

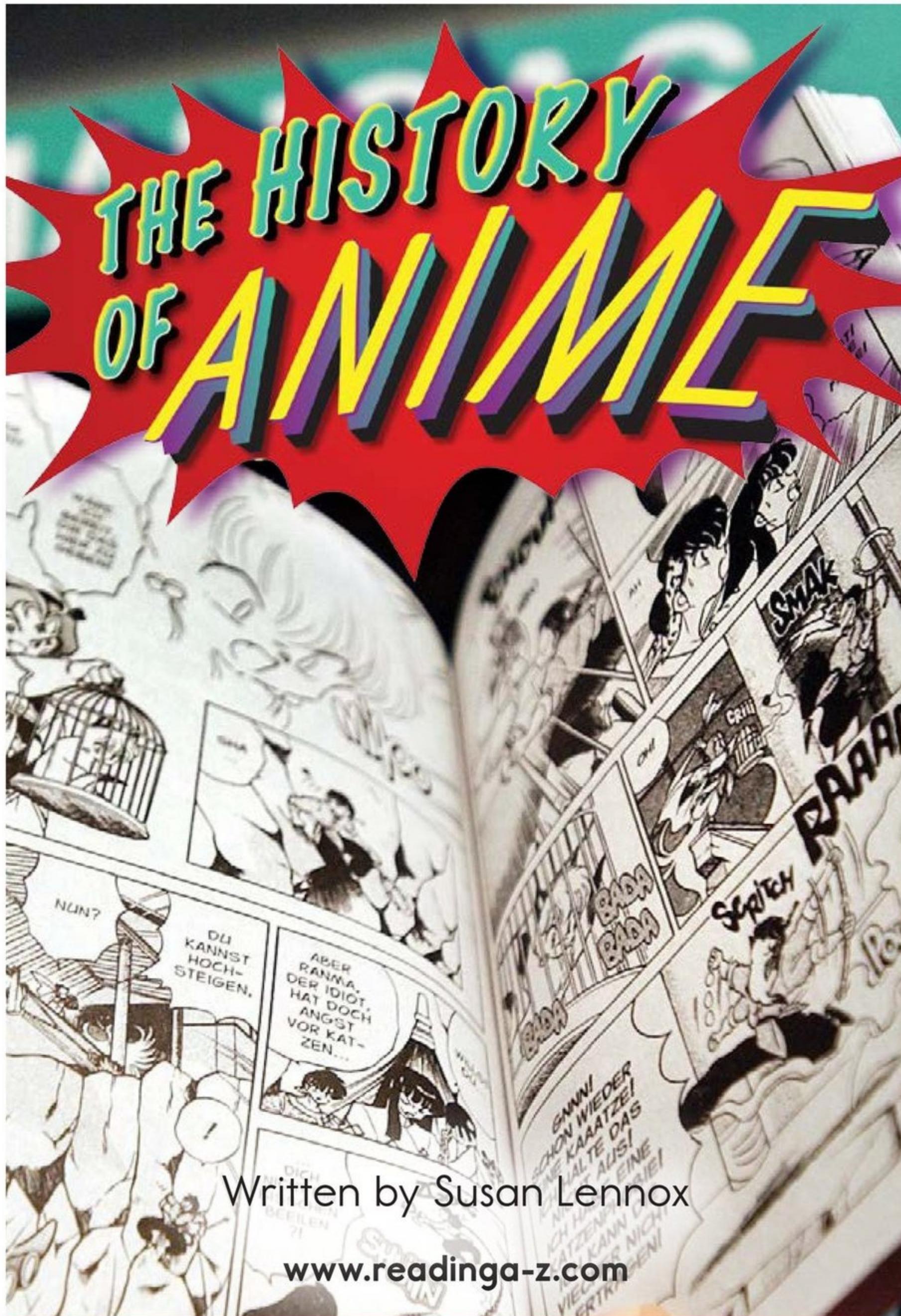
LEVELED Book • U

# THE HISTORY OF ANIME

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level  
U•X•Z<sup>1</sup>

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## Focus Question

What is anime, and how has it changed over time?

## Words to Know

animated  
anime  
banning  
dramatic  
expressions  
illustrations

lighthearted  
manga  
merchants  
panels  
scrolls  
sketches

Front cover: Manga artists use fine-point pens to create detail in their work.

Back cover: An Astro Boy exhibit at a Shanghai art museum opened in 2015.

Title page: Manga paperbacks in Europe are read from back to front.

Page 3: Visitors to an art exhibit in Germany can sit in front of a huge wall of anime characters.

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The cave paintings (main) in Lascaux, France, and clay tablets (inset) from Mesopotamia tell ancient stories.



## Introduction

Long before words existed, there were pictures. Early people used art to tell stories and share information. From ancient cave paintings to stone carvings, the images showed how the artists saw the world around them.

As time passed, languages developed. Symbols and words were used to share ideas. Art, however, continued to be an important part of storytelling. That is still true today. Stories are told not just with still drawings, but also with **animated** figures in cartoons and video games.

One type of storytelling art comes from the Asian island nation of Japan. Known as **anime**, it has become popular worldwide.

## Art for All

The history of anime began more than two hundred years ago. Before the nineteenth century, most Japanese artwork was done on large **scrolls**. The careful attention needed to make scroll art took time and drove up the cost. Only wealthy people in Japan could afford scroll art.



Colored woodblock prints required a different block for each color. Some prints had twenty different blocks for one complete image.



One of the most famous pieces of manga art is Hokusai's illustration of the well-known fable "The Blind Men and the Elephant."

In 1814, a new art form called **manga** appeared. Manga **sketches** were drawn by hand on paper. A famous artist used manga sketches to teach his students. Students shared their sketches, and the clever drawings soon caught on with the public. Manga could be created more quickly and cheaply than scrolls. Art was now available to everyone.

## Word Wise

The term *manga* is a combination of two Japanese words—*man*, meaning “curious,” and *ga*, meaning “sketches”—that together are the equivalent of the English word *cartoon*. It was first used by the artist Katsushika Hokusai to describe his own comical sketchbook drawings.

# From Curious Sketches to Comics

Manga came into its own in the late 1800s. Japanese ports saw an increase in trade. British and American **merchants** arrived, bringing newspapers from home. Japanese manga artists studied the cartoon styles in these papers. They began to use story **panels** arranged in a series in their own art. Manga characters soon had some of the same **expressions** seen in Western **illustrations**.

By the turn of the twentieth century, manga appeared in many Japanese newspapers. Political cartoons made fun of current events. Comic strips entertained children and adults with simple, funny stories. Readers enjoyed these entertaining manga images.



Manga newspaper comic strips look like their Western counterparts.

## Cartoons Spring to Life

The new century brought with it a different type of media—motion pictures. Film studios in the United States and other Western nations began making movies. People packed theaters to see this new form of entertainment. Motion pictures soon spread to theaters in other countries, including Japan.

The first movies were short black-and-white silent films. There was no recorded speech. Theater musicians played while the film rolled. Words appeared on the screen to explain what was happening and what the characters were saying. Since they couldn't be heard, actors had to find other ways to express themselves. Their performances, although silent, were quite **dramatic**, with wild expressions and actions.



Actresses in the 1917 film *Patria* use overly dramatic gestures to convey their characters' emotions.

Cartoonists around the world were fascinated with movies. Many wanted to make their own films. American illustrators like Walt Disney and Max Fleischer developed ways to turn still sketches into moving images. Soon, popular comic characters sprang to life on the big screen. Early animated movies ran just a few minutes, and their characters did not speak. Music played and cartoon characters used movement and expressions to tell the story, just as live film actors did.

Japanese manga artists soon created animated films of their own. The bold features of manga characters lent themselves to the dramatic expressions needed to tell stories in silent films. These cartoons were called *animēshon*, based on the English word *animation*. In time, this was shortened to *anime*.

## Do You Know?

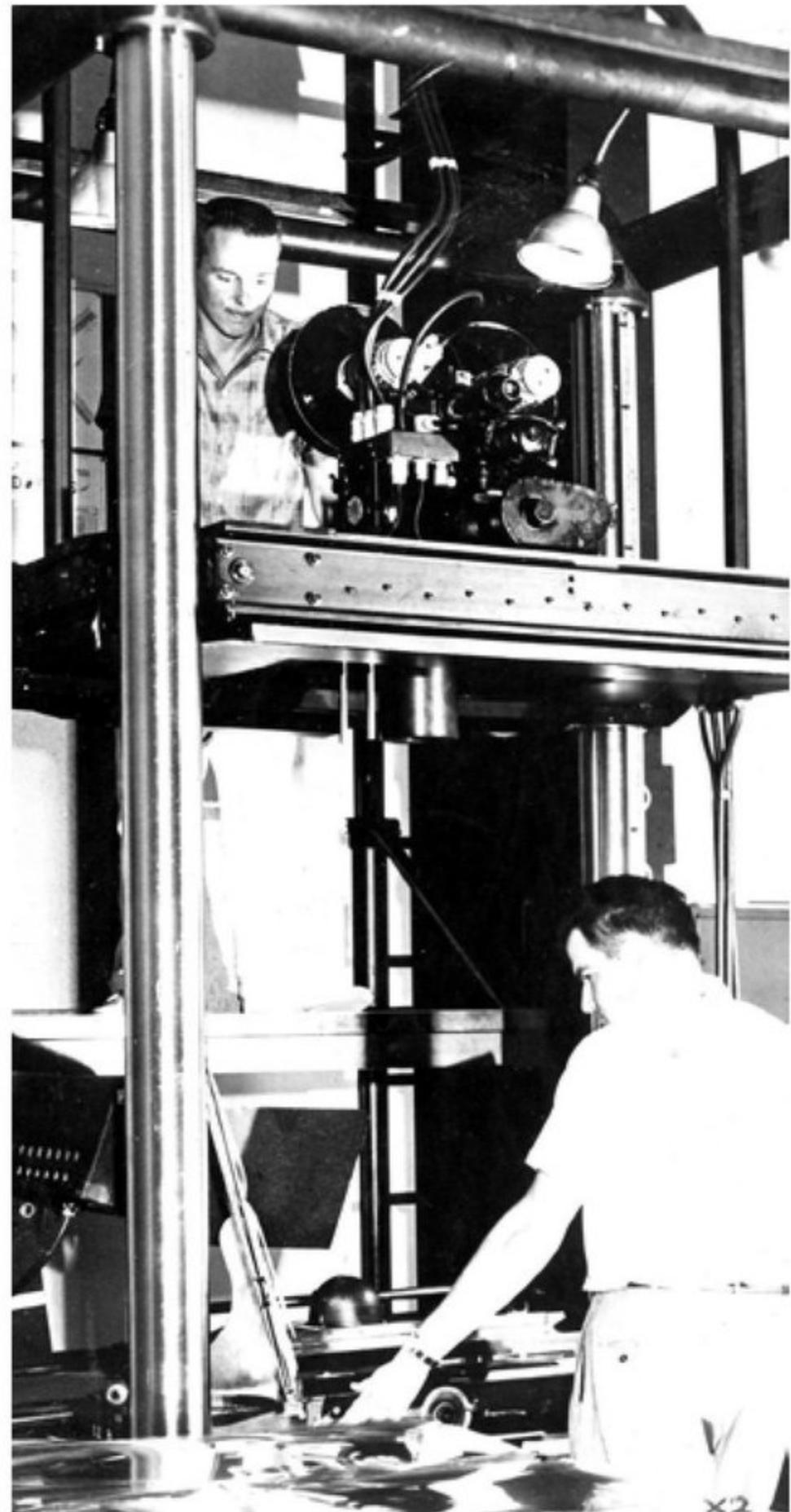
Before films and cartoons had sound tracks or recorded dialogue, music in theaters was live. Sometimes a single person played the piano along with the action on the screen. Sometimes a full orchestra played. The music served two functions. The first was to drown out the loud projector noises. The second was to keep the audience excited about what it was watching.



As technology improved, color and sound tracks were added to Western cartoons. Characters could now speak on film. In the 1930s, American cartoonists tried to make their human characters look more lifelike. New filming methods made backgrounds seem almost real. This realistic style was seen in Disney's first full-length animated movie, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

Japanese anime soon had sound but did not adopt the realistic look seen in Western cartoons. Instead, filmmakers used a technique from full-length Japanese movies—long, still camera shots that suddenly shifted to close-ups. The quick change created a very dramatic effect. Anime cartoonists also continued to draw in the black-and-white anime style.

Multiplane cameras helped create the appearance of depth in animated films.



# The Anime Look

Anime has a distinct appearance. Backgrounds are very detailed, and characters are often high energy, with exaggerated expressions and gestures. Many anime cartoons show action as viewed from different and extreme angles not used in Western cartoons.

Anime characters have prominent eyes and brightly colored hair. The eyes are especially telling in anime. Characters with large eyes are childlike and trustworthy, while smaller eyes, narrowed into a squint, indicate sneakiness. Tiny eyes reveal evil. A character's eyes don't always remain the same shape and size.

When a character is embarrassed, red lines appear across the character's nose. Scratching the back of the head makes the character seem more embarrassed. Blue lines across the face, narrowed eyes, bulging veins, or drops of sweat show anger.

Hair in anime has a unique look as well. It is often oddly styled and changes shape to convey movement and emotion.



## The Sorrows and Lessons of War

One reason anime style did not change was cost. New filming techniques were expensive. Another reason had to do with the start of World War II in 1939. When the war began, Japanese leaders wanted everyone's support. They tried to develop national pride by **banning** movies and cartoons made in other countries. Artists could only make art that celebrated Japanese values. Some animators refused to follow these rules and left the country. Others continued to create and release their art secretly. If caught, they faced punishment.

World War II ended terribly for Japan in 1945. The cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by two atomic bombs. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost. These events had a strong impact on the Japanese people and their art. The **lighthearted** fun of anime was replaced by more serious themes. Manga and anime artists used their work to send messages of peace, justice, and freedom.



Posters such as this one convinced the Japanese people to support their government against Japan's enemies.

In time, these messages were delivered using new 1950s technology—television. Through television, anime found a wider audience. Cartoons could now be watched at home. One of the most popular anime shows was based on a manga comic book drawn by Osamu Tezuka. The main character, Mighty Atom, was a robot boy with rockets for feet. In the show, he traveled the world, saving it from danger.

*Mighty Atom* became one of the most popular television shows in Japan. In the 1960s, it became a hit series in the United States as well under the title *Astro Boy*.

The success of *Astro Boy* paved the way for other anime cartoon shows. Called *mecha*, the cartoons featured teens and giant robots working to save the world from monsters. *Mazinger Z* was a popular mecha that was shown in Japan during the 1970s.



*Astro Boy* premiered on New Year's Day in 1963.

## Anime Today

Modern anime, like manga, features characters and story lines created for specific audiences.

*Shonen*—manga made for boys—stars male characters, with plots that include action and comedy. The popular shonen *Dragon Ball Z* was first aired in Japan in 1989. It continues to be shown on television stations throughout the world.



*Dragon Ball Z* ran from 1989 to 2003.

*Shojo*—manga made for girls—at first starred female characters with plots that focused on emotions and relationships. It soon changed to include more active characters involved

in romance and adventure. The 1990s anime series *Sailor Moon* by artist Naoko Takeuchi is a classic example of shojo. It tells the story of a girl who gets special powers. She uses them to protect Earth from evil forces.



The Sailor Moon character is used in at least three films and thirty-nine video games.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese studios began to make anime films. Many became hits around the world. In 1984, Hayao Miyazaki released *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, which saw great success. It told the story of a young princess who must save her planet. In 2001, the Japanese anime *Spirited Away* was made. It brought the tale of a young girl who enters the spirit world to the big screen. The director, Hayao Miyazaki, received much praise for the film. It eventually won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature.



*Spirited Away* has earned more than \$289 million since its release in 2001.

Anime is an important part of the latest twenty-first-century media, too. Favorite characters such as Astro Boy, Digimon, and Dragon Ball Z fighters spring to life in video games. Players control the characters' actions and guide them to complete missions with the push of a button. Just like figures from long ago, the images on the screen act out stories of adventure and daring. The dynamic characters in anime, though, take modern storytelling art to a whole new level.

## Glossary

<b>animated</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	made from a series of drawings that are put together to give the appearance of motion (p. 4)
<b>anime</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a Japanese animation style used in film and television (p. 4)
<b>banning</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	saying that something is not allowed; forbidding (p. 12)
<b>dramatic</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	sudden or exciting; full of action or emotion (p. 8)
<b>expressions</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	looks on someone's face that show feelings or emotions (p. 7)
<b>illustrations</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	pictures or drawings used to explain or decorate books or other written material (p. 7)
<b>lighthearted</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	cheerful, hopeful, or free from worry (p. 12)
<b>manga</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	Japanese comic books and illustrated novels (p. 6)
<b>merchants</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who buy, trade, or sell goods (p. 7)
<b>panels</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	individual boxes or frames in a comic strip or comic book (p. 7)
<b>scrolls</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	long rolls of paper or parchment that are used for writing or drawing (p. 5)
<b>sketches</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	quick, rough drawings (p. 6)

# The History of Anime

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,231

## Connections

### Writing and Art

Create your own manga comic strip. Include at least five pictures in your comic strip.

### Social Studies

Make a timeline of at least five events that impacted the development of anime. Briefly describe the significance of each event.

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