

## Understanding Manga

Manga is a medium that covers every genre you can think of, for readers of all ages and interests. The most popular manga are initially published in Japan where cultural differences can make finding “age-appropriate” titles more challenging, so here is a list of manga’s specific categories, and how “Amerimanga” may differ, is a critical first step to building a strong collection.

The two most popular categories primarily serve middle grade and young adult readers.

**Shōnen** refers to titles intended for tween and teenage boys. Many other subjects and genres can be covered in a **Shōnen** title, but the focus of these titles typically is on action and/or humorous plots featuring male protagonists. **Shōnen** also includes the popular “Mecha” and “Harem” sub-genres.

**Shōjo** refers to titles intended for tween and teenage girls. Many other subjects and genres can be covered in a **Shōjo** title, but the focus of these titles typically is on relationships and emotional interactions, typically featuring female protagonists. **Shōjo** also includes the popular “Magical Girl” sub-genre.

The most popular **Shōnen** examples include Attack on Titan, Naruto, and One Piece, while Stan Sakai’s Usagi Yojimbo is a classic in the category. The most popular **Shōjo** examples include Boys Over Flowers, Fruits Basket, and Glass Mask. Avatar: The Last Airbender and The Legend of Korra are excellent **Shōnen**-adjacent recommendations which have found a growing audience thanks to Nickelodeon’s anime series debuting on Netflix during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, while Disney has put a **Shōjo** spin on some of their most famous characters in series like Descendants, Fairies, and Kilala Princess.

**Kodomomuke** translates as “intended for children” and indicates manga for children younger than the typical **Shōnen** and **Shōjo** audience, generally 3-to-10-years-old. They are usually more gender-neutral than traditional **Shōnen** and **Shōjo** manga.

The most popular **Kodomomuke** examples include Doraemon, Dragonball, and Pokemon, as well as Tezuka’s classic Astro Boy. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is another category where Disney has found success with manga adaptations of several of its popular characters, including Stitch.

Because manga isn’t “just for kids” in Japan, there are distinct categories for older readers and more mature interests, too.

**Seinen** refers to titles intended for adult men, 18 or older. Like **Shōnen**, it covers a variety of subjects and genres, but with a stronger focus on realism and sophisticated storytelling.

The most popular **Seinen** examples include Berserk, Crayon Shinchan, Golgo 13, and Oishinbo. Kazuo Koike & Goseki Kojima's Lone Wolf and Cub and Hiroaki Samura's Blade of the Immortal are also considered hugely influential classics in the category.

**Josei** refers to titles intended for adult women, 18 or older. Like **Shōjo**, it covers a variety of subjects and genres, but with a stronger focus on mature, realistic, and at times, troubling relationships.

The most popular **Josei** examples include Chihayafuru, Nodame Cantabile, and Usagi Drop. Bizenghast is a notable example of a series that fits the category despite originally being published first in the United States, in English, sometimes referred to as "Amerimanga" and making it manga-adjacent for some readers.

**Yaoi/Yuri** is a term for manga which typically features mature (and occasionally graphic) romantic relationships between two male (**Yaoi**) or two female (**Yuri**) protagonists. These titles are traditionally created by women for women, though certainly not exclusively.

The most popular **Yaoi** and **Yuri** examples include Killing Stalking, No Touching at All, Ten Count, and Citrus, Murciélago, My Lesbian Experience With Loneliness, respectively.

And finally, there's a broad range of non-traditional and manga-adjacent titles to be aware of including but not limited to "Amerimanga."

**Doujinshi** typically refers to self-published manga titles from creators who originate from all over the world, or titles with a manga influence that don't neatly fall into traditional manga categories. Some contain fan art that is a parody or derivative of traditional manga, sometimes with content very far removed from the source material.

"For fans, by fans," **Doujinshi** can be a controversial category for manga purists. Some of the most popular examples include Boundry of Emptiness, The Full Room, and The Tyrant Falls in Love, while a more liberal definition might also include the majority of manga-adjacent and -inspired titles from publishers as varied as Antarctic Press and Tokyopop.



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