

Brenner, Robin E. **Understanding Manga and Anime**. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 333 pp. 40.00 USD. ISBN-10: 1-59158-332-2. ISBN-13: 978-1-59158-332-5. ∞

As a fan, and a librarian who regularly speaks, reviews, and conducts workshops on graphic novels, manga, and anime, the author of **Understanding Manga and Anime** is well placed to share her experience and knowledge with those new to these formats. Written primarily for YA and public librarians, the book is intended, as the author states, "to foster understanding and appreciation and to bring novices up to speed on the traditions, cultural road bumps, and joys of reading manga" (p. xi). The book covers issues involved in reading, collecting and promoting Japanese manga and anime.

The book is divided into nine chapters, and includes appendices, bibliographies, and indices. The first two chapters provide the reader with a basic history of manga and anime, and an introduction to its basic vocabulary, visual cues, intended audiences, layout, character types, and language issues.

Although readers can choose to read only certain chapters, they should not skip chapter 3. This chapter is probably the most interesting and important chapter for librarians wishing to create and/or maintain manga and anime collections. It provides an examination and explanation of cultural issues present in these works surrounding humour, romance, nudity, gender roles and violence. The author focuses on the challenges these issues can raise for collection development, and offers suggestions for evaluation.

Chapters 4 through 6 examine the prominent genres in manga, and provide suggested readings and booklists for each. Titles listed for each of these genres -- humour, slice of life (realism), romance, action & adventure, historical fiction, science fiction, and fantasy -- are annotated to indicate publishing information, intended audience and appeal, genre, and related media. The author has also included, most helpfully, the publisher's assigned aged rating as well as her own assessment of an age recommendation. Chapters 7 and 8 explore manga and anime fandom and fan activities, and offer starting points and basic outlines for a variety of library programs to consider.

In the last chapter, the author draws on her years of reading, viewing, and working with the manga and anime communities and presents a guide to collection development, and an annotated list of the top recommended titles for younger, teen, and school audiences, as well as suggested reading for additional exploration. The appendices and bibliographies at the end of the book look at vocabulary, frequently asked questions, and recommended further reading. Creator & Title and Subject indices are also included.

Manga and anime are becoming more and more popular, and many libraries are now faced with the task of developing collections to meet the needs of the growing number of fans. With so many titles currently available, this book is an excellent starting point. Well-written and thorough, it is recommended for public and school libraries, as well as academic libraries serving popular culture studies.

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