2 Into the World of Manga

"Even if they make me cry," thought Tezuka one day, "they can't stop me from doing the one thing I want to do most." This thought changed his life. Using the mountain of comics he had at home as models, he began to draw his own. Soon his classmates followed suit, and before long they were asking him to help them with their cartoon drawings. His art teacher was not overjoyed. "All the human figures you draw end up like comic characters," he pointed out to him. But Tezuka was not put off.

At home, too, he often drew comics with his brother and sister when they played together. One day, his sister drew a face resembling an upside-down gourd. "Look! It's a gourd-face with a patch on it, right?" exclaimed Tezuka, and quickly began to draw one himself. At that moment, though he did not realize it, he was creating a comic character that would later become famous, namely Hyoutantsugi. This character appears early on in the kami-shibai, or "paper plays," that Tezuka drew in second and third grade of elementary school.

About the time he was starting to draw comics, Tezuka discovered cartoons. Tezuka's father, who had a weakness for cameras and films, bought a film projector made in France. He also bought some films, one of which was a Mickey Mouse cartoon. On seeing this mouse with big ears who went around in pants, gloves and over-sized shoes, Tezuka was entranced. Instantly hooked on cartoons, he was soon trying to make his own. For this he drew successive figures on the page rims of books or notebooks, then flipped the pages rapidly so that the figures seemed to move. He even used a thousand-page book to create a massive flip-style comic book that he loved showing to his friends.

When Tezuka was in the fifth grade of elementary school, his homeroom teacher, Mr. Inui, discovered a comic drawn by him that filled a notebook and was being passed around in the class. At the end of the class, Mr. Inui took the notebook with him to the teachers' room. Tezuka trembled, fearful that he was in for a good scolding. But he had no reason to fear. The notebook was shown around in the teachers' room and every one of the teachers read the comic. When Mr. Inui handed the notebook back to Tezuka, he said: "You go ahead and draw as many comics as you like."

Mr. Inui had a unique way of teaching writing. He would say to his pupils: "If there's something you really want to write about, it's fine to write forty or fifty pages." This was just the kind of encouragement Tezuka needed. His imagination was freed, and he began to fill page after page. There were days when he was so inspired that he couldn't finish writing in the class, so he continued at home. He liked to mix facts with impressions and fantasy. Dialogue, too, began to appear in his writings. There were times, however, when he got so carried away with making up stories that he ended up writing untruths. This would result in a scolding from his teacher.

Eventually, by learning to write lengthy compositions using various techniques and points of view, Tezuka acquired the know-how to write stories.

Comprehension Check 2

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1. A gourd-face with a patch later became a comic character. ( )

2. On seeing Mickey Mouse, Tezuka started trying to make his own mouse. ( )

3. Mr. Inui scolded Tezuka because a comic was being passed around in the class. ( )

4. Mr. Inui encouraged his pupils to write lengthy compositions. ( )