



Komi Can't Communicate Reading Club Guide

CREATED BY: POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

Overview

Komi Can't Communicate, written and illustrated by Tomohito Oda, is the story of two high-school students, Shoko Komi and Hitohito Tadano, on their quest to find 100 new friends for Komi – and help overcome her social anxiety while learning to communicate along the way. Set at Itan Private High School, the first volume centers on Komi, who is viewed as the class “princess” but whose secret social anxiety causes her to be almost entirely mute, and Tadano, an awkward newcomer who becomes Komi’s unlikely ally and makes it his mission to help her make 100 new friends. As these characters grow closer, they find themselves facing new challenges and fears as they navigate quirky relationships that they could have never predicted. Through their experiences, *Komi Can't Communicate* offers readers a humorous, compelling, and original take on social anxiety, the power of friendship and determination, and the differences between reality and perception.



COMI-SAN WA, COMYUSHO DESU. © 2016 Tomohito ODA/SHOGAKUKAN

How to Read Manga

In keeping with the original Japanese comic format, manga is read from right to left—so action, sound effects and word balloons are reversed to preserve the orientation of the original artwork.

Key Themes

- Communication
- Anxiety
- Friendship
- Perception
- Courage and Determination
- Coming of Age

Key Characters

- **Shoko Komi** is the titular character of the book, with her quest to make 100 new friends and overcome her social anxiety framing all of the book’s events.
- **Hitohito Tadano** is a main character who doesn’t like to stand out. When he realizes that Komi needs help, he becomes her first friend and helps her on her newfound quest.
- **Najimi Osana** is an old friend of Tadano’s whose power is an uncanny ability to make friends, who quickly befriends Komi and agrees to help her.
- **Itan High School Classmates** include the perpetually nervous Himiko Agari, who becomes Komi’s third friend, an enigmatic figure named Ninja, the leader of the so-called “cool girls,” who is named Yamai, and many more!



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Komi Can't Communicate

Discussion Questions

- Which character do you think is the focus of *Komi Can't Communicate*? Should the reader's focus be on Tadano or Komi? As a reader, who is more important to you? Why?
- On Pg. 8, Tadano says "Fitting in and not standing out is the shortcut to happiness." Do you believe that to be true? What does your culture say about fitting in vs. standing out? When you're in a new environment, do you try to blend in or stand out?
- Can you relate to Komi's communication disorder? How about Tadano's anxieties about high school? What parts do you relate to?
- In "Communication 5," Komi expresses a lot of anxieties on the chalk board. Have you ever felt this way? How do you try to overcome some of those anxieties?
- Once Tadano becomes Komi's friend, how do you think he feels about her? Why does he commit to helping Komi make 100 friends?
- Why do you think so many of Komi's classmates idolize her without realizing she has trouble communicating?
- In second grade, Osana misunderstood why Komi wouldn't respond and took it very personally. What can this teach us about our interactions with other people? Have you ever rushed to judgment like this and had to change your mind later?
- Why do you think Komi can communicate over the phone but not in person? How has having a cell phone (or not having one) impacted your own life? Do you think it makes it easier to make friends?
- Would you enjoy going to a school with a high concentration of "quirky individuals"? Why or why not?
- How would you rate your own communication skills? What can you learn from *Komi Can't Communicate* to help improve your communication skills?
- Oftentimes, people can try to hide their feelings from one another. However, in *Komi Can't Communicate* and many other manga, feelings are shown in over-the-top and humorous ways. Why do you think the artist chooses to portray feelings this way? How does it affect your reading experience?
- What was your favorite part of *Komi Can't Communicate* Vol. 1? Why?
- After reading the book, what are some other ways you think Komi can work to overcome her communication issues? What small steps can she take next? Have you ever had to overcome an issue like hers? If so, how?
- Would you want to have Osana as a friend? Why or why not?
- How does *Komi Can't Communicate* compare to other manga you might have read? What is similar to other manga, and what is different?
- What do you think is more important: having lots of friends, or having a few close friends? What discoveries do you think Komi, Tadano, Osana, and Agari have made about friendship in Vol. 1? What discoveries do you think they might make in future volumes?
- After reading, who do you think the narrator of *Komi Can't Communicate* is? How does the narrator act differently here than other stories you've read?



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Activities

- **Communicating Emotion:** In *Komi Can't Communicate* and many other manga, the reader is always aware of what the characters are feeling. Characters are drawn with exaggerated, over-the-top expressions. Additional artistic cues coupled with onomatopoeia often make this very humorous. Think of 5 feelings and emotions that you often have. Then, attempt to draw them in the style of manga using similar artistic techniques as those found in *Komi Can't Communicate*.
- **Different Perspectives:** There are many times in the first volume of *Komi Can't Communicate* where different people's perspectives are shown, illustrating how differently people can interpret the same events. Pick an event from your life and describe or illustrate it from multiple people's perspectives. This can be a normal, everyday activity, or a significant moment in your life. How does putting yourself in someone else's shoes help tell a more complete story?
- **Communication Game:** Towards the end of the Vol. 1, Komi and Tadano play different games that require them to work together and communicate. Adapt a simple game you have played before, or create an entirely new game, that includes a mixture of words and actions that you believe will help the players learn to communicate and overcome social anxiety. The game can be collaborative or competitive. Play your game with friends and/or family members. How did the game help with communication skills? Is this something you feel would have helped Komi? If you take away one element of communication, how does this change the game? If you're playing over digital communication platforms, try different things like asking certain people to mute themselves or turn off their cameras. How does this change the experience? Does this help you relate to Komi?
- **Creative Conversations:** Many of the conversations Komi has throughout the book are written down, rather than spoken. Write a short story that takes place entirely in a single conversation, perhaps through text message or passed notes. You can use characters and settings from the book or create new ones of your very own. Remember: limit yourself to only dialogue, meaning no descriptions or exposition to help tell your story. As you're creating your story, consider motivation, voice, conflicts, tone, and dialect for each of the characters.



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