7 Success

In the year Jungle Taitei appeared, Tezuka received a request for a serialization from another publisher: "In America right now," the publisher said, "Tarzan is popular as an adventure story and Superman as a science story, but in both comics the hero is an adult. We'd like you to draw a science adventure story with a child hero."

"What if I draw a comic story in which nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes?" thought Tezuka. The idea came to him while watching news reports of nuclear tests carried out by the USA. As a result, the serialization of Atom Taishi ("Ambassador Atom") began in 1951. It depicted clashes between earthlings and aliens in a futuristic 21st. century. Atom, a child robot, acts as an ambassador mediating between the two groups, but this character only made its appearance in a supporting role from the third installment on.

The serialization lasted one year, but failed to live up to expectations. Still, despite being a minor character, Atom proved popular. As a result, Tezuka was made a proposal by the editorial department of the magazine company:

"Atom, being a robot, is powerful and can do things humans cannot do. But we would also like him to have the same human feelings as the children who read this comic. It would be good if he had weaknesses and sometimes failed, just as they do."

So, in 1952, a year after Atom Taishi had appeared, the comic story Tetsuwan Atom ("Mighty Atom") made its appearance with Atom as its hero. Unlike the complicated Atom Taishi, the story was easy to follow and a lot of fun. It caught on straight away and from the first issue letters started pouring in from children. From then on, Tetsuwan Atom was always a top choice among readers, and as a result it ran non-stop for seventeen years.

In Tokyo, Tezuka lived in an apartment building called Tokiwaso. It was an old, two-story wooden apartment with a shared kitchen and bath. There, in a tiny 4.5 mat room with only a table and bookcase for furniture, he continued to work on the serialization of Jungle Taitei and Tetsuwan Atom. There, too, he created the first long girls' story-comic, Ribon no Kishi ("Princess Knight").

Tezuka's good nature made it hard for him to turn down requests. If a project seemed interesting, he wanted to do it. He was full of ideas, a quick writer, and a man who believed that "Where there's a will, there's a way." As a result, work increased constantly. At one stage he was working on eight serialized comics, as well as on other complete comics and comics in book form. The volume of work was simply astonishing. And as Tezuka's work increased, so did the number of editors coming to collect their manuscripts.

Among editors, Tezuka had a reputation for being a difficult artist to collect manuscripts from. He readily made promises, but often disappeared when the deadline for delivery approached, unable to finish the work on time. This hide-and-seek between him and the editors gradually became more frequent. Yet, despite it, each of the comics was a hit with young readers and around this time Tezuka had no equals among popular comic book artists.

Comprehension Check 7

本文の内容に合うものには○を、合わないものには×をつけなさい．

1. Atom was a hero in Atom Taishi. ( )

2. The story of Tetsuwan Atom was too complicated to follow. ( )

3. Tezuka's work increased because of many requests from editors. ( )

4. When Tezuka was not able to finish the work on time, he often disappeared. ( )