

# Manga & Me

(art + social science)

Manga, or Japanese cartooning, has grown increasingly popular in the United States and many areas of the world over the past decade. Huge, 300 or more page magazines containing multiple story series are viewed on a weekly basis in Japan, making it an important part of their culture.

Manga is a very respected art and literature form, with genres that appeal to male and female viewers of all ages. American students are most familiar with the “Shounen” (boy’s style) or “Shoujo” (girl’s manga), and with “Anime”, the animated version found in video media.

This lesson gives students just starting in cartooning an opportunity to study the process of creating a Japanese Manga character based on their own features and personalities.

## Grade Levels 5-8

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

## Preparation

- Have students bring in popular forms of Manga that they are familiar with and discuss what they like about the style. Encourage students to think like a manga artist and discuss ways to portray emotions, personalities and situations.
- Compare Japanese Manga to Western cartooning. Have students point out the differences and similarities.



## Materials

**Blick Newsprint** (10204-1085) 8-1/2" x 11" sheets, need one sheet per student

**Blick Economy Graphite Pencils** box of 12, (20302-2009), need one per student

**Sharpie® Fine Point Marker**, Black (21316-2001), need one per student

For Colored Pencil Manga:

**Blick Tracing Paper**, 9" x 12" sheet (10609-2003), need one sheet per student

**Faber-Castell Red Line Colored Pencils**, (20553-1012) share one 12-color set between two students

For Marker-rendered Manga:

**AquaBee® Paper Manga Artist Paper**, (12437-1001), 50-sheet pad, need one sheet per student

**Stabilo® Power Markers** (21292-0189), share one 18-color set between four students

**Liqui-Mark® Global Colors Marker** (21264-0089), share one 8-color set between four students

For Hand-painted Manga Cels:

**Blick Tracing Paper**, 9" x 12" sheet (10609-2003), need one sheet per student

**Dura-Lar™ Matte**, 25" x 40" (55505-1105) cut to 5" x 7-12" pieces for 25 per sheet, need one per student

**Blickrylic Student Acrylics**, assorted colors (00711- ), share six pints across classroom

- Research Japanese Manga. Recommended resources:
  - “Manga Madness” by David Okum (70591-1001)
  - “Manga Mania” by Christopher Hart (70596-1001)
  - “Kids Draw Manga” Book series by Christopher Hart (69532-)

## Process

1. Either provide samples or have students bring samples of Japanese cartoon characters that they like. Discuss typical Manga features:

**Hair** - Manga hair is simple, without defined strands. It is frequently unnatural in color and the style defines the personality of the character.

For example, pink hair is used on a cute, bubbly girl. Blue hair signifies a character that has a lot of youthful energy and black or brown hair is considered average. Spiky, wild hair commonly signifies an adventurous spirit.

**Eyes** - Manga eyes, when open, are drawn enormously large with white reflective patches. Laughing or crying eyes are often shown as simple arcs, with an eyelash or two for definition.

**Noses** - Manga noses are barely there or completely non-existent.

**Mouths** - Manga mouths are tiny when closed and huge when open. Details such as lips are usually ignored. Traditional Japanese culture considers showing teeth to be impolite so most Manga characters smile without showing teeth and cover their mouths politely when laughing.

Have students experiment with preliminary sketches in the Manga styles that they are familiar with. Assign emotions such as surprise, anger or sadness and have students draw expressive facial features to match.

2. Have students bring their own school photo or a 8" x 10" head-and-shoulders shot. Smaller photos can be enlarged on a photocopier and color photos are not necessary. Students will create a Manga character from their own portrait, using any of the features they have just studied. The characters they create may or may not look like their photos. Some students will want to continue with full-body drawings, but, for this project, limit drawings to a head-and-shoulders portrait. Students should follow these basic steps for all methods:



**Step 1:** Trace the basic shape of their head, hair and shoulders.

**Step 2:** Place light dots or lines to position facial features.

**Step 3:** Use the light dots as reference to place Manga-style eyes, nose and mouth.

3. Color the Manga portrait in one of the following ways:

### Colored Pencil Drawing

- Position a sheet of tracing paper over the photo. Use a drawing pencil to follow 3-step process above.
- Use a black fine point permanent marker over the pencil lines.
- Fill in with colored pencil.

### Marker Rendering

- Position a sheet of transparent marker paper over the photo. Use a drawing pencil to follow 3-step process above.
- Use a black fine point permanent marker over the pencil lines.
- Fill in color with broad tip or wedge tip markers. Fine line markers will create too many lines - the goal is to make a flat area of color. A skin tone set is essential for faces.

### Hand-Painted Cartoon Cel

- Position a sheet of tracing paper over the photo. Use a drawing pencil to follow 3-step process above.
- Position an 8" x 10" sheet of Dura-Lar film over the traced drawing and use a black fine point permanent marker to transfer to the film.

## Process, continued

- Use Blickrylic paint to fill in the color. Paint right up to and even on top of marker lines.
- Turn acetate sheet over to view finished cel.

**Computer Rendering** (most often used by Manga professionals - this method most suited to higher grade levels)

- Position a sheet of tracing paper over the photo. Use a drawing pencil to follow 3-step process above.
  - Use a scanner or digital photo to bring pencil drawing into a computer paint program. Adjust levels to eliminate gray areas and strengthen blacks. Add color by selecting and filling areas.
3. Once a Manga portrait is completed, you may wish to create a simple background to place the character in, add a language “balloon” or continue to develop a full-body character. Some options:
- Assign a specific genre of a background that would be meaningful to the portrait. For example, somewhere in the school or home, a special place they like to go.
  - Use photos taken around the school as the background and have students overlay their portraits.
  - Continue to develop their character and a storyline by creating a 4-panel comic strip (known in Japan as “Yonkoma”)

### National Standards:

**Content Standard #1** — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

**Content Standard #2** — Using knowledge of structures and functions

- **5-8** Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or not effective in the communication of ideas

**Content Standard #4** — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- **5-8** Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures