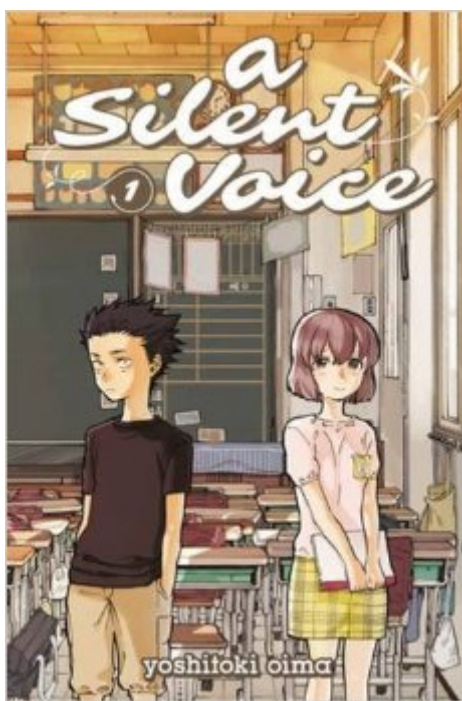


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A Silent Voice 1



Synopsis

LEARNING TO LISTEN Shoya is a bully. When Shoko, a girl who can't hear, enters his elementary school class, she becomes their favorite target, and Shoya and his friends goad each other into devising new tortures for her. But the children's cruelty goes too far. Shoko is forced to leave the school, and Shoya ends up shouldering all the blame. Six years later, the two meet again. Can Shoya make up for his past mistakes, or is it too late? Read the manga industry insiders voted their favorite of 2014! A very powerful story about being different and the consequences of childhood bullying | Read it. • -Anime News Network The word heartwarming was made for manga like this. • -Manga Bookshelf

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Let's talk about deaf culture in Japan. This story is very much a no holds barred critical examination into not only the effects of bullying, but also being "different" in Japan. Shoko, a deaf girl, gets bullied incessantly by her classmates, and the escalation is surprisingly well done. It's all very much on point and the psychological impacts are surprisingly fleshed out in explicit detail. The manga was supported by the Japanese Federation for the deaf, and this shows as Shoko, not given many lines save for a few chapters told in a perspective that is essentially hers, is left as a silent protagonist in all the right ways. She has a voice, and she attempts to interact, but the lack of empathy for her at first from not only the teachers but also the students, results in this voice being silenced painfully. This sets the stage for how the escalation of insults and bullying leads to the fallout that affects the main male lead Ishida as well. For the most part, this story is told from his perspective, only shifting

away from this when it helps to emphasize the main point that is being spelled out. The story then, shows the intense attention to detail that demonstrates not only personal experience, but an in depth understanding of being on both sides of the problem. Being bullied, and how easy it is to be the bully. The story though, does not come off as preachy in any respect. Instead, it is a very real discussion being lobbied which lays out "this is what happens, these are the effects, and these are possible ways to move forward from there" This third aspect is the central focus of the entire story. It is told in subtle phrasing, coloration, and mood set up. The pacing is also spot on. The advancement of the story line is slow and methodological.

This review is of the first volume alone, so please keep in mind that is how I am judging the story at this point. It's not often a story can get an immediate reaction out of me. Within a single chapter I had an idea of what the story was going for and realized to my horror that the first volume was basically what would become one of the most difficult but fast reads I have done with any series. I blew through the first volume within an hour or so. It's engrossing but mainly because of how well one can relate to it. As an anime and manga fan I was not a cool kid in middle school or high school. It's unlikely that those interests would ever allow for a "popular" kid in that age. So, bullying isn't something I'm unused to. I have also been working with troubled youth and those with learning disabilities for the past 2 years so this story is a painful reminder of what kind of things adolescents will do to one another in their ignorance. It's not difficult to relate to the story of someone being bullied but this story actually takes place from the perspective of someone who is the bully, a non-traditional setup. If you're anything like me, you may have a hard time getting through the story knowing that the main character you're following is the bully in this particular story. While that dichotomy changes a bit as the volume goes on this first volume isn't an easy story to swallow. But the fact that it is so important is what makes it truly shine. The characters are all real and it's not hard to see how many of these people exist in everyday life, even outside of the Japanese culture.

In the heavily genre-fied world of manga publishing, *Silent Voice* is a breath of creative fresh air. Scratch that—make that more like a gut-punch. So much manga, even good manga, is artistic without having much in the way of a message, but this one hammers its meaning home with almost cruel dedication. *Silent Voice* showcases how bullying can be a destructive cycle that ruins more than one life. My first experience with this series was actually reading an English fan translation of the original one-shot manga this was based on (*Koe no Katachi*, published in *Bessatsu Shonen Magazine* in 2011). It touched me and stuck with me for years, and I was ecstatic

to hear that this series was finally making it stateside. The plot contained in Volume 1 of *A Silent Voice* is parallel to the story told in that original one-shot, with some additional lead-in material and a cliffhanger ending. The product description summarizes the plot nicely, so I'll instead focus on the deep, rich psychology on display. Three things really make this a standout title for complexity. The first is that it's clear from the start that Shoya, despite being one deeply flawed little kid, is not at his core an evil person. We see that he loves his family and cares about what his friends think of him to the point of insecurity. However, Shoya is thoughtless. He's bored. Most importantly, he lacks empathy, the ability to see his actions from another's perspective. Empathy is a trait that is only partially-developed in children, something we learn as we grow up from getting battered in life's school of hard knocks, and I think the reason so much bullying happens in childhood can be ascribed to that.

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