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Death Note, Vol. 1



Synopsis

Light Yagami is an ace student with great prospects - and he's bored out of his mind. But all that changes when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies, and now Light has vowed to use the power of the Death Note to rid the world of evil. But when criminals begin dropping dead, the authorities send the legendary detective L to track down the killer. With L hot on his heels, will Light lose sight of his noble goal...or his life? Light tests the boundaries of the Death Note's powers as L and the police begin to close in. Luckily Light's father is the head of the Japanese National Police Agency and leaves vital information about the case lying around the house. With access to his father's files, Light can keep one step ahead of the authorities. But who is the strange man following him, and how can Light guard against enemies whose names he doesn't know?

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Customer Reviews

We've all heard stories and myths of Death, the Grim Reaper, or, as in the case of Death Note, the Shinigami. We know that, at will, these creatures can bring death. We know that Death and the Grim Reaper are particularly fond of huge scythes. But what a lot of us don't know (mainly because it's an added fictional element presented in Death Note) is that Shinigami prefer to use note books, or death notes. And occasionally, they lose their notebooks accidentally-on-purpose so that a human can find it. That is the beginning of Death Note, a story of a genius student named Light who finds this strange notebook and decides he wants to change the world into a utopia by killing all of the world's most horrible criminals without any suspicion to him. All he does is write their name in the

death note and they're dead. The description above sounds dark, and this story is very dark. The lead character seems to have little care for those he kills and in fact finds some enjoyment in the unique ways he can bring about their death. His Shinigami shadow, Ryuk, bound to him because Light now owns the death note, guides him only to the point just beyond complete ignorance but otherwise lets Light do as he wishes. Thus, even despite the fact that it's nearly impossible to trace the murderer, suspicion does rise. This is when the true horror starts, as we begin to see what Light is willing to do to get himself free of suspicion. Anyone familiar with Shonen Jump's Hikaru No Go will recognize the artwork here. They won't recognize, however, the deep themes of morality VS. immorality. While reading, you have to decide, based on your own personal beliefs, what side Light is actually on, moral or immoral, good or evil. Certainly, at face value, Light is a decent human being, studying hard to become a top student, helping his sister with her homework, talking cop-business with his father, but it's in those moments of inspiration that Light has when you'll begin to wonder. And yet, it's his anti-hero love-ability that makes you keep reading, know matter what your beliefs are. You want him to avoid suspicion, to do away with the criminals, and to get rid of the cops tailing him. In volume one, it details Light's first moments with the death note and Ryuk. It also begins his battle with Interpol and their top agent, the secretive L. In between, we learn the main rules of the death note as well as the side-effects it has on humans and on Shinigami. It's haunting the way some of these rules are relayed, as if they were natural things to be considered in our minds. Death Note is one of those few mangas that captured me from the beginning (I read the first chapter in Shonen Jump). I knew after I read it that I would buy the graphic novels. As someone very selective of manga this was something special. I highly recommend this to fans of manga or to horror/thriller fans. This is a well-written, artistic manga indeed. I'd give it more stars if I could.

Death Note is a very different manga from the others Viz Media has begun to release here in the U.S. It is thanks to them, however, that I learned of this brilliant series. The story follows a teenager, Light, who is bored with his life and sick of the monotonous cycle. He stumbles upon a Shingami's (Death God's) notebook, or Death Note. The notebook has a dark power: a brief way to put it would be to say when you write down a person's name and have the image of them in your mind, they will die of a heart-attack in forty seconds. There is much more to it than that, however. Details can be added as to how and when they die, but they must be physically possible. Ryuk, the Death God whose notebook Light has found, was also bored. He deliberately left the notebook there for a human to find. He is a very strange character with a very strange appearance. Nevertheless, he does play an important role. Light's name seems almost contradictory. He says he is killing off

violent criminals to make the world a better place. He claims that he is righteous. But is murder the righteous thing to do? Interpol begins to move and is forced to play its trump card: L, a person whose face and full name are not even known to the NPA. L and Light are both brilliant. Their plans, deductions, and observations never cease to amaze. Their battle and search continues as it evolves into a race to discover who the other is. Ultimately, you don't know who to cheer on. The protagonist is a bit crazy and is continuously committing murder and playing with people's lives. Yet you find yourself still reading. The plot is engrossing; it is rare for me to find a manga that keeps me glued to the pages without frequent action scenes. Dark, mysterious, and decidedly different, Death Note is a level above.

The majority of mainstream manga released in America has, up 'til now, been easy to categorize into two genres: Shounen (boy-oriented, lots of action, fighting, magical weapons, heroes out to save the world, etc.) and Shoujo (girl-oriented, romance, emphasis on character development and emotions, girls with magical powers/boyfriends, shounen-ai, etc.) Death Note, although serialized in Shounen Jump, doesn't clearly fall into either category. The main conflict is the intense psychological battle between Light and L. Ingenious mindtraps, moral ambiguity, and strong suspense characterize the theme of Death Note. If you think this sounds more mature and complex than the average manga, then you would be correct. The supernatural setup involving death gods and a lethal notebook may turn off some people who would really enjoy it. I assure you that the premise is not hokey, and the supernatural aspects are secondary to the suspense and plot. The exploration of the "Rules" regarding the Death Note, the intricate use of logic, and the slow moral decay of the main character are fascinating to watch. The protagonist (he can hardly be called the hero), Light, is a brilliant young student who first decides to use the Death Note to rid the world of deadly criminals. However, absolute power corrupts absolutely, and his main goal shifts from promoting peace to avoiding capture at any cost. His pursuer is the international enigma who is known only as "L". This equally brilliant detective has a different idea of justice and is hot on Light's trail. They soon become locked in a battle of life and death; the first side to make a mistake (or fail to anticipate the other's move) will die. During their chess game, the public is divided by support and opposition for the mysterious killer, known to the media as Kira. To thicken the matter, other characters and factors interfere, throwing both L and Light for a loop. This is a book for fans of The Usual Suspects, intrigue, and detective thrillers. However, if you don't like following lots of dialogue or keeping track of complex plot lines, Death Note may not be for you. I also think it could benefit from more character development, since Light and L's personalities take a backseat to their actions.

Even so, this manga is a real treat for those who want something deeper than the usual fare. If you enjoy Death Note, also look forward to upcoming "Monster" and "20th Century Boys."

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