



Marc Hairston
and
Pamela Gossin

ANIME AND MANGA CREATORS

The Early Years



About the Authors

Marc Hairston was a young child with two loves: space and cartoons. Now as an old adult, he is a professional space physicist studying satellite data to see how the sun and the solar wind affect the earth's atmosphere and cause the northern lights. In his spare time he has become an anime scholar, giving talks and writing papers and books. He has stacks of unopened anime Blu-ray discs and calculates it will take over ten years to get through the backlog of unwatched shows.

—For my favorite anime fans: my son, Roberto, and my two “goddaughters,” Sofia and Cathy.

Pamela Gossin is a professor of the history of science and literature who studies and writes about how the humanities and sciences can both teach us meaningful things about ourselves and the world around us. Together, she and Marc Hairston have taught many anime and manga classes, including Science Fiction and Fantasy, and Healing Nature. Like Princess Nausicaä, she tries to appreciate the beauty and complexity of the universe and live in harmony with nature and other living beings.

— For Victor and our newly arrived grand-twins, Greyson and Richard—so blessed to share the universe with you!

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Rumiko Takahashi and *Ranma ½*

Rumiko Takahashi has the distinction of being the richest manga-ka in the world. Creator of six major manga series and over a dozen shorter series and single-chapter manga, she is also now the most famous manga-ka in the world. Born in 1957, she grew up on the east coast of Japan in the Niigata Prefecture. As a young child, she did not have any strong desire to be an artist. It was not until she was in college that she started drawing manga as a hobby. She found further motivation when she took a short course at the Gekiga Sonjuku manga school, where she studied under the well-known manga-ka Kazuo Koike, creator of the manga *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

While she was in manga school, Takahashi published her first few works as *dōjinshi*, self-published comics generally sold at comic fairs attended by fans. In 1978 she won an honorable mention in the Shogakukan New Comics Contest for a one-shot manga called *Those Selfish Aliens* that was published in the contest sponsor's magazine, *Weekly Shōnen Sunday*. She expanded this story into the series *Urusei Yatsura* (*Those Obnoxious Aliens*), which began publication later in 1978 and quickly became a hit.

dōjinshi
Self-published comics
generally sold at comic
fairs attended by fans

one-shot manga
Comic books or graphic
novels that consist of a
single chapter based on
a stand-alone story arc

Rumiko Takahashi (pictured in 2022) is the richest and most famous manga artist in the world. Her six major manga series and over a dozen shorter series and single-chapter manga have attracted a huge following and won critical acclaim.



Most manga-ka feel lucky to have one, or maybe two, hit series. In her career Takahashi has had six long-running hits: *Uru-sei Yatsura* (1978–1987), *Maison Ikkoku* (1980–1987), *Ranma ½* (1987–1996), *Inuyasha* (1996–2008), *Rin-ne* (2009–2017), and *Mao* (2019–). She has also created dozens of shorter series. When she ended her first two successful series in 1987, she started *Ranma ½*, a new comedy-action manga that attracted an even larger readership than both of her previous series.

Martial Arts Hijinks

Playing off the popularity of manga series that focused on martial arts, Takahashi's new series centered on sixteen-year-old Ranma Saotome, who was being trained as a martial artist by his father, Genma Saotome. When father and son travel to a Chinese

laughs, the story presents a serious satire and critique of Japanese society. Traditionally, Japanese culture has had a fairly strict division between the genders and gender roles. Ranma's frequent transgressions as he switches between the genders highlights some of the arbitrariness and hypocrisy of Japanese attitudes. As a highly competitive martial artist, Ranma's self-image is tied up with being a strong male. Turning into a female, even one who is a powerful martial arts fighter, is an embarrassment for him. Over the course of the series, though, he learns to appreciate some of the roles he can play as a female that would not be acceptable as a male, such as enjoying sweet desserts. In anime and manga, it is typically women and girls who favor sweets.

Comic Misadventures

Akane, too, does not fit into traditional Japanese gender roles. She is a tomboy who prefers martial arts to the domestic arts and generally hates boys, which sets her apart from most of the other

Worldwide Popularity

While many manga-ka find popularity outside of Japan, Rumiko Takahashi is easily the most popular worldwide with both male and female fans. One writer attributes her popularity to humor that transcends borders and cultural differences. "The red thread that ties everything together is her humor, and that's what makes her work so popular both in Japan and overseas," says Lisandra Moor, a writer for a Tokyo-based English-language magazine. "Some have qualified her gags as 'international' as they often rely on imagery and context rather than dialogue and punch lines."

According to *Lambiek Comiclopedia*, Takahashi's works have been translated and published in nearly two dozen languages: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, and Vietnamese. Worldwide the number of printed books of her manga in 2024 exceeded 230 million.

Moving to Anime

Because of its huge success in Japan, *Ranma ½* was one of the first manga series licensed by Viz Media and brought to the United States in the early 1990s. After the text was translated into English, the artwork was flipped so that the progression of panels flowed from left to right as US comic books typically do. The first set of *Ranma ½* manga were published like US comics, as single twenty-two- to thirty-two-page issues that contained a single chapter. Soon after that, VIZ dropped the single-issue model and began publishing them in book form as the company continues to do today.

From 1989 through 1992, Studio Deen created 189 half-hour anime episodes of *Ranma ½* along with three theatrical films and

Rumiko Takahashi's Ranma ½ has reached American audiences both as a manga series and as a televised anime series (pictured). The latest reboot of the Ranma ½ anime series premiered worldwide on Netflix in 2024.



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This is a fan-run English-language website that contains an encyclopedia of information about Hayao Miyazaki, his works, Studio Ghibli, and many of the other anime connected to them.

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