

Mega-manga

Japanese-style comic books, known as "manga," have gained fans from Boise to Berlin, and have been credited with virtually single-handedly restoring enrollment in Japanese-language classes on American college campuses, where Japan had fallen off the map after its economy turned south in 1990.

Japan has become the cultural lodestar for a generation of trendy young Americans, say purveyors of pop culture.

"That generation looks at Japan much the same way as the generation before looked at France, in Hemingway's era," said Stuart Levy, chief executive officer for Tokyopop, a manga publisher in Los Angeles.

"You had a lot of creative energy happening in France at the time. I think you have that in Japan, and American youth can really relate to that."

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