



# Naruto, Vol. 1

## Reading Group Guide

CREATED BY: POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

### Overview

Written and illustrated by Masashi Kishimoto, *Naruto*, Vol. 1 tells the story of Uzumaki Naruto, a clever but troubled student on a quest to become the greatest “shinobi,” or greatly skilled ninja, the world has ever seen. Set in the small village of Konohagakure, the book follows Naruto, an orphan, as he trains at the prestigious ninja academy. Despite Naruto’s mischievous antics and penchant for practical jokes, he has a singular goal: To become the village’s next leader, or Hokage, and to earn the respect of his classmates and villagers. Yet, as Naruto learns more about his past, he begins to understand that his destiny might not be as clear-cut as he first thought.

Filled with moments of humor, empathy, and plenty of action, *Naruto*, Vol. 1 provides a great introduction to one of the most popular manga titles of all time. The story offers readers powerful lessons on accepting ourselves for who we are and chasing our dreams, even if they seem impossible. This action-packed story is perfect for readers 13 and up.



NARUTO © 1999 by Masashi Kishimoto/SHUEISHA Inc.

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### 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

- Ambition
- Otherness
- Prejudice
- Self-Acceptance
- Pride
- Free Will vs. Fate



## Key Characters

- **Uzumaki Naruto** is the protagonist of the story. An orphan, Naruto is an outcast in the village because, as a child twelve years before, he was selected to be the living vessel for the Nine-Tailed Fox's spirit. Naruto has a cheeky personality and loves to play pranks on his friends and teachers.
- **The Hokage** is the village leader. "Hokage" is a title passed down to the strongest ninja in each generation.
- **Master Iruka** is Naruto's strict teacher and a fellow orphan, causing him to feel a deep connection and empathy for Naruto.
- **Master Mizuki** is a member of Naruto's community who exploits Naruto for evil purposes, unintentionally leading Naruto to learn more about his past and the secret power inside him.
- **Konohamaru** is the grandson of the village's Hokage.
- **Master Ebisu** is Konohamaru's tutor.
- **The Nine-Tailed Fox** is an ancient spirit that, twelve years prior, was trapped inside the body of newborn Naruto to contain its power and protect the village.
- **Haruno Sakura** and **Uchiha Sasuke** are Naruto's classmates and assigned to be his training partners at the ninja academy.
- **Hatake Kakashi** is a Jonin, or senior ninja, who trains and oversees Sasuke, Naruto, and Sakura.

## Discussion Questions

- How many similarities and differences do you notice between *Naruto* and other manga that you might have read? In particular, how does the story's beginnings compare to those of other manga?
- How would you feel if you carried a secret similar to Naruto's, and discovered it as a teenager? Similarly, how would you feel if you did not carry that secret, but learned of a friend that did?
- What do you think drives Naruto to become the village's next Hokage?
- What do you think happened to Master Mizuki? Do you think we'll see him again throughout Naruto's story?
- How do you feel about Naruto when the book starts? What do you know about his character and who he might have been before the story begins? What do you know about his reputation in the village?
- Why do you think no one told Naruto that he was the Nine-Tailed Fox? Would you have kept Naruto's secret or told him the truth? Why or why not?
- Naruto gained the power to create multiple, life-like doppelgangers through the ancient scroll, which allowed him to graduate his studies. Do you think this is fair? Do you think he would have passed if he had not found the scroll? Why or why not?
- Have you ever felt like your identity was based on who you were related to, like friends or family, more than how you see yourself?
- Have you ever been treated hostilely without knowing why, like Naruto? How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think Sakura cannot fully express herself? Why does the artist need to represent this through her "inner Sakura"? Do you think this adds to or takes away from her character?
- How does the author use humor in the book? What do you think is the funniest moment in the book? Why?
- *Naruto*, Vol. 1 was published in 2000. Do you see anything in the book that surprised you or seemed out of date?



SUMMER READING GUIDE

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## Activities

- **Harness Your Inner Sakura** – The “inner Sakura” shows up when Sakura is unable to express herself openly. Find a scene from *Naruto* or another book and rewrite the story to show one of more characters’ “inner Sakura” and how they might react to events. Alternatively, create an entirely new story that has two versions: One of real events, and one being told by a character’s inner monologue.
- **Kakashi’s Ninja Challenge** – What do you think is an appropriate challenge for a ninja? Based upon what you’ve read in the first volume, what challenge would you create to test the skills of a ninja in training? What skills would that student need in order to pass your challenge? What would their goals be?
- **Nine-Tailed Fox Comic** – The story of the Nine-Tailed Fox’s defeat is mentioned briefly in the book. Write the story of how the Nine-Tailed Fox was defeated and the important characters, events, and settings involved. Consider turning this into a comic.
- **Japanese Lore** – Parts of *Naruto* are based off of Japanese folklore, such as the mentions of the multi-tailed fox (Kitsune) and ninjutsu. Kishimoto weaves this folklore into the book to create a unique, modern world for his story. For this project, create a world that is based on some sort of traditional folklore from your culture, or another culture that you would like to learn about. When creating your world, think about things such as:
  - Systems of power
  - Vegetation
  - Culture
  - Money
  - Religion
  - History
- Finally, create a written or visual representation of this world, making sure to include some or all of these elements. What kinds of stories could take place there?

