

Manga Lettering: Translating What Can't be Spoken

Sara Linsley, Feb 2022

About Me, Sara Linsley

- Pronouns: she/her
- Freelance manga letterer, software developer, and font designer
- Based out of NYC
- Website: sara.pizza

Some comics I've lettered:

- Animal Crossing: New Horizons
- Revolutionary Girl Utena: After the Revolution
- Sweat and Soap
- Dandadan
- Fushigi Yûgi: Byakko Senki
- Love Me, Love Me Not
- Love in Focus
- Those Not-So-Sweet Boys
- i tell c
- Something's Wrong With Us

Objectives

By the end of this workshop, the participants will:

- gain an understanding of how letterers turn a translated script into a page of manga
- be able to identify the tools that manga artists use, and how those same tools can be used in localization
- cultivate an appreciation for how graphic adaptation can make or break the reader's experience

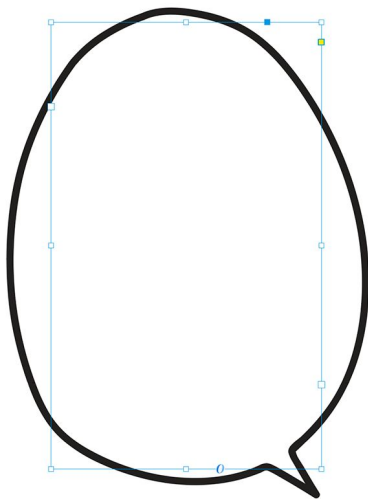
What is Lettering?

- Graphic Design
- Typography
- Illustration

Typesetting

Script:
1.5 Mrs. Bennet:
It will be no use
to us, if twenty
such should come
since you will
not visit them.

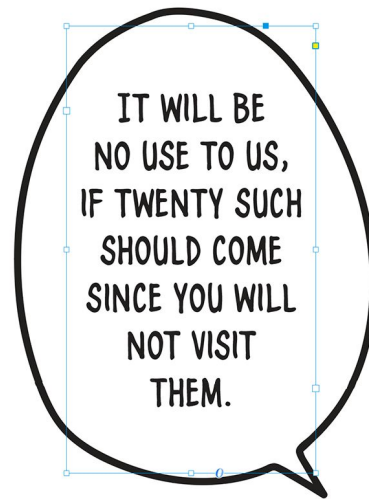
STEP 1:
Place text
frames



STEP 2:
Paste text
into frame

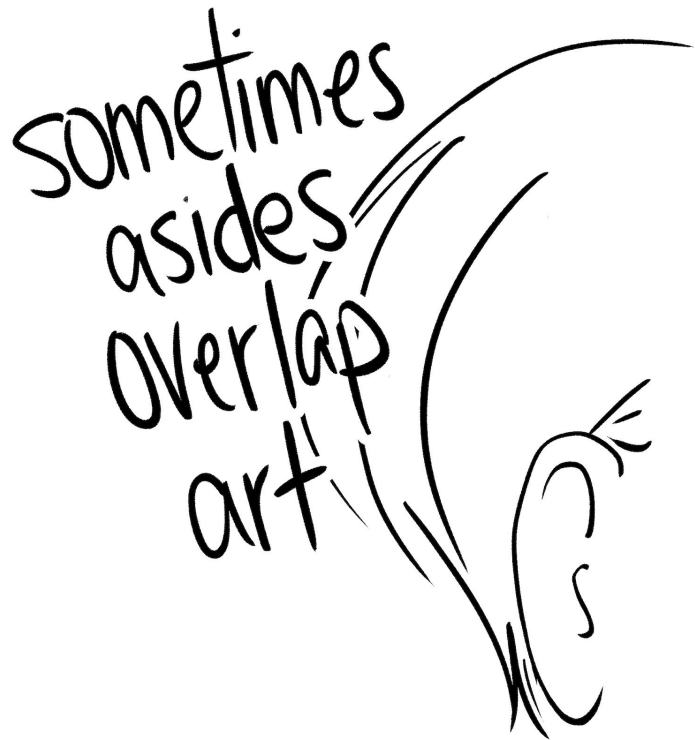


STEP 3:
Format and
balance text

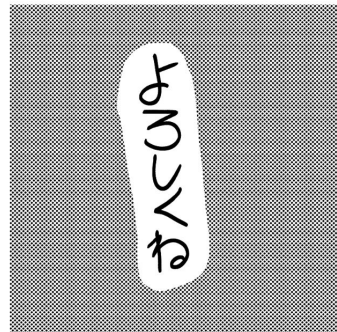


Retouching

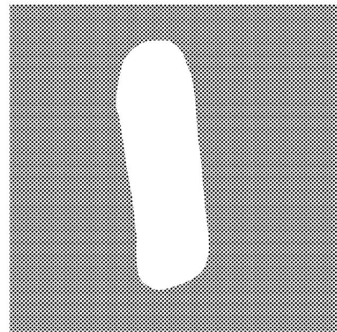
sometimes
asides
overlap
art!



Original



JP Removed



EN placed



JP retouched



Sound Effects Treatment

Full Retouch



Fushigi Yuugi Byakko Senki © 2018 Yuu Watase/Shogakukan

Styled Subtitle



Sweat and Soap / Ase to Sekken © 2018 Kintetsu Yamada / Kodansha Ltd.

Simple Subtitle



Dandadan © 2021 Yukinobu Tatsu / Shueisha / Viz Media

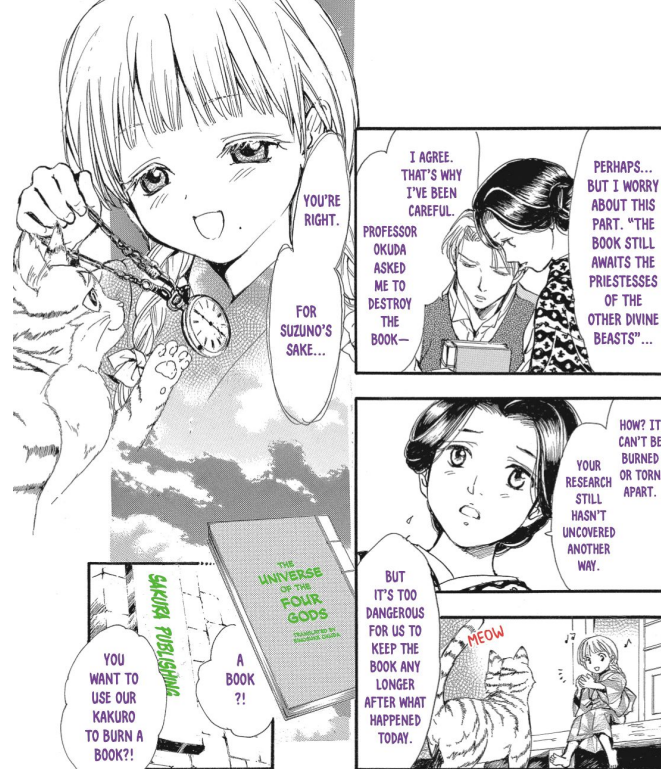


*Kakuro: The latest kind of furnace used in Western-style steelmaking at the time.





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Dialogue
Sound Effects
Signs /Labels

In the same way that translators must carefully match the tone of each character's dialogue, letterers are responsible for matching the *visual* tone of the comic.

Analyzing a Panel

To know how to localize a comic,
first you must understand how it
was made and why it was done that
way

Analyzing a Panel

- What fonts did the typesetting use?
- Is the art drawn conventionally or digitally?
- Does the panel have any background elements (signs, posters, etc)? Is the text on them a font or handwriting?
- What style do the sound effects have?
- What voice is each element trying to convey, and why?

Analyzing a Panel



Dandadan
© 2021 Yukinobu Tatsu /
Shueisha / Viz Media

Analyzing a Panel



Art - drawn conventionally,
toned digitally

Dialogue - drawn
conventionally

Screen - typical font
from a mobile UI

Dialogue - different font
to denote the speaker is
on the phone

Analyzing a Panel







Signs - brushy fonts, warped to perspective



Art - drawn digitally in CSP

Dialogue - default font

Sound Effects - drawn by hand in CSP

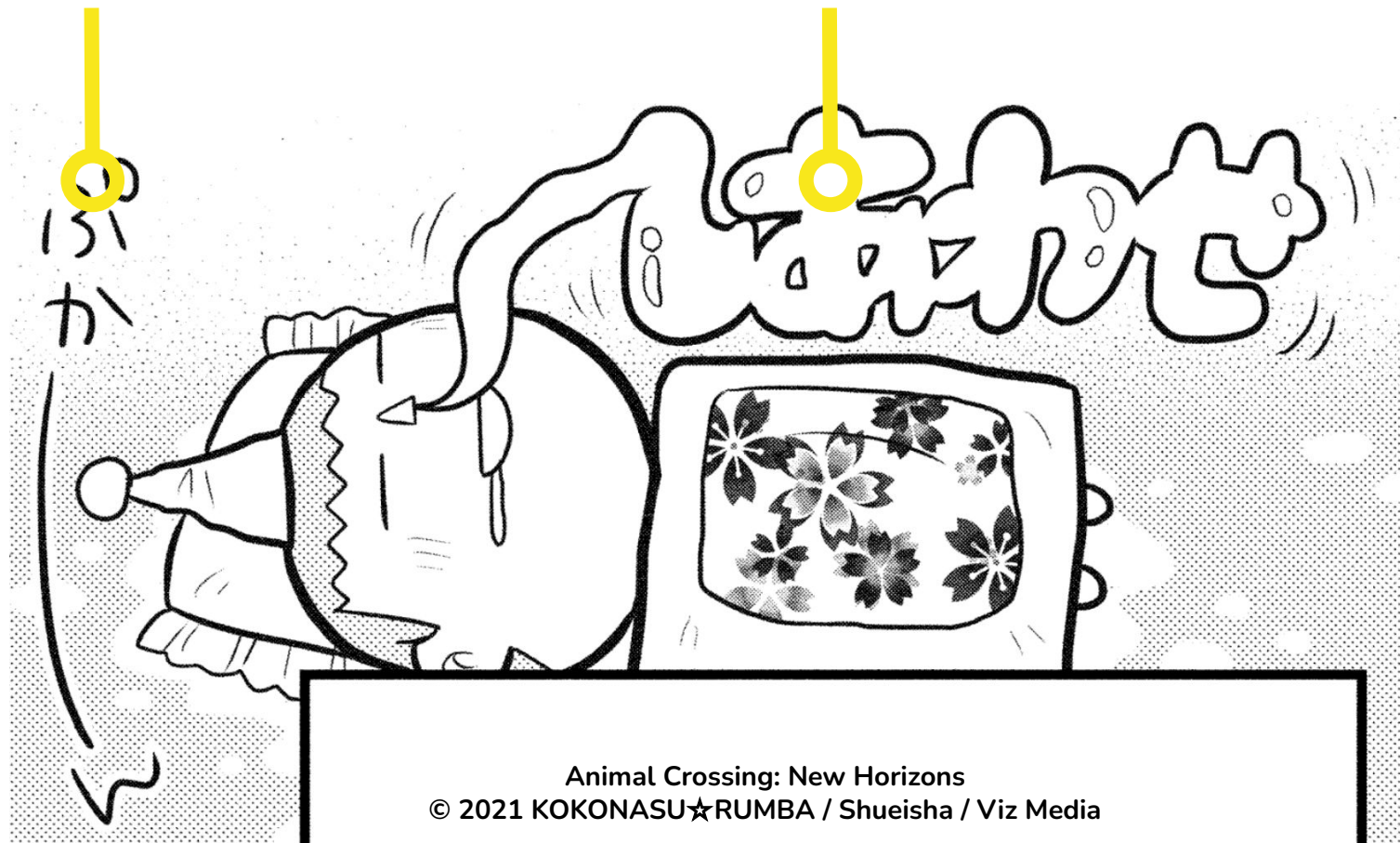


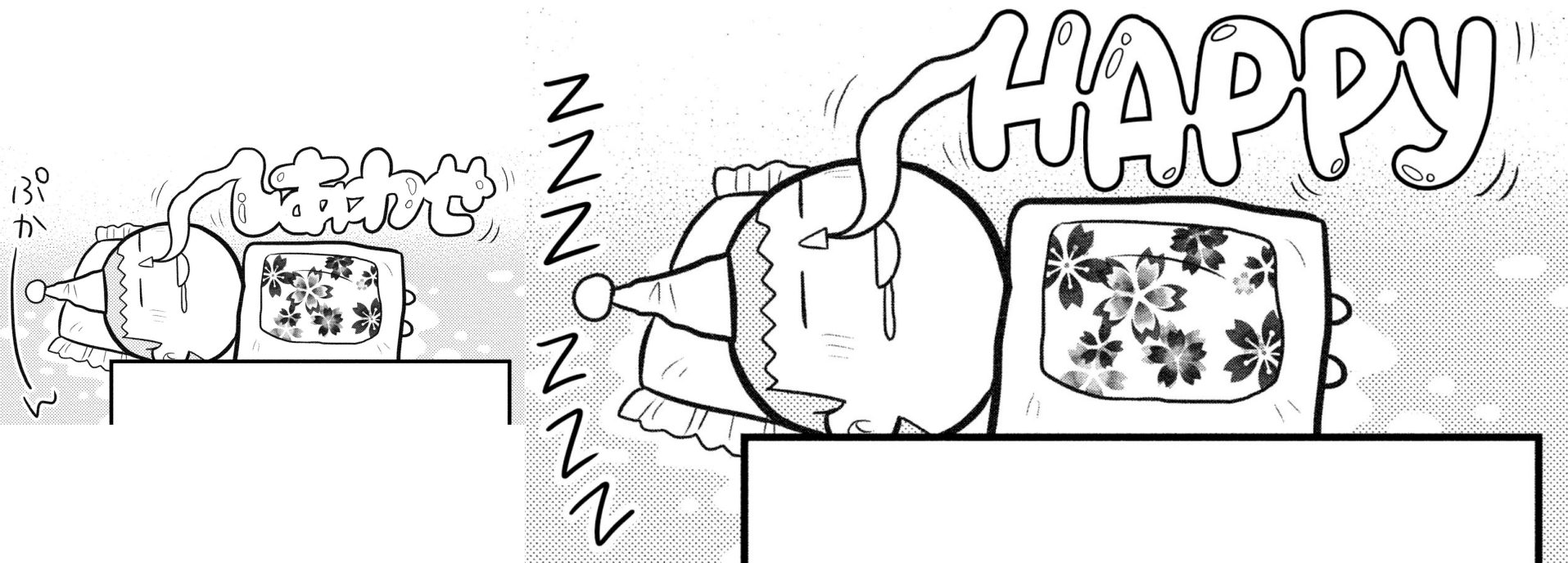
Signs: "Kumano Shrine"



SFX - drawn by hand

SFX/dialogue - drawn by hand



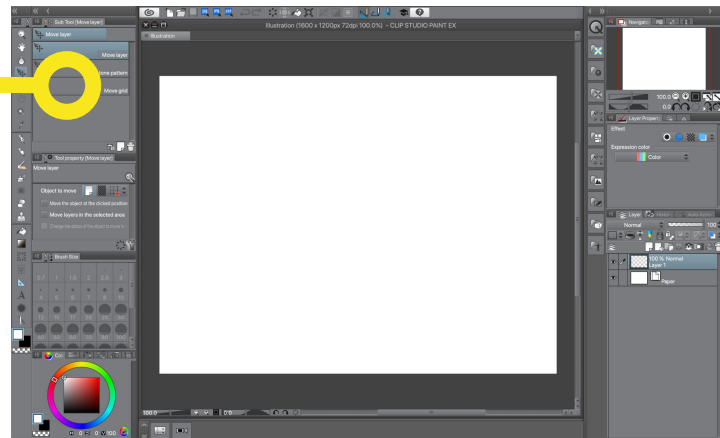


How Do You Know What Tools an Artist is Using?

- When the art was published
 - Before ~2010
 - Paper, pencils, and ink
 - Physical screentones
 - After ~2010
 - Clip Studio Paint
 - Or paper + pencils for lines, and CSP for tones



Source: JetPens.com



Follow Your Artists on Social Media



山田金鉄@ドラマ化&新連載&短編集出ます
@KintetsuYMD

衣装の細部色々間違えてると思われますがご容赦を…。タイムラプスも撮ってみました。

[Translate Tweet](#)



5:58 AM · Jan 5, 2022 · Twitter Web App

...

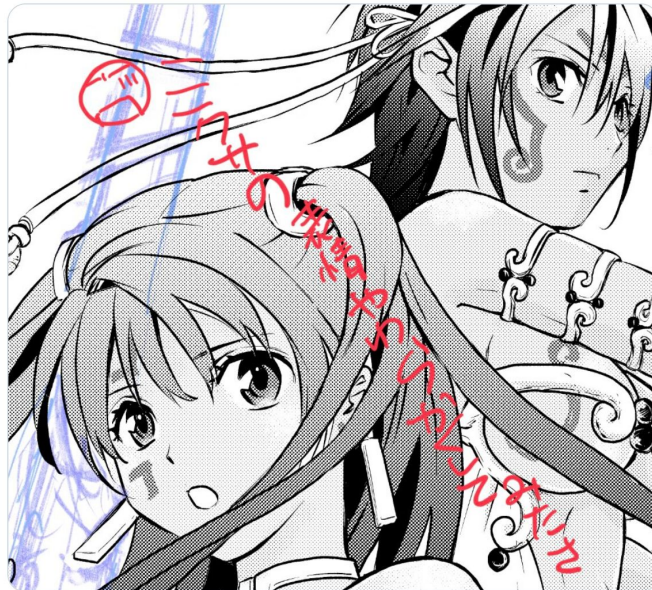


渡瀬悠宇/「アラタカンガタリ~革神話」少年サンデー連載中
@wataseyuu_

途中。

[Translated from Japanese by Google](#)

in the middle.



9:03 AM · Dec 27, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

...



神尾葉子
@yokokamioo

公式ホームページに載せるカラー原稿のチェックをしているのですが、量が膨大…🌸そして懐かしくてちょっと手が止まってしまう😭

[#ホームページ制作中](#)

[#花男](#)

[Translate Tweet](#)



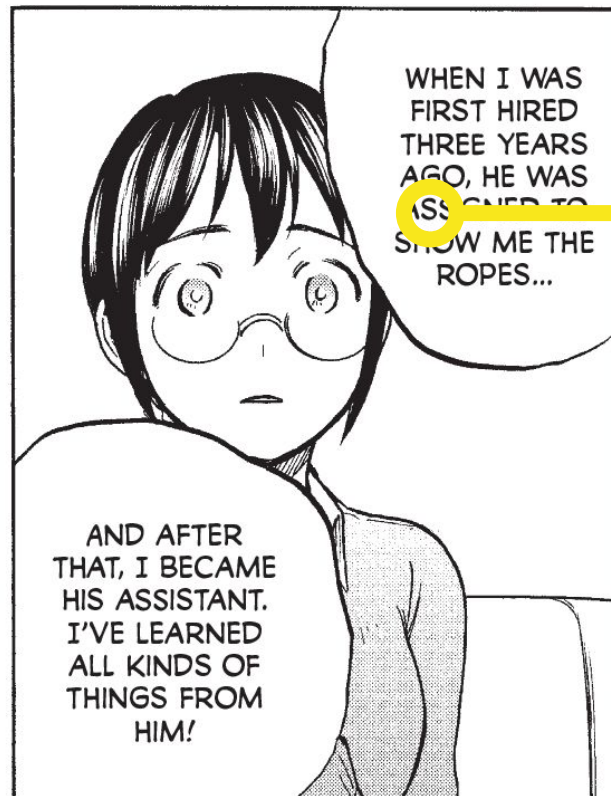
8:58 AM · Sep 29, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

How Do Letterers Know What Tools to Use?

- Font licensing limits the fonts that we can use, which is why you might see the same couple fonts/foundries across a publisher's releases
- Publishers' style guides dictate sound effect treatment, font usage, etc
- Editors' preferences
- By default, we try to match the Japanese reading experience

Japanese vs. English Typesetting Traditions

Looks
closer to a
serif
computer
font



Looks
more like
handwriting

Why don't we
typeset manga in
Times New
Roman?

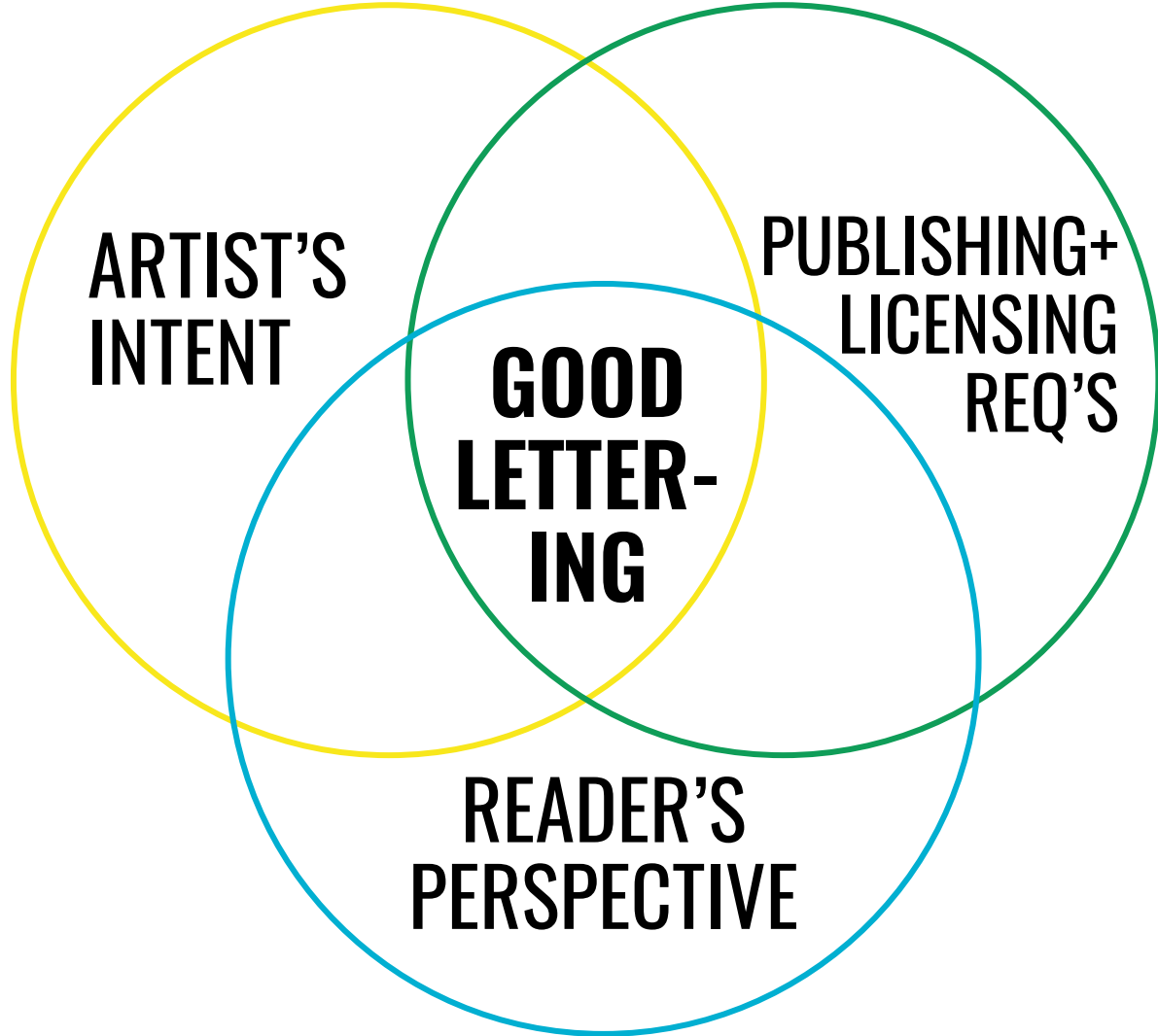
Japanese vs. English Typesetting Traditions



Astro Boy © 1952 Osamu Tezuka /
Tezuka Productions
[Source: Bookwalker](#)



Punch and Judy Comics Volume 1, #1 (1944)
[Source: Wikipedia](#)



Activity Time!

Script

SFX: WHOOSH

Which treatment best replaces the sound effect on the left? Why?

A:

WHOOSH

B:

WHOOSH

C:

WHOOSH

Script

SFX: GYAAH!



Which treatment best replaces the sound effect on the left? Why?

A:



B:



C:



In Conclusion

- letterers turn a translated script into a page of manga using a variety of tools (InDesign, PS, CSP, fonts, etc)
- manga artists use some of the same tools, which we then also utilize in localization
- graphic adaptation can make or break the reader's experience