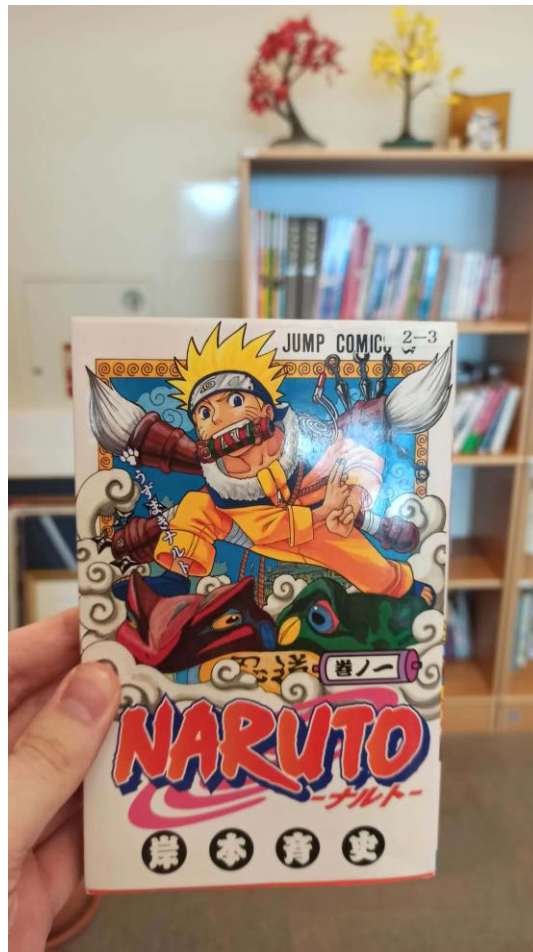


Essay by Rihards Strautmanis on Shonen Jump Naruto Manga

The Shonen Jump series Naruto was written and created by Masashi Kishimoto. Naruto along with other Shonen Jump series created by different authors like One Piece and Bleach were inspired by one of the biggest and the most popular manga series Dragon Ball created by sadly departed Akira Toriyama.



Naruto starts out with telling a story about how a Nine Tailed Fox demon or Kyuubi in Japanese attacked the village hidden in the leaves. Also well known as Konoha. One day a very powerful ninja known as the Fourth Hokage was able to save the village from Kyuubi by sealing the demon inside a young boy named Naruto at the day of his birth.

Naruto Uzumaki is a trouble maker of a kid, due to him pulling pranks and goofing off, but deep down Naruto himself feels lonely and depressed, because he doesn't know that a demon fox is sealed inside of him and everyone in the village hates and despises him due to Kyuubi killing off a lot of people and taking their families away.

Something Naruto himself has no part in. He is being scolded and yelled at by his teacher Iruka Umino also known as Iruka-sensei in Japanese. Iruka while tough, does want what's best for Naruto since Naruto was born and grew up without having any siblings, parents, grandparents or any other relatives of any kind. So in a way, Iruka acts like a father figure to Naruto.

In the first issue of the manga Iruka asked Naruto why he put graffiti on the Hokage stone faces, which are like the USA president stone faces in the real world at Mt. Rushmore. Naruto says that he does admire the Hokage and the reason he says this is because he himself wants to become a Hokage himself one day, so that the people in the village can stop disrespecting and look up to him instead.

Naruto of course first has to graduate the Ninja Academy. For those who don't know. Naruto is a world where there are powerful ninjas that use jutsu's, chakra and even lethal ninja weapons like kunai, shuriken, etc. In the Naruto world jutsu is basically Naruto's magic system. Where characters used jutsu in many different ways, some creative, some deadly. There are 3 different jutsu types in Naruto. Ninjutsu, Taijutsu and Genjutsu.



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What each of these jutsu do? Here is what I know so far:

Taijutsu is hand to hand combat. Usually when characters are out of chakra, which is a ninja's energy source, they have to use Taijutsu to stay alive. There are characters who heavily rely only on Taijutsu, like Might Guy and Rock Lee, which are introduced in Issue 4 or 5. But we don't fully see the full extent of Taijutsu until much later on in the series.

Ninjutsu is the most used jutsu in Naruto. Ninjutsu is basically where characters use chakra to create clones, transform into different people or objects, climb on trees, etc. But Ninjutsu requires a lot of concentration and a combination of both spiritual and physical energy. Without having one without the other, the jutsu could end up not working on the long run. Something Naruto himself struggled with quite a lot in the academy.

Last is Genjutsu. Genjutsu is a power I don't often see in Naruto. It is mostly used on people to mess with their heads. Basically mind control, giving them hallucinations or putting them in a coma or long sleep. The characters that use such abilities are Kakashi Hatake and Sasuke Uchiha, although Sasuke only uses Genjutsu when he becomes much older and much further into the story.



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Anyways, back to the actual story. Basically Naruto has a hard time doing Jutsu in a correct way and that's because later in the story it's explained that due to Kyuubi being sealed inside Naruto, his chakra is all over the place and the demon chakra in Naruto basically holds Naruto back into making jutsu's correctly.

Naruto was able to graduate due to him being tricked by Mizuki, one of the first villains in the story, to let Naruto steal a sacred scroll from the Hokage's office. There Naruto was learning his very iconic Multi Shadow Clone Jutsu skill. Basically the difference between a regular clone and shadow clone is that shadow clones have actual shadows and also they are solid, which means that this skill is very useful in combat. It's not just one of you who fights the bad guy, but 5 or more of you kicking butt. Naruto was able to make over one thousand shadow clones on his first try, but that is also because he was trying to save Iruka from Mizuki. Also Iruka was the very first person who acknowledges Naruto as a person rather than a monster, since Mizuki told Naruto that he had a demon sealed inside of him, which rightfully made Naruto very upset, since he knows why everyone in the village hates him and wants him dead.

Anyways, due to Iruka's encouragement, Naruto finally graduated into becoming a Genin ninja. A Genin is a low class Ninja. And there are different classes of Ninjas depending on the skill level. Genin is the lowest rank. Chunin is the middle rank and Jonin is the highest rank. So this starts off Naruto's journey into becoming a Hokage, which will be difficult, but not impossible.

Aftwards Naruto ends up meeting new characters. Konohamaru Sarutobi, who is the grandson of the third hokage, Hiruzen Sarutobi. Konohamaru hates the fact that he is just labeled as the grandson of the third hokage and never gets acknowledged by his real identity. Not even his name. But Naruto was the first person who did acknowledge him as an actual person, even in the end calling him by his real name. Which is a similar bond that Naruto has with Iruka.

Then later during the graduation day Naruto puts on his iconic ninja headband and ends up with a team of 3. Himself, Sakura Haruno and Sasuke Uchiha. Sakura is a girl that Naruto has a crush on. I don't know why, because Sakura is the kind of female character I personally dislike.



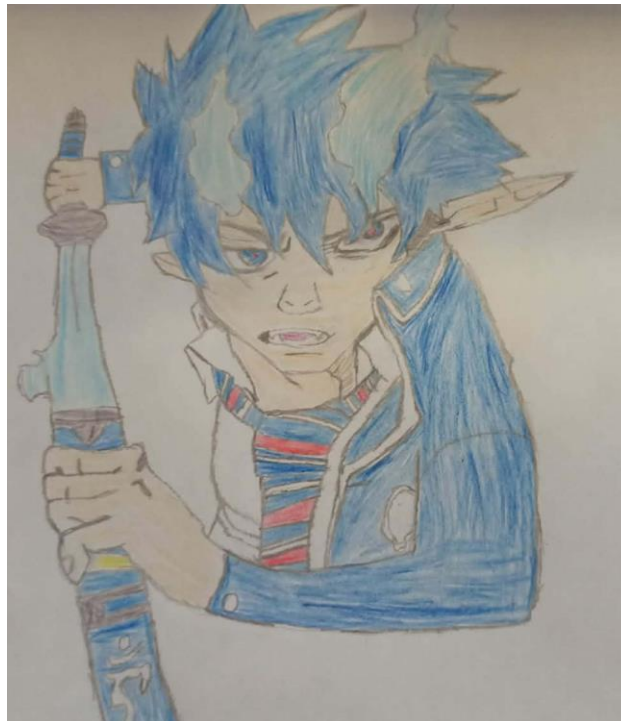
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Fun fact: Instead of Sakura, Kishimoto wanted to put Hinata Hyuuga in Naruto's team instead, which is known as Team 7. But Hinata was introduced during the chunin exams in the manga, while in the anime we see her in the first episode cheering Naruto on without actually saying it. Kishimoto himself admitted that he doesn't know how to write female characters and it's very evident in Naruto.

Since in the story Sasuke Uchiha gets introduced, every girl, minus Hinata has a very obsessive crush on Sasuke to the point that the girls, including Sakura don't acknowledge any other boy in class. Sasuke Uchiha is a naturally born talented genii in Naruto, while Naruto is the complete opposite of that. While Naruto trains to the point his bones crack or when he becomes so tired due to exhaustion, Sasuke is so good, that all the training he does in the academy or outside of it is nothing but a child's play to him.

And Naruto completely hates Sasuke and for a good reason. He hates how Sasuke gets all of the love and attention from everyone, especially Sakura, since he himself gets treated like garbage by everyone in the village, including his own classmates. And since then a rivalry between Naruto and Sasuke was born.

There was an interesting panel I saw in the manga that wasn't animated in the anime is Sasuke's surprised and shocked face when Sakura told him that Naruto had no parents. This was the first time Sasuke learned about this and it surprised him. Sakura was bad mouthing Naruto to the point of making fun of him for having no one in his life, which rightfully made Sasuke angry at Sakura since later on in the story we learn that Sasuke also lost his family and his entire clan. I wish they kept that in the anime, because it showcases that Sasuke is more than just a emotionless jerk. In the manga it showed that Sasuke actually showed genuine concern for Naruto, while in the anime he was just irritated by Sakura's constant nagging. And can't say I blame him.



Drawing by Rihards

Later on in the story we end up meeting Team 7's squad leader Kakashi Hatake. Kakashi wanted to learn more about his squad, like what things they like, dislike, what are their hobbies and also their future dreams. Kakashi started out telling them about himself to give Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura an idea how they should answer him. Of course Kakashi kept it very vague, which creates a lot of mystery to the character.

Naruto told his love for Ramen, which is Naruto's most beloved dish and it's also very popular in Japan if I'm not mistaken. Of course Naruto told his future dream, which is to become the greatest Hokage. Then we go to Sakura and good lord how I personally loathe this character.

I personally don't mind female characters showing crushes on guys in fictional stories. But what I don't like is them being written in such an obsessive manner that everything else in life means nothing to them. I personally don't mind that obsession in a more comedic type of story, but in a serious story driven series, it just feels forced and obnoxious. Sakura's obsession with Sasuke was so infuriating that they kept that obsession all the way to the end of the series. Jesus Christ. By that point I was expecting her to move on from him, but Kishimoto said no.

And last is Sasuke who says he hates everything and doesn't like anything. His goal is to kill a certain someone. Who that is, we don't know until much later in the story. Which is the Zabuza Arc.

Afterwards Kakashi does a training exercise with his squad which is called the survival exercise. Basically it's a test where Naruto, Sasuke and Sakura have to take away two bells from Kakashi before time runs out. The scary part is that if they fail, they will be sent back to the academy. The two bells thing is that if two people get the bells, they stay in the squad, while the third member who doesn't have the bell gets thrown out of the team. So Naruto, Sakura and Sasuke each individually try to get the bells from Kakashi, but each attempt failed since Kakashi is a Jonin level ninja, while other 3 are only Genin. After the timer runs out, Kakashi ends up failing all 3 of the characters, because Kakashi told them that the real reason for the exercise is for them to learn how to work as a team, not as individuals. Kakashi gave them another chance by giving Sakura and Sasuke lunch boxes while Naruto was tied up to a log and was left starving. Sasuke was willing to give Naruto his lunch box and then Sakura gave hers to Naruto, even feeding him. Sakura had to learn not to treat Naruto so badly and shouldn't just focus only on Sasuke (sadly that doesn't last long), Sasuke had to learn that he shouldn't always look down on others and actually help them out when they need it and Naruto had to learn not be so cocky and arrogant all the time.

Kakashi does see them breaking the rules he made, but he let them all pass, because they learned about teamwork and sometimes just following the rules doesn't always require priority over friendship. We then read Kakashi's iconic line: Those who break the rules are scum, but those who abandon their friends are worse than scum.

Very powerful words indeed. And then we move to Zabuza's arc which I will not be covering, because we will be here all day.

So, why I chose Naruto as a subject for this essay? Because Naruto was one of my biggest inspirations growing up, along with other pieces of media, mostly action oriented cartoons from the west and other anime/manga series. One of my dreams is to create an action oriented animated series as well, but my drawing skills from my imagination and memory aren't the best. I honestly started drawing when I was in my second year of high school. I started drawing anime/manga characters in 2020, because I wanted to see if I could draw such characters on my own. My drawing skills are slowly improving, but not to the point I can create my own characters.



Rihards with his favorite recent drawing inspired by Japanese characters

These days I just pick an existing character image from google and try to redraw that character with pencil and paper. I also drew Naruto characters as well, mostly Naruto and Hinata, since those two are my favorite Naruto characters. Naruto, because I can relate to him on a personal level, because while I was raised and cared for by my parents, I do know how it feels like to be outcasted by society as well. I was born both physically and mentally disabled and it was very difficult for me to fit in with other people, especially kids around my age. Hence why I was transferred to 6 different schools and I was also a victim of bullying.

But Naruto along with other fictional characters like Spider-Man, Wolverine, and many others inspired me to keep moving forward in life and do my best to make my dreams come true. Which sadly in today's world is almost impossible to do for various reasons.

As for Hinata, well, I chose her, because she has a very kind, loving and caring personality which I admire a lot from other fictional female characters as well, like Kari Kamiya/Hikari Yagami from Digimon, Dawn/Hikari from Pokemon, Hiyori Iki from Noragami, etc. And I feel like more girls & women should aspire to be more like Hinata, rather than be someone like Sakura Haruno for example. Or worse yet, Myne Suphia from The Rising of the Shield Hero.

But that's all I have for now. I also shared my drawings of Naruto characters I drew as well, so I hope you like them along with my essay.