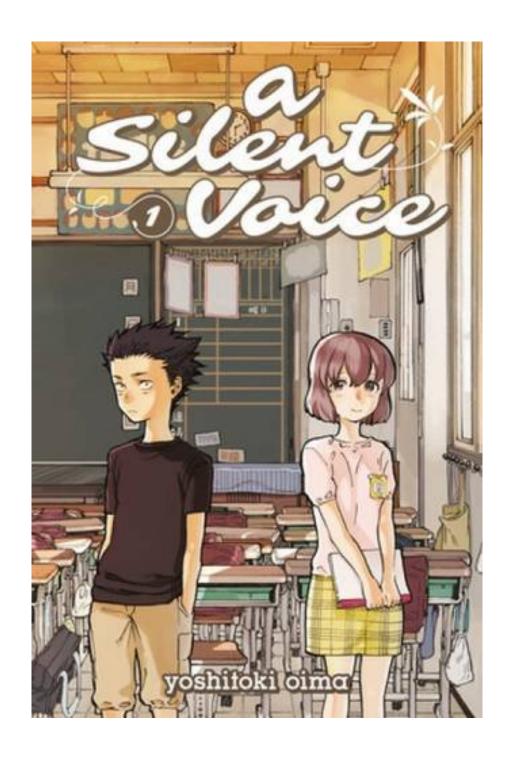


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LEARNING TO LISTEN

Shoya is a bully. When Shoko, a girl who can't hear, enters his elementary school class, she becomes their favorite target, and Shoya and his friends goad each other into devising new tortures for her. But the children's cruelty goes too far. Shoko is forced to leave the school, and Shoya ends up shouldering all the blame. Six years later, the two meet again. Can Shoya make up for his past mistakes, or is it too late?

Read the manga industry insiders voted their favorite of 2014!

"A very powerful story about being different and the consequences of childhood bullying... Read it." - Anime News Network

"The word heartwarming was made for manga like this." -Manga Bookshelf

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26 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

Powerful story

By DC

I have read a preview of this manga once and it touched me very much. This story is about a hearing boy and a deaf girl. Shoya, a hearing boy, is a bully who loves to get in trouble. Shoko, a very sweet, friendly, and kind deaf girl, shows up in Shoya's school. Shoya starts to bully the poor and sweet Shoko like he yanked her hearing aid from her ear, throwing it on the ground and stomping it. One day, Shoya took his bullying too far on Shoko and she has to transfer to another school. Shoya gets a taste of his own medicine; bullying by his own classmates for almost 6 years. Shoya was filled with regret, remorse, and blame for almost 6 years. This beautiful, but powerful story teaches us the consequences of childhood bullying. If you are hearing impaired like me, buy this book and trust me, you will love this story.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

A stunning, insightful look into Japanese Deaf culture, and the effects of bullying.

By Amy

Let's talk about deaf culture in Japan.

This story is very much a no holds barred critical examination into not only the effects of bullying, but also being "different" in Japan. Shoko, a deaf girl, gets bullied incessantly by her classmates, and the escalation is

surprisingly well done. It's all very much on point and the psychological impacts are surprisingly fleshed out in explicit detail. The manga was supported by the Japanese Federation for the deaf, and this shows as Shoko, not given many lines save for a few chapters told in a perspective that is essentially hers, is left as a silent protagonist in all the right ways. She has a voice, and she attempts to interact, but the lack of empathy for her at first from not only the teachers but also the students, results in this voice being silenced painfully. This sets the stage for how the escalation of insults and bullying leads to the fallout that affects the main male lead Ishida as well. For the most part, this story is told from his perspective, only shifting away from this when it helps to emphasize the main point that is being spelled out.

The story then, shows the intense attention to detail that demonstrates not only personal experience, but an in depth understanding of being on both sides of the problem. Being bullied, and how easy it is to be the bully. The story though, does not come off as preachy in any respect. Instead, it is a very real discussion being lobbied which lays out "this is what happens, these are the effects, and these are possible ways to move forward from there" This third aspect is the central focus of the entire story. It is told in subtle phrasing, coloration, and mood set up. The pacing is also spot on. The advancement of the story line is slow and methodological. The changes in the characters are very very well spelled out, and the finale comes as the natural result of everything that led before it.

If you are looking for some mindless fun, look elsewhere. Here, Oima lays their focus solely on an underexposed and often ignored segment of any society: Those who are perceived as "disabled" and are "defective" somehow. Oima actually manages to very subtly bring the reader to the realization that just because someone has no sense of hearing, they are not defective, and should not be treated as such.

Seeing this laid out reminded me of another book that is available on amazon. It's called "Deaf again" by Mark Drolsbaugh. In it, he brings the readers attention to the notion of not being broken or defective, yet being treated as such. Shoko is seen by Ishida as not being broken at all. He accepts her deafness after he ages and actually changes and improves himself as a result of serious introspection of how terrible he was. His acceptance of her deafness stands in contrast to her mother. Shokos mother, on the other hand, is seen accepting the pathological view of deafness, that she is functionally limited and needs "fixing" she is made to use hearing aids, her mother refuses to learn sign language, and she often worries over Shoko to a fault. All of these actions, done with the best of intentions, end up further weakening Shokos sense of self.

Now why is this all important?

Because it shows that acceptance of difference but not isolation of these differences is they key to understanding. Ishida and her mother stand in stark contrast to one another, and how this manga lays this out makes it explicitly clear that the reason for this is to emphasize understanding and acceptance of somebody as they are. Only in doing so can a person really be able to freely express themselves as they are rather than going with the idea that lacking something means dysfunctional. How they get this message across in this manga is one of the few truly moving moments in manga. Every little thing in the manga works towards a very crucial moment. Each little thing that seems insignificant and is more about how one or another character is the way they are is actually very very important to understanding how we come to the most crucial moment in the entire manga.

Because not a single chapter is wasted, because not a single line of dialog is unimportant, because every element serves to make a powerful impact on the readers perception of not only Shoko, but also Ishida, this manga is one of the few manga that has rightly earned its place in my top 10 manga of all time list.

If you want to understand the conflict deaf people face, both externally and internally, if you want to understand what it means to understand one another, and if you want to see a realistic look at how bullying

affects not only the bully but also the victim, then I strongly recommend this manga. My most sincere hope is that others will be able to enjoy every little aspect of it that I did.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

"A Silent Voice" Volume 1...

By A. Irey

This review is of the first volume alone, so please keep in mind that is how I am judging the story at this point. It's not often a story can get an immediate reaction out of me. Within a single chapter I had an idea of what the story was going for and realized to my horror that the first volume was basically what would become one of the most difficult but fast reads I have done with any series. I blew through the first volume within an hour or so. It's engrossing but mainly because of how well one can relate to it. As an anime and manga fan I was not a cool kid in middle school or high school. It's unlikely that those interests would ever allow for a "popular" kid in that age. So, bullying isn't something I'm unused to. I have also been working with troubled youth and those with learning disabilities for the past 2 years so this story is a painful reminder of what kind of things adolescents will do to one another in their ignorance.

It's not difficult to relate to the story of someone being bullied but this story actually takes place from the perspective of someone who is the bully, a non-traditional setup. If you're anything like me, you may have a hard time getting through the story knowing that the main character you're following is the bully in this particular story. While that dichotomy changes a bit as the volume goes on this first volume isn't an easy story to swallow. But the fact that it is so important is what makes it truly shine. The characters are all real and it's not hard to see how many of these people exist in everyday life, even outside of the Japanese culture. The voices of shame of and guilt that resonant after the ignorance and bullying are given light are all too common and when enough becomes too much it really hits home to see how the dynamic of the story changes up.

The art for this particular series is beautiful. In fact, in a day and age where stories like this tend to focus on pretty yet great drawing, this particular series has a bit of grit to it which makes it that much more appealing given the tone of the series.

Since this is only the first volume it's hard to say where the story will go from here in terms of quality. As far as beginning volumes though, this one definitely has lasting impact even without the continued plot. I'll be very interested in reading what comes to follow.

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