

Critique of *Doki-doki Date*

Doki-doki Date is a class project for “Graphically Speaking: Japanese Manga” by Kangni Wang. The project consists of a pair of manga, each 2 pages long. The two manga pieces have the same characters and storyline: a boy is standing by a pole, looking bored and checking his phone. A girl shows up and looks excited to see the boy. But as she runs towards him, she trips herself and causes extreme embarrassment. Then the boy helps her up, with blushes on his cheek and ears. Both manga pieces are in shojo style, since elements like filters, full-body portraits, and chibi styles appear throughout the piece.

Kangni’s project shows similarity and difference at the same. The pair of manga are similar, since they have the exact content flowing from panel to panel. However, difference is also created by shifting the content to the next panel. Therefore, even though the story are the same, since the combinations of content and panels are different, the two versions can give the readers different feelings. In fact, Version A has a romantic approach to the date, whereas version B has a more comical effect.

In this project, different effects are set by the distinctive climax frames. In other words, how Kangni arranges the tripping scene creates the tone difference. The tripping scene is an insignificant one in version A, but the climax scene in version B. In version A, although the tragic tripping scene digresses from the smooth dating theme, it is indeed contained in a very

small frame at the bottom of first page. The panel's size and position, combined with the chibi style used in this frame, suppresses the significance of this event in the date. On the other hand, in Version B, the very same scene takes up 2/3 of the second page. It is then impossible to slip by this scene – the fact that it is the very first panel the readers see as they turn over the page makes it an eye-catcher. And since the theme contrasts with the previous page so much, it becomes the climax of this story.

Another interesting part of this project is the missing of dialog. As we can see, although there are dialog bubbles floating around, indicating there is communication going on between the boy and the girl, Kangni didn't really fill them up. In the manga, the characters' facial expressions and gestures are very vivid, so we can have a rough idea of what they are saying. This gives the readers their own interpretation of the conversation between the boy and girl. Moreover, the fact that the readers can understand what is going on without the conversation indicates the effectiveness of the graphics. In other words, by leaving out irrelevant elements, Kangni is able to convey different but strong messages by the slightest panel alternation.

Nevertheless, there are also drawbacks to this decision. By leaving the dialog bubble for the readers to fill out, Kangni is expecting the readers to be negotiating readers. That is, even if they are filling the conversation as they read, they can come back to it later and change their interpretations. However, for other readers, they might have a fixed interpretation of the conversation, which might cause confusion of plot, development and character mentality.

This project is a success, because I am drawn to the elements Kangni explores through this pair of manga. By keeping most the story and panel and alternating as little as she could, Kangni managed to create two manga that show different theme and effects. The storyboarding is extraordinary, because every panel needs to be taken into consideration to point to the same

tone and outcome. Through these strategies, Kangni communicates feelings by different characters and scenes.

Works Cited

Kangni, Wang. "Doki-doki Date" May 2017. Print. Unpublished.