

## Empathy for Fictional Characters

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Figure 1. Comparison images of A2 from the game Nier: Automata. Being a precursor android model, A2 shows very little emotion initially. With the exploration of her story, the player gets to see her emotions come to the surface and with that, her expressions as well.

*Abstract Character design is often regarded as one of the most popular mediums in the field of creative multimedia. Reasons for this can range from aesthetic appeal to affinity towards the characters. A decent amount of research and study has been done throughout the years, formulating a basic pipeline and standard for a good character design. One such standard is that of storytelling via a character and creating characters that are relatable, believable, and invoke empathy in the observer. This research delves into how a character conveys and aids in the development of a story and the value behind creating believable and relatable characters. Data from various demographics was collected via an online survey and a visual analysis was conducted. Based on the findings, the researcher discovered that while the general audience may not have experience in design or media, they are still able to appreciate well-developed characters. The visual analysis also shows that recent characters designed to carry a fair trace of storytelling and elements to make them seem more believable or life-like. Hopefully these findings helps in enlightening up and coming as well as adept character designers in the value of creating deeper, more meaningful characters.*

**Key words** Character design, narrative, concept art, game design, player engagement.

### Introduction

Good character design relies on well thought out personality and convincing visuals, of which appearance that resonates with the ongoing narrative plays a part in keeping a character interesting. Brenner (2016) explains that it is in the familiarity these characters can manifest that we can empathize with regardless the character is human or not. But why does representing human qualities in a character make it that much appealing to the crowd? What about witnessing a character's growth causes the audience to empathise more with said character? This research aims to shed some light on the appeal factor of a character that has a design or appearance that is resonant with the narrative and how growth conveyed through character design can help enrich the story experience.

### Problem Statement

Characters are a crucial element in storytelling in any medium. Storytelling regardless of context, lore or setting always leans on having a well designed central protagonist in order to draw in viewers. Often these