

LEARNING THROUGH MANGA

An Informational Brochure on
Exploring Manga, Manhwa,
and Webtoons in Print Format



WHAT IS MANGA?

Even if the word *manga* is new to you, you've almost certainly heard the young people (or adults!) in your life talk about manga's most popular IP: *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *My Hero Academia*, or *Sailor Moon*, to name a few! These Japanese franchises, which have spawned animated TV shows (or anime), movies, video games, and more, all started in a medium called manga.

Put simply, **manga are comics from Japan** and/or created by Japanese writers and illustrators (or **mangaka**). Manga titles are written for a wide range of demographics, and they can represent a plethora of genres, including action, romance, slice-of-life, horror, fantasy, and much more. Manga has been a part of Japanese culture for generations, but in the twenty-first century, it has become the most read and translated form of comics across the globe. Contributing to its popularity are the depth and breadth of manga stories (often spanning multiple 200-page volumes, or **tankobon**), the variety of genres represented, a spreading interest in Japanese culture, and the popularity of animated adaptations. Now, other East Asian comic formats are also gaining popularity, including **manhwa** (Korean comics).

Because these comics come from cultures outside of North America and with their own standards and sensibilities, it can sometimes be difficult for parents, educators, and librarians to quickly determine whether a book's content is appropriate for young readers. Ink Pop, a comics line from Random House Graphic, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, aims to help by bringing authentic manga and manhwa titles to North American audiences under our respected and trusted brand. These works have been expertly vetted and translated, and they offer young readers new opportunities for growth in literacy, social-emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness. **This guide highlights the first volumes of four new Ink Pop series: *I Wanna Be Your Girl*, *Our Aimless Nights*, and *My Life as an Internet Novel*, along with *School Bus Graveyard*, a manga-inspired comic.**

MANGA IN LIBRARIES AND CLASSROOMS

Just like Western comics and graphic novels, manga and manhwa can be incredible tools for learning! The synthesis of text and images creates complex reading experiences that require readers to derive meaning—often implied—from both modalities. Images can act as scaffolds for readers who struggle to decode words, and artistic choices including overall style, facial expressions (which are frequently exaggerated in these mediums), layouts, backgrounds, and text bubble shapes—all features absent in prose text—can imply tone and humor. In addition, the long-running nature of many manga and manhwa series, along with a breadth of genres and topics, can retain the interest of reluctant readers.

In some cases, manga and manhwa titles can be used in large group-instruction settings to teach or reinforce learning standards. Many titles present opportunities to study plot structure, narrative tropes, archetypes, character motivations, and other literary elements—with the added benefits of appealing to popular culture interests and encouraging art literacy. In other instances, specific titles can be recommended as enrichment or intervention for individual students or small groups, targeting specific interests or learning goals. In either setting, reading manga and manhwa helps readers to develop social-emotional intelligence and cultural awareness. Characters in these stories come in all varieties, and many are relatable. Readers love watching them change and grow over hundreds of pages, and no matter the story's genre, there is much to learn from characters' interactions. Additionally, because these books commonly take place in Japan or South Korea, readers are exposed to cultural elements and norms outside of their own, which can broaden their worldviews.

TIPS FOR READING MANGA OR MANHWA WITH YOUR STUDENTS OR LIBRARY PATRONS

- **Pay attention to formats.** Manga is commonly (but not always!) read from right to left, which can take practice. Manhwa is read from left to right, similar to western comics. Reading panels out of order can take away from comprehension and leave readers confused, so it is important to make sure readers are viewing each panel in the correct order.
- **Notice text presentation.** The shapes and backgrounds surrounding text can signal many things to the reader, including if the text is spoken or thought, its tone and intensity, and the character that the text is attributed to. There might be different styles of text on one page, or even within one panel.

- **Go with the flow.** Some readers can fall into the trap of scanning pages too quickly, which can lead to missed details and lower comprehension. Much of the humor and nuance in manga and manhwa comes from pacing and imagery. If readers struggle to comprehend the story or miss implied details, encourage them to slow down and take in each element of the text and images.
- **Check for understanding.** Just like you would for any other book, check for readers' full understanding of the content. This should include factual recall, inferencing, character and plot analysis, and domain-specific knowledge (subject matter specific to the book, such as "internet novels" in *My Life Is an Internet Novel*, or distinctions between gender and sex in *I Wanna Be Your Girl*).

**NEED HELP
FINDING
YOUR NEXT
MANGA TO
EXPLORE?
READ ON
FOR IDEAS!**





I WANNA BE YOUR GIRL

VOLUME 1

ABOUT THE BOOK

Hime has secretly been in love with her childhood best friend Akira for as long as she can remember. She was the first person who knew that Akira identified as a girl, and she made it her mission to be Akira's protector against the world. Hime is thrilled that Akira has decided to live as her true self now that they are starting high school.

However, as Akira starts to attract all types of attention, Hime takes it upon herself to aggressively stick up for Akira whenever necessary. Not wanting her to be singled out or bullied, Hime decides that her only option is to put herself in Akira's shoes. Hime dresses like a boy in support of the friend she loves . . . too bad her plan backfires on them both.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When speaking about someone's characteristics, *sex* refers to a person's anatomy, which can be male, female, or intersex. *Gender* refers to how a person presents themselves in society, which is generally man/boy, woman/girl, or nonbinary. How are these terms different? How does this knowledge influence the way you think or talk about people, sex, and gender?
2. Do you think the teacher's explanation on page 18 is helpful to Akira and the other students? Why or why not? How could the teacher have made their message more effective?
3. At the beginning of the book, why do you think everyone is so concerned about Akira's gender and appearance? How do you think this makes Akira feel? On page 24, when Hime says, "I'm tellin' you, you've done nothing wrong, okay?! They were the ones who made a big fuss!!!" Akira replies, "No . . . they didn't do anything wrong either. They just don't understand." What do you think of Akira's response?
4. What do you think of Hime's decision to wear a gakuran? What is her intention? How does Akira feel about this? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.
5. On page 55, Hime's math teacher says, "If you want to make a point, you can't keep insisting on it. You have to give others time to accept it." Do you think he is correct? What other subjects or situations in life could his advice apply to?
6. When Hime and Akira begin talking to Anzu, how does each person feel about the other two? How do these feelings change throughout the book?
7. On page 99, Akira says, "It's what we refuse to give up that makes us who we are, right?" Do you agree with Akira? Why or why not? What makes you *you*?
8. Hime expresses anger throughout the book. Sometimes her anger is masking other feelings that she is unaware of. What feelings are at the root of her anger? Have you ever felt one thing, only to later realize you really felt something else underneath the surface?
9. In chapter 8, Hime is stopped by Yukka Ishiyama, who has a few things to say to her. Does any of Yukka's advice resonate with you? Why or why not?
10. What do you think of Anzu's response to Akira on pages 136–138? Why does Anzu get angry?
11. In chapter 10, Hime has another insightful conversation with her math teacher. Does anything he says resonate with you? Why or why not? Describe Hime's feelings toward Akira and about her gakuran at the end of the chapter.
12. How does Hime feel about Akira wanting to become the soccer team's manager? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.



MY LIFE AS AN INTERNET NOVEL

VOLUME 1

ABOUT THE BOOK

Every internet novel has the usual cast: a gorgeous heroine, handsome boys vying for her attention, and an unremarkable best friend at the heroine's side. Dani, an ordinary student and avid reader, is all too familiar with these tropes. But she never imagined that one day she'd wake up in an internet novel herself! How did she get here?

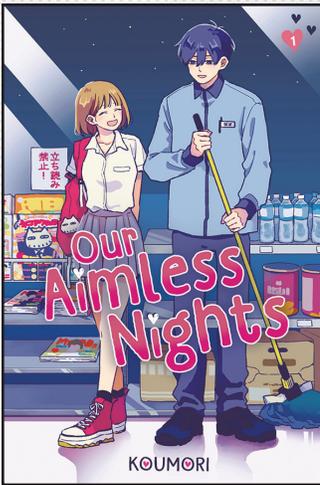
Her new fictional world is complete with a beautiful best friend named Yeoryeong, and four impossibly good-looking boys who all happen to be in her class . . . and are potential love interests. *Love interests who weren't originally meant for her.* Dani knows that nothing good will happen to her as the side character, so she is determined to stay out of the way! But what happens when this fictional world ends up leading Dani to the first real friends she's ever known? With no idea how to get back home, Dani decides she'll just have to play her part—no matter what plot twists come her way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *My Life as an Internet Novel* is a manhwa title, meaning it is a comic from South Korea. The story takes place in South Korea. What do you know about South Korea? Can you locate the country on a map? What other stories can you think of that come from or take place in South Korea? After reading the book, have you learned anything about the country or its culture?
2. In South Korea, "internet novels" are stories that are posted chapter by chapter online, and the medium can include many different genres, including romance.

Sometimes internet novels are printed as books after their digital publication. Does Western culture have a similar medium? If so, what are some of its distinguishing features and most popular titles?

3. Can you identify the types of speech and thought bubbles used in the book? How are they different? How do the various shapes, background colors, and other elements impact your reading experience?
4. What character traits define Dani, Yeoryeong, and each of the Four Heavenly Kings? Do these characters fall into any familiar archetypes?
5. On page 118, Dani says, "Being [Yeoryeong's] friend is just asking for unnecessary stress!" Why does she think that?
6. On page 120, Dani decides that she's going to avoid Yeoryeong. If you were in Dani's situation, what would you do? Would you come to the same decision? Why or why not?
7. How do the prologue and first episode work to build mystery and suspense? What questions do you have at the end of episode 1?
8. What causes Dani to eventually embrace her friendship with Yeoryeong?
9. Why do you think the book's creators chose to include a three-year time jump? Do you think Dani experienced those three years, or do you think her life also skipped forward? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.
10. How does the book's tone shift after the time jump?
11. What are some common tropes of romance novels or stories? In what ways is *My Life as an Internet Novel* a typical romance story, and in what ways does it subvert the genre? What commentary do the book's creators make about romance stories and internet novels? How do they convey that commentary to the reader?
12. What do you think will happen in future volumes of *My Life as an Internet Novel*? Why do you think that?



OUR AIMLESS NIGHTS

VOLUME 1

ABOUT THE BOOK

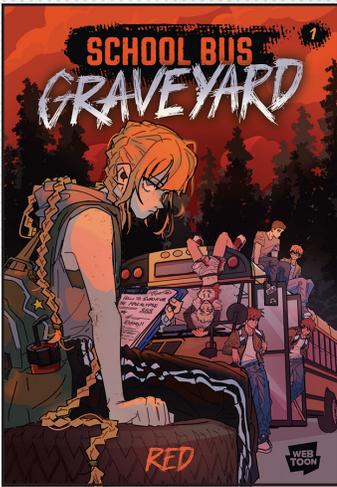
Peppy high school girl Chika and quiet boy Waya seem to have nothing in common. However, they share a secret. They meet every week outside the convenience store where Waya works. Slowly, they learn more about each other. Before either of them knows it, something begins to bloom between them in the moonlight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the book's first chapter build suspense for the rest of the story? After reading the first chapter, what can you infer about the characters and their circumstances, and what questions do you have?
2. What are Waya's and Chika's defining character traits? How do their personalities affect the way they interact with each other?
3. How would you describe the social dynamics of the students at Waya and Chika's school? Do you think they are similar or different to the social dynamics at your school?
4. Do you think the book does a good job of depicting the thoughts and feelings that come with having crush? Why or why not?
5. On page 55, Waya says that he "prefers just talking in person" over digital communication, and that he feels better when he can see the other person's face. Do you prefer talking to people in person or online? Why?

6. How do Waya and Chika view themselves? How do they view each other? How is each character's self-perception different from how they are seen by the other person? How do their perceptions of the world around them differ?
7. Why are Waya and Chika so averse to speaking to each other at school? Use evidence from the text and images to support your answer.
8. What character traits do you think earned Takeru Shiba the nickname of Shibaken? Why do you think the book's creator chose to draw him with a tail and/or ears in certain panels?
9. On page 135, Shibaken says, "I still remember what you did during middle school when I . . ." but Shirata cuts him off and says that she doesn't want to talk about it. Based on the text, images, and what you know about Shirata, what do you think might have happened?
10. When the students are studying together, what are the intentions behind Shibaken's actions? How do his actions betray those intentions? What should Shibaken have done differently in this situation?
11. What finally convinces Waya to reach out to Chika?
12. If you were friends with Waya, what advice would you give him to help him overcome his self-esteem issues? If you were friends with Chika, what advice would you give her to navigate her crush on Waya? What lessons can be learned and applied to your own life after reading *Our Aimless Nights*?





SCHOOL BUS GRAVEYARD

VOLUME 1

ABOUT THE BOOK

Ashlyn has always been a loner, and she likes it that way. However, she's forced to make allies fast after a high school field trip goes horribly wrong. She and a few others now see a monstrous phantom invisible to everyone else. Thankfully, it doesn't seem to be able to hurt them. Until midnight that is, when the skies turn red and Ashlyn finds herself in a world of murderous ghosts. She'll need to trust her classmates to uncover the secret of the curse, but can she survive long enough to do it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Chapter 1 begins "in media res," which is Latin for "in the middle of things" and is a common narrative device. What other books, movies, or video games can you think of that begin in media res?
2. After reading through page 24, stop and consider the following: What do you know about the group's situation? What questions do you have? Based on what you know so far, can you make any guesses about their circumstances?
3. Early in the book, Ashlyn likes to be alone and is hesitant to make friends. Why might she feel this way? Do Ashlyn's parents contrast her personality?
4. Why do you think Aiden is so attached to Ashlyn and persistent in trying to get her on the field trip?
5. The Sorrel Weed House is a real place in Savannah, Georgia. Do you know anything about the historic landmark? Does learning more about this real-life location and its paranormal history change the way you view the story?
6. What does the reader learn about Ashlyn on page 72?
7. Do you think there is meaning behind the Sorrel Weed House tour guide's phone charm? If so, what is the meaning?
8. At the end of chapter 2, the group has finished their first night in the shadow dimension. On pages 160–162, the reader is given a brief explanation of some of the shadow dimension's rules that the group has discovered. Based on these rules and the group's conversations and circumstances in the present time, what do you think might have occurred during the many nights since? Use evidence from the text and images to support your answer.
9. If you were in the group's situation, how would you use the rules of the shadow dimension to your advantage?
10. What are some of the pros and cons of returning to Savannah? If you were in the group's situation, what would you choose? Why?
11. What do you think of the group's plan to acquire a vehicle and guns, fortify the graveyard, and wait a year before returning to Savannah? Would you go with this plan, alter it, or come up with a different plan entirely? Is there anything else you would ask Aiden to purchase with his saved allowance?
12. Do you think Ashlyn is a good leader? Why or why not? What does each teen contribute to the group?

Brochure created by Matt Slayter, an educator with expertise in pop culture-based education. He regularly works with manga and graphic novel publishers to create teacher- and librarian-friendly resources.



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