

Creation of the story: description of characters

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	Creation of the story: storyboard
Learning objectives	Learning how to develop characters for a video game
Subjects	Arts, literature / reading, English as Foreign language, Writing
Recommended Age (10 – 14) or (15 - 18)	15 -18
Material needed	Tutorials (i.e., YouTube), software
Sequence duration	45 – 60 minutes
Tips for shorter duration	To make this sequence shorter you can focus on creating a simple draft of the main character. The remaining activities could be assigned as homework.
Points of attention for inclusion / Inclusion best practices	It is important to include diverse characters (i.e., characters with a migrant background).
Individual or group activity	Group activity (divide students into groups of three)
Expected production	Create the description of main characters

Skills developed (after learning objectives)	Creativity, collaboration & teamwork, planning
Price range of the game (<20€, 20-40€, >40€)	Free (Piskel, Gigantic store, Heroforge.com) or paid software (Unity) (free, >150€)
Extension / differentiation activities (at the end of the sequence)	Create the dialogues of the characters, start the design and animation phase
Tips for shorter duration	To make this sequence shorter you can focus on creating a simple draft of the main character. The remaining activities could be assigned as homework.
Tips to make the sequence more accessible	It is important to include diverse characters (i.e., characters with a migrant background)

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

In this sequence, students can create their own characters using different online software programs. You should divide your students into groups of three and ask them to discuss and use their imagination when developing their character. Two of the most common character categories are the 2D and the 3D characters. Students can also use (free) YouTube tutorials to understand the main differences and identify the most useful software.

Software options:

1. Piskel (Pixel Art, mostly used for 2D; free)
2. Unity (2D and 3D; free –150€ per month)
3. Gigantic store (2D and 3D models; free)
4. Heroforge.com (3D models; free)
5. Metahuman (3D models; free)

- **Step 1 – Understanding the difference between 2D and 3D characters (15 minutes)**

Show different video game characters to your students to inspire them to develop their own character. Tutorials can be found on YouTube for free. You should mention the importance of characters in video games and show how they are developed in different games. You can also ask your students to consider the character's look, how the character acts around others, its interactions with the environment and what its main characteristics are. The genre and atmosphere of the game are key things to consider when deciding what character could fit in what game.



Source: <https://dribbble.com/shots/11362822-Super-Mario-Bros-Minimalist-Pixel-Art>

2D characters: 2D games use flat graphics and do not have three-dimensional geometry. This means that the characters are flat and the background environment is not very realistic (Zoria, 2020). The character's movements are flat and often there is a starting point and an endpoint, where the character must reach the game's goal (Starloop Studios, 2021). It's easier to create a 2D character and they can be used in more simple games.

The creation of 2D characters is called pixel art (Kotaki) and many guides can be found online.

Example of 2D character in video games:

Super Mario Bros: originally released in 1985, Super Mario is one of the most famous 2D characters. When Princess Toadstool was kidnapped, only Mario can save the Mushroom People.

3D characters: 3D characters are more complex to develop but they can move around more easily. 3D represents the three dimensions: width, height and depth, and it creates a more realistic environment for the character (Starloop Studios, 2021).

Example of 3D character in video games:

Final Fantasy VII: Zack Fair is the main character and he is designed using the 3D technique. His characteristics are very clear and he can move in all directions. The story is set during a war and Zack is a soldier who is given various tasks throughout the game. His ultimate goal is to win against his antagonists.



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zack_Fair#/media/File:Zack_Fair.png

- **Step 2 – Developing the main character (15 minutes)**

When developing a video game character, students should remember that players want to experience a realistic game adventure in an authentic way (Starloop Studios, 2021). You should advise your students to consider what the main mission of the character is when deciding the traits of the character (Eden, 2020). Then they can choose between a 2D or a 3D character. If the character does simple moves, then a 2D character should be used. If the character is more realistic and does more complex activities then a 3D character will be better. At this stage students should consider the strengths and weaknesses of their character (Arsalan, 2021), the moves of the character and the objects the character is using (Warner, 2019). For example, what are the facial expressions of the character? Does the character make use of any weapons?

- **Step 3 – Relationship with other characters (10 minutes)**

This is a key question for the development of video game characters. Students should consider how their character interacts with others. Are they friendly? Do they have enemies?

Students should also consider how their character will interact with the player. Will the player have the option to decide how a character will react? Some 2D characters, like the Hollow Knight, don't have any relationship with other characters. The only interaction of the Hollow Knight with its environment is to move around in the kingdom and defeat its enemies (Team Cherry, 2017).

- **Step 4 – Deciding the look of the character (15 minutes)**

Video game characters are successful when they are memorable. Students should give their character a distinct appearance (Arsalan, 2021). You should also ask your students to consider the mission of the character and choose their look accordingly. For example, a ninja would be dressed in a different way than an animal character.



References

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