

An Introduction to Manga

漫画 Teacher-led Q&A discussion

Explore the work of three Japanese Manga artists based in the UK using the films included in the resource pack.

1. Chie Kutsuwada

Her illustration for *As You Like It* is an interesting example of a fusion of Manga drawing with more 'text heavy' annotation from literature to accommodate the Shakespearean style. Highlight that Japanese Manga often involves minimal use of words, i.e. they tell the story with the images, whereas often Western style is to illustrate text with images.

Chie's style emphasises that drawing characters' emotions are an extremely important part of her work, and this characteristic – focusing on character expressions, particularly in the eyes – is an area that Manga is particularly good at.

2. Fumio Obata

Look at his work *Just So Happens* book to highlight that there is no one way to draw manga., Fumio Obata defines himself more as a 'graphic novelist' and uses Manga as the foundation to experiment with his drawing style. It is interesting to note that he does not focus on serialised Manga, but tries to write one off pieces consistent with a more graphic novel style, particularly drawing all images in colour to develop his stories.

3. Inko

Look at *Enter the Barefoot Lone Pilgrim* to look at UK-Japan artist interaction between Japanese Manga artist, Inko, and British artist David Blandy. Compare different styles and reflect upon whether Manga ought to be considered 'art.'

Extended Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Manga is different from graphic novels in other countries?
(see *Chie film*)
2. Why do you think Manga is often not appreciated as 'Art'? (see *Fumio film*)
3. Why might those that decide on how Art is taught in the UK (including teachers) "look down" on Manga?

Thoughts/possible "answers":

- When drawings or prints are "mass produced" they have less "value". Very few galleries exhibit Manga Art. Manga books have a "universal appeal" arguably because they are cheap and accessible
- Many schools focus on Artists whose works are in the famous galleries around the world. Direct copying images from screens or books is "frowned upon". When Art Teachers are training they are taught to focus on improving observational skills and encouraging students to be creative.
- Students could/should make more sophisticated connections with Manga artists and not just copy work. They can follow similar lines of enquiry and develop their own observational drawings in a Manga style. They can also write and annotate eloquently about this process in their sketchbooks. The more students and schools do this the more wider perceptions will change.