

**Question 2: Compare manga in Japan with comics in the United States- make sure your answer includes comparisons on the level of form and content as well as considerations of how these media fit into society and social life in each country.**

Japanese manga and comics originating in the United States have very significant differences when compared side by side. Some of the most significant differences between the two would likely be the drawing style/mood setting used by Japanese artists, and themes or subjects that are common in each culture.

Japanese manga is well known for its unique artistic style and use of visual tools to signify a desired mood. Because of strict page allotments in American comics, artists must use more narration than Japanese artists to convey an idea, and have less space to work with for portraying action or emotion. Japanese comics are known to run for thousands of pages, over multiple volumes, and thus have less restrictions and more freedom to innovate. Japanese artists will often draw characters from multiple angles within the same scene to emphasize an action, where American artists must find ways to condense images and stories as much as possible.

The content of Japanese manga tends to work outside of societal norms and break the readers comfort zone. Even some of the earliest forms of manga were based on crude humor and obscene stories. While many of the early manga scrolls had religious themes and ideas, it is also common to find stories of farting contests (Schodt p. 29). Today, Japanese comics still breach all boundaries of obscenity and violence, where in the United States the content of comics has been strictly regulated.

Comics in the United States do not possess the same significance held for manga in Japan. Japanese culture is very strict and formal, and manga allows Japanese citizens a form of entertainment and escape from societal norms. There are forms of manga aimed for each age and gender demographic, that allows people to experience something beyond their set role in society. In the United States, comics are aimed mostly towards young boys or collectors, and are not commonly seen outside of these demographics.

**Question 3: So far, in class we have watched many anime that involve cyborgs, robots, and/or androids. Often, the main characters in such films are 'female.' Why do you think these kinds of themes are so prominent in Japanese animation? Can you make any links to Japanese society more generally or to Japanese ideas about technology and religion?**

I think that the recurring theme of cyborgs and robots in Japanese manga and anime are due to the need for Japanese people to escape from reality. Japanese culture sets strict limitations and expectations of formality and respect on its people and manga allows them a break from everyday reality. From one point of view, the stories and themes can be unlimited in creativity because they are not limited by reality.

On the other hand, I think that while cyborgs and robots play into the need to create a fantasy world, they also tie into the real world expectations of our future and technology. The possibility of robots is not necessarily far from reach in today's world, and the idea of them having human characteristics makes them a little less scary. The world has had a fascination with technology throughout this last century, and has enjoyed significant booms of technological advancement. I think this theme shows this fascination and the excitement of what is still to come.

I believe the reason that many of the main characters in these cyborgs/robot themed anime are female is also due to the strict roles created in Japanese culture. Women are supposed to be subservient and passive in Japanese culture, and placing them in strong, heroic roles satisfies multiple needs of manga readers. For one, it allows women and girls to feel empowered and strong when they can identify with a strong female character, and second, it connects with many men's fantasies of a strong, assertive woman.