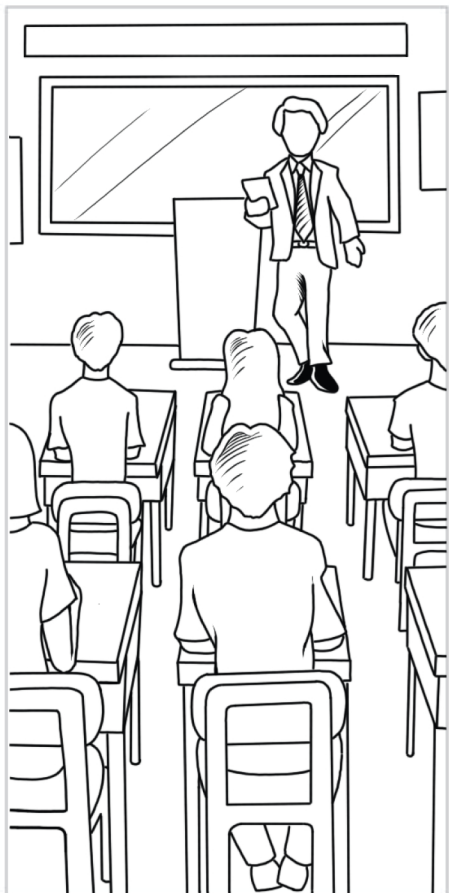


# MANGA EDUTAINMENT

Engaging in Learning and  
Discovery through Manga



**JAPAN FOUNDATION**  
LOS ANGELES



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これも学習マンガだ！  
Manga Edutainment







# INTRODUCTION

Manga opens up possibilities.

For one, reading manga is a fun way to teach and learn about both Japanese society and the Japanese language. In a recent nationwide survey by the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles, it was shown that an overwhelming reason people learn Japanese was through an interest in Japan's pop culture, including manga; in fact, the percent of institutions reporting pop culture as a motivation for learning Japanese was over 90% out of 1451 institutions! What this means is that manga is a potentially powerful force with which to engage learners.

The combination of rich artwork and compelling stories allows manga to teach us a diversity of themes in an accessible format. Different manga connect us to different facets of people's everyday lives: how does one live with disability? How can people help those in poverty? How can one learn to accept one's own LGBT identity? The educational value of manga is in teaching us more broadly about ways to connect ourselves with our present-day society.

However, the abundance of manga titles today can also be intimidating. With so many out there, where can one begin? That's where this selection of excellent titles comes in. The Nippon Foundation has carefully selected 200 titles that showcase manga that is both fun and educational, a sample of which is presented in this booklet. These titles are showcased here along with comments from prominent Japanese figures such as writers, editors, and university professors who also want to share their love of manga.

You will find manga that celebrate diversity, that pose philosophical questions, that teach us aspects of Japanese culture, and much more. Yet no matter the subject or where we are from, these manga encourage curiosity and the desire to learn more. The door to other cultures can only be opened by the imagination and manga can be the key.

Hideki Hara  
Director  
The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles

## Imuri | イムリ

By Ranjyo Miyake | 三宅乱丈

KADOKAWA

22 volumes, ongoing

***Twin brothers and two civilizations***

-- *How should the world be? ... What do you think?*



This manga is a bit hard to follow at first. After all, it is SF. But once you understand the initial setting, there is no problem and you will find yourself immersed in the story. The main characters are twin brothers who were raised by totally different tribes in different environments. In this world, all twins are highly empathetic. These twins also symbolize attitudes of the two civilizations toward nature and society. One is a civilization that exerts its power to purposefully control nature and people's minds. The other is a civilization that does not go against the natural world, co-exists with nature and people, and waits for others to assist them. A Western civilization versus an Eastern civilization, so to speak. The story approaches its climax. How should the world be? Without noticing, you will discover the basis for thinking about the two civilizations while excitement builds as the thrilling story unfolds. (*Yukari Fujimoto*)

## Kasai no Hito | 家裁の人

By Jinpachi Mori and Osamu Uoto | 毛利甚八、魚戸おさむ

Shogakukan | 小学館

15 volumes, complete

***A low-key, ordinary hero***

-- *Learn about jobs at family courts and the occupation of judge*



While manga in general features extreme characters, the main character of this manga is very low-key and ordinary. He is also kind. The kindness is exquisite and shows the ideal image of an adult you can aspire to become. This is a good example of people who would never appear in TV dramas and novels vividly showing their brilliance in manga. The work also depicts how people at family courts help individuals, making you realize there are such occupations and those jobs are also appealing. (*Youhei Sadoshima*)

## The minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living | 「健康で文化的な最低限度の生活」

By Haruko Kashiwagi | 柏木ハルコ

Shogakukan | 小学館

6 volumes, ongoing

**Approximately 2,190,000 people. Is welfare really something only for others?**

-- *Struggles of a new case worker caught between her feelings of sympathy and the system*



The word "welfare" has started to appear more often in the news. It is a system whereby the government provides minimum living expenses to people who cannot work due to sudden unemployment, illness, or divorce. The underlying philosophy is found in Article 25 of the Constitution of Japan--"All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living"--which we learn about in social studies class at school. However, it sounds like something that has nothing to do with us, and what it really means is unclear.

This is an ambitious manga that uses the words of Article 25 for its title as it deals with the difficult theme of welfare. The story follows a slightly helpless new public worker assigned to the public assistance division at a ward office and her struggles at welfare sites: suicide due to unemployment and poverty; a life of debt due to bankruptcy; and a single mother who divorced due to domestic violence and who also cares for her parents. The main character confronts individual circumstances and life while experiencing surprise, confusion, empathy, a sense of duty, and the frustration of sympathizing while following the system.

Today, approximately 2,190,000 people receive welfare in Japan. Your family could face such problems as unemployment, illness or divorce at any time. Welfare is definitely not something most people think about. It is an important but hard-to-touch issue. This work addresses the topic using interesting, easy-to-understand expressions, making it fun to read instead of being cut and dried, such as you might encounter in school or in the news. This is a new form of manga that lets you explore such social issues as welfare and poverty, and learn about the work of case workers and public employees. (*Katsuhiro Motoyama*)

## Shindou | 神童

By Akira Saso | さそうあきら

Futabasha | 双葉社

4 volumes, complete

***The world is filled with music***

-- *The world is full of music: How then does a soundless manga depict sound?*



Do you know the expression “perfect pitch”? It is where you hear everything—from the siren of an ambulance to the sound of trees swaying in the breeze—in the “do-re-mi” scale, and can write it as musical notes.

This work features a girl with perfect pitch and depicts the music that fills the world. The girl plays piano. She also plays baseball. You may wonder if she worries about her fingers, begging the question: Is talent so important? Isn't the wish to live a certain way more important? This work's depictions of sound using illustrations are amazing. Despite manga not having sound itself, everyone can experience how it feels when the world begins to fill with music. (Yukari Fujimoto)

## Silver Spoon | 銀の匙

By Hiromu Arakawa | 荒川弘

Shogakukan | 小学館

14 volumes, ongoing

***Eating life***

-- *Student life at an agricultural high school dairy farming program, where you learn the process of food reaching the table*



The stage is the dairy farming program at an agricultural high school. As this manga shows details of student life at a specialized vocational high school or technical college, it is especially useful for junior high school students currently thinking about options after graduation. Most students at specialized vocational high schools have decided what they want to do in the future by the time they enter the school. However, the main character still has not made up his mind about a future career. If you are the only one who cannot decide on your path while many others around you already know their future, you may find the main character encouraging as he actively investigates various possibilities. In addition, reading this work deepens understanding of dairy farming. It shows you how the food you eat gets to the table and lets you think about eating living things. This work is also recommended to those interested in food. (Yasuhiro Yamauchi)

## Cooking Papa | クッキングパパ

By Yamatochi Ue | うえやまとち

Kodansha | 講談社

143 volumes, ongoing

**Ideal dad, ideal family**

-- A recipe manga that delightfully solves problems at home and the workplace through tasty food



This was the pioneer of men's gourmet cooking manga that featured recipes. Until then, gourmet manga for men were all about cooking battles; this one took the form of a recipe manga, a style that was occasionally seen with manga for girls.

The setting of a double-income family where the father cooks for family between work and the mother is a career woman was quite new when the series started. The family's attitude of creatively solving the difficulties associated with double-income situations and turning them into something enjoyable may present an ideal family image, or a modern version of Sazae-san.

Yet without thinking about these things, it can also be enjoyed simply as a manga that offers delicious-looking dishes one after another, and this is another appeal. (Tomoko Yamada)

## Honya no Mori no Akari | 本屋の森のあかり

By Yuki Isoya | 磯谷友紀

Kodansha | 講談社

12 volumes, complete

**Every book is a whole world**

-- Reconfirming the appeal of books, a glimmer of light when feeling lost in life



A book contains folded time. As you open it, you enter a different world. This can be a glimmer of light for people who have lost their way in life.

The main character is Akari, who works at a bookstore, and each episode revolves around a book. Will you find a story you like here? This manga also vividly illustrates the work of a bookstore. You can enjoy this as a job manga for reference when you think about work and a career in the future. (Yukari Fujimoto)



## Hinoko | ヒノコ

By Masami Tsuda | 津田雅美

Hakusensha | 白泉社

8 volumes

**Awaken the power of kanji**

-- Were characters themselves magical spells in ancient times?



I suppose everyone learned in elementary school that kanji characters are hieroglyphs. But you probably do not pay much attention to their magical side from symbolically combining elements in reality and phenomena. Hinoko is the name of a shrine maiden of legend. Mayura, who inherited the red fingernails of the right hand of Hinoko, has the power to make written characters a reality. When she writes kanji for fire, fire appears; when the character is for flying, people can fly in the sky; and when the character she puts down is for protection, harm to a particular person or thing can be prevented. As you breathlessly follow the exciting story, you'll realize how your feelings toward kanji have changed. (Yukari Fujimoto)

## Gaki no Tameiki | ガキのためいき

By Bakka Okita | 沖田 x 華

Kodansha | 講談社

3 volumes, complete

**The world can also look like this**

—An autobiography filled with laughter and tears, from an author with Asperger syndrome



Have you heard of Asperger syndrome? The author has Asperger syndrome and had a learning disability in childhood. For example, she could not follow instructions of the teacher in kindergarten, because she could not differentiate and catch the teacher's voice amid the noise of a bunch of kids. However, she was able to study alone wearing headphones with a PC, since she could take her time and go at her own pace. Once she fixated on something, it was hard to get her to let go. She would follow other kids, which annoyed them. When you read the manga, you repeatedly have flashbacks to your own experiences: "That's what happened!" or "That kid had it." Once you grasp how the world looks to the child, you often understand immediately. Some of you might think, "Oh, that's the same with me!" Then let's try to explain it to others. "How the world looks" and "what you can do and what you cannot do" are different for everyone. This manga clearly shows you that. Above all, it is fascinating to read. (Yukari Fujimoto)



## A Silent Voice | 聲の形

By Yoshitoki Oima | 大今良時

Kodansha | 講談社

7 volumes, complete

***Listen with your heart***

-- *What cannot be expressed in words holds the truly important things*



School and society tell us that bullying is unacceptable and we should not discriminate against disabled people. Do we really consider what this means and fully grasp it? Don't we think everything is OK as long as we treat them as something special and keep them in a special place?

In this manga, the main character bullies a deaf classmate and causes her to transfer to another school; he himself is then bullied in class and changes his life. The manga depicts his frustrations and changes as he confronts regrets of the past, when he could convey his feelings only by hurting others. He goes to see the girl he bullied partly in order to sincerely confront who he is.

Trying to understand others; trying to listen to the voices of others' hearts; trying to listen to your own voice--the work makes us think about the difficulty and preciousness of these things. Do we know everything just because we can hear the sound of voices? We may not even be listening to our true voice.

Sign language is featured in a number of scenes as well as written communication. Email, letters, gifts, actions, various facial expressions--each one is a form of voice. Communicating our true voices may be possible only by facing each other and sharing our thoughts. The main character, in the process of learning about the soundless world, encounters true voices that he has never tried to listen to.

Are you listening to the voice of someone important to you? (*Katsuhiko Motoyama*)

## Sumire Fanfare | すみれファンファーレ

By Naoko Matsushima | 松島直子

Shogakukan | 小学館

6 volumes

**Think, and feel relief**

-- *The world through the eyes of Sumire, a fourth-grader living with her divorced mother*



The main character is Sumire, a fourth grader who lives with her divorced mother. Sumire's environment leads her to care more about the adults around her than about herself. From the standpoint of adults, Sumire is hurt and heroic, and should be more like the typical demanding child. The manga presents issues in today's society, such as single mothers' incomes and the difficulty of remarrying with kids, and makes you think. At the same time, no one "bad" appears, allowing a warm feeling of relief. It would be interesting to find out what children of the same age as Sumire think about this work. (Naoko Hosoda)

## Donguri no ie | どんぐりの家

By Osamu Yamamoto | 山本おさむ

Shogakukan | 小学館

7 volumes, complete

**A powerful work that questions, "What does it mean to live?"**

-- *The story of children with multiple handicaps, their parents, and teachers at a school for the deaf*



It is overwhelming and shocking that a manga can express this much and make you think about fundamental aspects of a human being. Here is the story of children with multiple handicaps—deafness and intellectual or mental disabilities-- and their parents along with teachers at a school for the deaf. Life with severe disabilities is grueling: the cold prejudice and discrimination of society; an inadequate government system; and the families that suffer from such tough realities. The work gives us the unaltered dark reality, as if shouting out that the children have been abandoned, set apart, and treated by society as if they didn't exist. Yet in the midst of this darkness, there is a beautiful ray of light, however small, from the efforts of families and teachers as well as the intense energy of children's desire to live and connect with others. There may be many things the children cannot do, but it is precious and wonderful to become able to do something. This makes you realize the importance of things half-forgotten. What does it mean to live? What are human beings? And how should this society we live in be? The work makes you stop and ponder. (Katsuhiro Motoyama)

## Happy! | ハッピー!

By Nobuko Hama | 波間信子

Kodansha | 講談社

33 volumes, complete

**Only those who have lived through the experience would understand, but ...**

-- The heroine grows into a mature woman by meeting a guide dog



The heroine grows into a mature woman by meeting a guide dog. Love, marriage, giving birth, raising a child, and interaction with society--this may seem like a commonplace story. However, there are so many things only those who have lived through the experience would understand when it comes to difficulties faced by the guide dog itself, even though the hardships can be logically understood. While broadening readers' views and deepening understanding, this is a conscientious, first-rate work that provides support and encouragement to people dealing with disabilities every day. (Machiko Satonaka)

## With the Light | 光とともに...～自閉症児を抱えて～

By Keiko Tobe | 戸部けいこ

Akita Shoten | 秋田書店

15 volumes, complete

**In order to build a promising society**

-- A motivational book that can readily be enjoyed as a drama and deepens understanding of autism



This is well worth reading as a drama, and at the same time it is an excellent motivational book that deepens understanding of autism. Reading this manga made me realize that I didn't really know as much as I thought. The author's sincere effort has paid off beautifully. The manga is not pushy at all and has no sense of righteous anger, but it is something you can naturally enjoy as a drama and does make you think.

An essential book in order to build a more promising society. (Machiko Satonaka)

## Fantasium | ファンタジウム

By Ami Sugimoto | 杉本亜未

Kodansha | 講談社

9 volumes, complete

**What are the qualifications to be a first-class magician?**

-- A dyslexic boy becomes a magician



The main character is a boy with dyslexia. His parents expect him to do “normal” things and do not recognize his efforts, and he has a hard time making friends. Then he meets Hojo, the grandson of a legendary magician, and sets out on a new path as a magician. Meeting a person who notices your strengths and tries to broaden them can significantly change your life. That key person may not be your family. The person may be a teacher at school or a total stranger you happen to come across somewhere. Even outside the family, there can be life relationships that change your destiny.

This is an insightful, appealing manga suggesting the potential of all kinds of nurturing relationships. (Yasuhiro Yamauchi)

## Wandering Son | 放浪息子

By Takako Shimura | 志村貴子

KADOKAWA

15 volumes, complete

**Diversity and shades of gender**

— Story of the growth of a boy who wants to be a girl and a girl who wants to be a boy



This illustrates daily life of family and friends, focusing on a boy who wants to be a girl and a girl who wants to be a boy. Who am I? Am I different from others? These may be themes that trouble many young people entering adolescence. The author infuses the manga with a comforting, tender viewpoint sympathetic to such concerns and watches over the characters’ mental and physical growth. It also clearly shows that there are nuanced stages among sexual minorities as well as aspects that cannot be individually labeled as L, G, B and T. Highly recommended to those who feel that they are some sort of minority, and their families. (Yasuhiro Yamauchi)

## Harurokku | ハルロック

By Mochi Nishi | 西餅

Kodansha | 講談社

4 volumes, complete

***Use all the time spent dithering to take action***

*-- Another kind of youth story where a girl in the science program helps people and starts a business with electronic handicraft*



A girl in the science program devotes herself to electronic handicraft, unintentionally helps others, and launches a business along the way. There is youth fiction with this story too, and I read the pilot version of the manga and hoped for a series.

This is an enjoyable read from start to finish. We follow an adorable, absent-minded girl going through life without clear purpose. Since childhood, she disassembled appliances at home. Following the advice of a high school teacher, the main character, who is a bit different from ordinary kids, takes up electronic handicraft, uses it to help others after entering college, and gradually broadens her world.

Everything she makes using computers or sensors is appealing. Creating the tools you need by fully utilizing IT will be an important skill in the future. Programming will be adopted in school education.

This manga amusingly illustrates a pioneer of these trends. The programmer female student mumbles an unnerving line: "I think it's better to use all the time you spend dithering to take action." This kind of magical touch is another reason to take notice. (*Ichiya Nakamura*)



## Little Forest | リトル・フォレスト

By Daisuke Igarashi | 五十嵐 大介

Kodansha | 講談社

2 volumes, complete

### ***Eating nature's bounty***

-- How to grow, harvest and prepare delicious vegetables, fruits, grains, birds and animals



It begins like this: A friend has moved to a small village in the Tohoku region, and sends beautiful letters filled with drawings of the village's seasonal food and events. The first episode is about making silverberry jam. The harvested fruit is strained to remove seeds and then simmered, adding sugar equal to 60% of liquid weight while checking the taste. If it tastes too sour, add more sugar (up to 100% of liquid weight). A full tray of silverberries makes 3 jars of jam ... and so on, all carefully illustrated step by step, showing how various vegetables, fruits, grains, birds and animals are grown or raised, harvested, cooked and made into delicious food in the village. But this is not a mere recipe manga. The work conveys the author's thinking that passing down knowledge and techniques to process nature's bounty into food on your own is the fundamental act of human beings. This is also a wakeup call for the industrialized urban food culture.

(Koichi Yuri)

## Megumi no Daigo | め組の大吾

By Masahito Soda | 曾田 正人

Shogakukan

11 volumes, complete

### ***Is wanting to do a good job at a fire immoral?***

-- Thinking about the importance of life and safety with Daigo, a freshman firefighter



This work completely covers the cool, life-saving efforts of firefighters. In particular, your heart will go out to Daigo as he rescues many people, and you will find yourself rooting for him. In this wonderful manga we experience the best positive feelings of boys' manga along with a thorough look at the psychological realities of firefighters. Daigo, troubled by his frustration that "wanting to work hard as a firefighter means wanting a fire to happen," reaches the point of thinking "being the best firefighter means creating a fireless town where you don't have to work hard rescuing people." This is an excellent work that carefully depicts in detail the concerns of firefighters, which is something you will never see in a Hollywood movie of an unprecedented accident and the heroes who come to the rescue. (Youhei Sadoshima)



For the full list of all 200 titles, please visit:

The Japan Foundation, Los Angeles site:  
[www.jflalc.org/jle-manga](http://www.jflalc.org/jle-manga)

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