringing their own comics and cartoons, it impacted a lot of soon to be manga artists that helped push for the success of anime and *manga* worldwide (A Short History of Manga, 2020).

One of the first most successful manga artists at the time was Osamu Tezuka.

Osamu Tezuka, known as the *God of Manga and the Godfather of Anime*, had invented cute characters with distinctive large eyes that were prominent in both the comic and cartoon series of *Astro boy* (A Short History of Manga, 2020).

Establishing this aesthetic had brought immense amounts of adoration worldwide, especially in Japan. This was an innovative break that was prominent in the development of both *manga* and *anime*. It is recognized as a part of Japanese pop culture and gives foreigners a look into Japanese life. Having a little background knowledge discussing the origin and significance of *manga*. I would like to explain the process that manga artists have to keep in mind. When developing a *manga*, it is important for the manga creator to have a clear idea of what his or her

product is. It is important to sort ideas and create the pictorial *manga* expressions that will work best for each scene,

The design process has three important steps which consisted narrative planning, scripting, and storyboarding. Narrative planning is done during the creation of the core features and entities that are included in the story, such as characters, places, and events (Mihara et al. 2014, p.960).

With careful consideration over these elements, it is typically expressed with the use of text or visual information. This is important because this provides the artist with additional information that can be revised. Then used in the best way to get the wanted reaction or effect that the artist had intended.

Scripting is to construct the story of *manga* from those elements made in the narrative planning step. Text boxes aligned along with the storyline are often made to overview the structure of the story easily (Mihara et al. 2014, p.960).

Information such as movement, dialogue or expression to properly guide the reader in the direction that the creator had intended.

Storyboarding in *manga* production is a simple expression of the script of *manga* allocated page by page, indicating a layout of frames on each page, the compositions of pictures on each frame and placement of word balloons (Mihara et al. 2014, p.960).

This is important to note that a *manga* tends to be filled with illustrations that are in the grey monochromatic scales. This is accomplished with the use of chiaroscuro, which is a technique to manipulate the use of light and shadows. This is a technique used by manga artists that add a sort of uniqueness to their art but it is also a method to keep costs down.

To keep printing costs to a minimum, producers use cheap recycled paper and only one color of ink. The purpose for this is to allow even elementary children to purchase these *manga* with their weekly allowances (Mihara et al. 2014, p.960).

Therefore, when it comes to efficiency, it is more beneficial for publishing companies in Japan in regards to producing and releasing new chapters weekly.

Once the manga artist has chosen a plot for their story, there are elements that need to be worked on. Elements such as creating a character profile that provides a detailed description of the character. This could include the character's physical descriptions, or backstory, etc. When designing a character, ideas are countlessly scrapped or reused in a way that best fits the idea that the artist is trying to achieve.

For example, the images below are of *Midoriya Izuku* from the series *My Hero's Academia*. This series is made by Kohei Horikoshi who played with the design of *Midoriya*. The first thing to note is that the original design has hair covering the majority of the character's face. With the addition of his stance and expression, it gives him a standoffish vibe. Compared to the current design of the character *Midoriya*, the messiness of the hair stayed but is arranged to show the character's face. There is also more of a roundness to the character's face (Izuku Midoriya, 2020).

When character designing, the use of circles can make the character seem more friendly and approachable. (How to Convey Character's Personality Through Shape, Variance and Size, 2020)

Even the eye expression has a gentler look to the current design than the previous design.



Figure 1: (All Beta Designs in *My Hero Academia* - Ultra Archive, 2020)



Figure 2: (Midoriya "Deku" Izuku, hero, uniform, outfit, suit, cool; *My Hero Academia* | Hero, My hero academia costume, *Boku no hero academia*, 2020)

Although the amount of detail that is given for each character depends on the manga artist. The readers will always respond to characters with both negative and positive reactions. This makes it enjoyable to think about the potential character development and how they change through the story. Another element that I enjoy about *manga* is the way that manga artists are able to capture the fluidity of the character's movement and the attention of the reader the way that Eiichiro Oda does.

The use of speech bubbles, sound effects, toning, and effect lines can impact the energy from panel to panel. (Pres, 2020)

When explaining the fluidity of Oda's work, I think of it as the smoothness of the character's action. There is enough information that is shown in each panel that can be inferred by the reader that allows for them to visualize what is happening throughout the chapter.

For example, the image below is taken from a page of a chapter from the *One Piece* series (One Piece, 2020).

What is seen can be understood as a fight between two characters. There may not be enough context as to how it started or why they are fighting. But the reader will understand that they are fighting for some purpose that is connected to the story.



Figure 3: (Image result for why didn't luffy hit bellamy | One piece, Manga pages, Star children, 2020)

The way that the two characters move is very dynamic yet cohesive. It is kind of like a choreographed fight scene. When I mentioned dynamism before, I was referring to the lively energy that is being expressed through the use of lines and shadows when an action occurs. For example, when you look at the image below, there are two characters being shown on the panel.



Figure 4: (*Caesar Clown*, 2020)

One character has punched the other character with so much force that it has left an indentation of his fist into his face. There are multitudes of small darkened lines that have been used to create a shadow-like effect to draw your eyes toward the indent on his face as well as the moment of impact. The effect lines that surround the fist as it makes contact gives the reader a visual of how much power was put into the punch. The two images that were previously shown are panels taken from a fight scene. With the use of effect lines and bold shades of monochrome, it shows how dramatic the scene is. When compared to a page that expresses a simple conversation like the image below. The use of effect lines is not as prevalent but is still used in certain areas as shadows or to set the mood.



Figure 5: (*One Piece*, Chapter 912 - *One Piece Manga Online*, 2020)

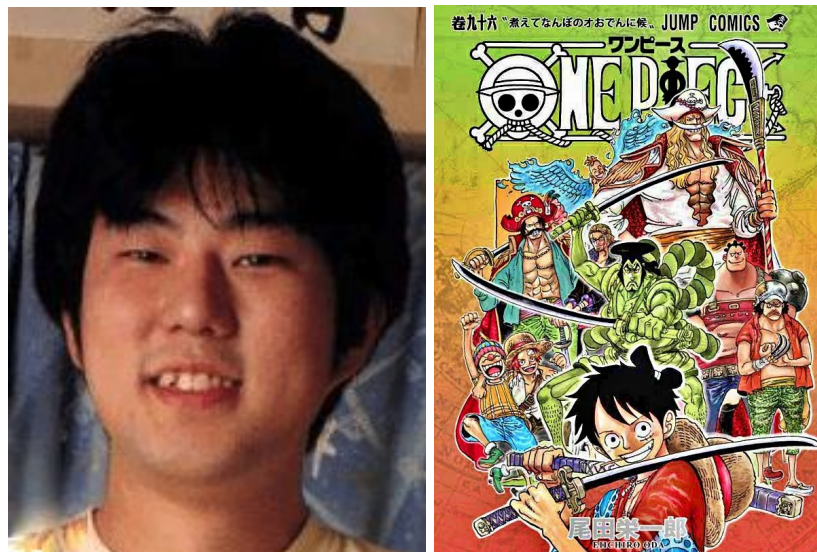


Figure 6: (Eiichiro Oda (Creator) - *TV Tropes*, 2020)

Figure 7: (Official *One Piece* Volume 96 cover in colour, 2020)

Lastly, I would like to delve deeper in Eiichiro Oda's life as a manga artist, using him as a case study. I would like to start off with some background information about Oda.

At a young age, Oda's love for *manga* had sparked when he encountered Akira Toriyama's *manga*. This led him to start a career as a manga artist at the age of 17 where he produced various other shorts before creating the hit series *One Piece* (Makungo, 2020).

Before Oda started working on a *manga* of his own, he needed to gain some experience.

Oda had worked as an assistant for Nobuhiro Watsuki on *Rurouni Kenshin*. While working with this manga artist, he worked on pirate themed one-shots called *Romance Dawn*. (Eiichiro Oda Biography • Manga Artist, 2020)

This was a *manga* that allowed Oda to see what it was like to make something on a small scale before creating several volumes of *manga* in rapid succession that has continued to be produced and released even today.

One Piece is full of comedic, action packed adventures that involve the main character, *Luffy*, to travel around the world. He meets new people and encounters a multitude of adventures in search of the legendary treasure "One Piece". What comes with finding the "One Piece" is unlimited amounts of riches and fame, which is the pinnacle of glory and the title of "Pirate King". While the main character searches for potential members for his crew, he encounters a lot of other tyrannical pirates as well as the Marine. There is a shift of what is considered to be bad or good. Marine's are considered to be the guys that fight for justice, yet let corruption slide with a slap on the wrist. *Luffy's* crew continued to be accused of wrongdoings when in actuality, they always do their best to put a stop to the evil that has been left unchecked (*One Piece*, 2020).

As *One piece* continued to rise in popularity over the years, even the number of *manga* being sold each year has risen significantly.

Shueisha has confirmed that Oda's *manga* has sold an estimate of 12.7 million copies from November 19, 2018 to November 17, 2019". This means that *One Piece* is currently the top-selling *manga* series as of 2019 as it enters its 96th volume (Komatsu, 2019) .

Not only is it a top-selling *manga* but I have grown alongside the series over the years as it released new volumes each month. What I enjoy most about *One piece* is not only the illustration but also the development of writing that the creator has continued to amaze readers time and time again with. There are other manga artists that do the same thing but there is a different emotion evoked when growing up watching a series for decades versus a series that last for a few years. In the *One Piece* series, I also find it exciting to see how a single arc that is set up during the infant stages of the series could affect something that is happening in the current arc.

As perhaps many writers try to do, Oda writes with intent and purpose of how characters are involved in the story (Mori, 2019).

Whether to bring significance to a character, a concept, or a theme in the story. Oda works his way backwards from a particular element that may seem like a minor detail to the reader. But actually plays a major role to any future arcs that could occur later in the story.

Basically, Oda brings new ideas back from the old ideas (Mori, 2019). This is an innovative way that takes simple to outrageous ideas with it potentially being revised and used at another point in the series.

Manga in itself has had a huge impact on society and on people for a variety of reasons. Being able to have a clear understanding of what *manga* is, where it originates from, and the significance of it. There is a distinctiveness in the story, characters, and style of *manga* that has captivated the attention of people worldwide. It is important to understand that *manga* in itself is a unique form of art that has developed in Japanese popular culture. The amount of work and time that is dedicated to creating a *manga* is tremendous. Manga artists have to wisely divide their time in order to release new chapters weekly. There is a lot that is attributed to the reason why *manga* is made with a certain color and in a certain format when published. This just adds to the unique form of the medium that is used as a source of entertainment. At the moment, Eiichiro Oda is one of many manga artists that have successfully made it in the *manga* industry. I used Eiichiro Oda in a case study to explain a few elements that I find enjoyable when reading a *manga*. Manga artists have to deal with their trials and tribulations as they dedicate their life to creating *manga* for a living. It is in no way an easy task to create a *manga*. The years of practiced draftsmanship and impressive skills of storytelling is necessary when trying to create a successful *manga*.

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Figure 2: Pinterest. (2020). *Midoriya "Deku" Izuku, Hero, Uniform, Outfit, Suit, Cool; My Hero Academia | Hero, My Hero Academia Costume, Boku No Hero Academia*. [online] Available at: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/464644886537858450/> (Accessed 13 May 2020).

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