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CHARACTERISTICS OF VILLAINS

Creating Story and Visual Design of Villains

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Abstract <p>The conflict between good and evil has been one of the greatest inspiration for countless pieces of art and literature throughout history. The objective of this thesis was to research the qualities made of credible, intriguing villainous characters. It had an in-depth look at both psychological and visual principles of this archetype. The depiction of villains in multiple cultures and history were also taken into account.</p> <p>The thesis researched and analyzed characters from various pieces of literature, art, movies and video games. A lot of references were also taken from literature sources and from the internet. The method to create the psychology and visual for the villains were also discussed through the theory of conflict, personality traits, backstory, motivation, and physical appearance.</p> <p>In the latter chapters, the knowledge gained from theoretical research was implemented to the actual character designs. Three sets of characters were created featuring different themes and were based on the relevant areas that had been studied. A questionnaire was conducted to prove the validity of the visual design reflecting the villain's characteristics as well as to explore how audiences perceive the villain through their appearance. The overall result was relatively successful and there were rooms for essential improvement.</p> <p>Due to time constraints and the lack of solution, a questionnaire for the writing part of the project could not be carried out, otherwise, more conclusive data could have been added into this thesis. Less time was spent on the project due to the unexpected extension of background research, which slightly affected the quality.</p>		
Keywords Villain, character design, narrative, psychology		

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1 INTRODUCTION

The terms 'good' and 'evil' have been acknowledged in human consciousness ever since the beginning of mankind. In both written and visual media, these terms are recognized as hero and villain, respectively, which are the roles used to tell a story, or to convey a message from its creator. While heroes are righteous beings who commit selfless acts, villains represent a malicious force scheming their nefarious acts and creating conflicts in the narrative.

As creating vivid and multifaceted characters, particularly villains, might be one of the biggest challenges creators encounter due to their both visual and internal complexity, this thesis concentrates on researching both visual and psychological aspects of successful villainous characters from various media. Moreover, the research discusses the more complex sides of this archetype associated with human mental health and common disorders portrayed in these characters.

The author will predominantly use the term villain for the purpose of avoiding the misconception between villains and antagonists, and for simplicity. The thesis aims to answer the primary questions of what criteria is essential for a villain that makes him or her credible to the audience, and how to build vivid, fleshed-out villains with internal depth which satisfies both visual and psychological aspects. The purpose of this study is to aid creators in the process of creating characters for video games; however, as several materials are compiled from movies, comics, and literature, the methods can be applied to creative fields outside of the game industry as well. The secondary question is how other factors such as gender, culture, and history influence the concept of villains.

The first step of this thesis is researching the background of villainous representation throughout the history of written and visual media, specifically literature, paintings, photography, theatre, movies, and graphic novels. This allows the author and the readers to understand the concept of nefarious beings in human's beliefs in the past and in different cultures. The next step is to identify the role of villains in video games, what they contribute to the mechanic and narrative. The valuable knowledge obtained from the first two steps benefits the

follow-up research diving into the methods of designing a credible and authentic villain based on visual and psychological theories in the field of character design. Various examples from video games, movies and literature will be presented to support the theoretical points.

Upon completing the necessary background research, the author will apply what they have learnt to design their own sets of villains for video games. A summary of the stories will be written, followed by the construction of the villain's personality traits and visual traits. Questionnaires will be carried out on a group of people both in and outside of gaming industry for feedback as well as to confirm whether the visual designs of the villains project their personality. How different audiences perceive a character through their visual design is also taken into account.

2 HISTORY OF VILLAINS

There is a common misconception that antagonists and villains are the same thing, also villains and anti-heroes. Villains are individuals or entities that are evil and harmful to others; their actions and motives create conflicts to push the story forwards. Antagonists are defined as a person who opposes the protagonists; it is not important if they are good or evil. (Peloquin 2017.) A villain can be either a protagonist or an antagonist and vice versa. Anti-heroes, as Black (2017, 79) explains, are the hybrid of hero and villain. They have significant flaws which are uncharacteristic of a hero but also their own redeeming qualities.

The concept of villain, or evil, might be surprisingly diverse in different timeline and cultures. This chapter covers an understanding of how people of different cultures throughout the ages perceive villains in written and visual media. It is essential to discern the foundation for villains' appearance and behaviour, and how it echoes in our expectations for this archetype in the modern world. This chapter serves as background research for the final art project, as well as the answer for the secondary question and a part of main questions. As it is nearly impossible to accurately present all the works of creativity and their character

design pattern of various media within a single chapter, the author limited their research scope to a few notable examples.

2.1 Literature

Many iconic villains in history belong to one of the earliest written media forms, literature. When speaking of the most classical villains in old English literature, several people would expect the scheming adviser Iago in *Othello*, or the murdering, deceptive usurper named Richard III, which were both written by the great poet, playwright, and actor William Shakespeare. It is undeniable that Shakespeare has crafted memorable, vivid and complex Renaissance villains, from ruthless rulers to cunning backstabbers, who are adored by audiences for generations. For example, Richard III, besides being an ambitious murderer, is a charming manipulative genius who captures the audiences with his immoral logic and dazzling wordplay.

The villains of Shakespeare's plays are not shallow personifications of villainy or intrinsically bad guys with no sense of humanity, instead, according to the audiences, they resemble misguided characters who are victims of the cruel hand of fate. Richard III consequently doubts the conviction of his actions and is haunted by his sins, which leads to his downfall and death; or even the sadistic, psychopathic mass murderer Aaron the Moor in the gruesome play *Titus Andronicus* possesses a trait of humanity, which is the love for his child. This formed a debatable idea that Shakespeare did not view his villains as innately, completely evil persons, but the victims of circumstance. (Bartoshevich 2016; Morris 2011.)

Another classic literature work which should be mentioned in this chapter is *Frankenstein's Monster* written by Mary Shelley, published in 1818. The story follows a monster which is portrayed as frightening, grotesque, 8-foot-tall, assembled from body parts taken from corpses, but is sensitive and emotional. The monster is firstly abandoned by his creator, Victor Frankenstein, and later on, encounters persistent rejection from the community. The alienation explains his vengefulness and violent actions towards Frankenstein, and humans in general.

The readers are fascinated by Mary Shelly's ability to portray the monster as a multi-layered and complex character. The monster's benevolent qualities are emphasized with a moment when he saves a girl from drowning, his admiration to beauty and nature, his willingness to survive with nuts and berries rather than meat, or the attempt to learn kind behaviour. These traits make the monster sympathetic to readers, even though his crime is inexcusable. Mary Shelly created one of the most iconic villain figures in literary history with a message implying that the lack of human companionship and sympathy is able to turn kindness into cruelty. (Spark Notes no date.)

Travel to the far East, Chinese literary works have portrayed various impressive villains who were loved or feared by generations of Eastern readers. One of the most iconic villainous characters of classic Chinese novels is Cao Cao in the *Romance of Three Kingdoms* by Luo Guanzhong. The evil-doer of this 14th-century historical novel is described as a power-hungry, intelligent, cunning tyrant who would use all means to achieve his goal of becoming an emperor of China. This warlord is responsible for most of the chaos in the novel, yet he is admired by many characters and readers for his charisma, his respect for his men, his accomplished leadership and strategy planning. Cao Cao possesses the qualities of a type of villain with high intelligence and absolute authority, which might be considered as one of the most popular character archetypes of Chinese literature. This archetype is also portrayed as corrupted officials, for example, Gao Qiu in *The Water Margin* who commits countless dastardly deeds to gain power; or cunning conspirators, such as Wang Xifeng in *Dream of the Red Chamber* with a goal of keeping her own position and her family's stability.

Another common type of villain in East Asian culture is Heavenly beings who are banished from Heaven for their sins, and animal spirit who assume semi-human form, such as fox spirits, spider monsters, or white bones demon. They frequently appear in folktales and allegories influenced by Taoism and Buddhism. For example, the majority of villains in *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en is either Earthly manifestations of Heavenly beings or animal spirits achieving human forms

with enough Taoism spiritual merits. They attempt to kidnap and eat one of the protagonists for the purpose of immortality. Physical immortality and invincibility are believed to be the ultimate goal of many devotees of Taoism, which are used as the main motive of many villains in this novel (Taoism and immortality no date).

2.2 Paintings

The conflict between good and evil is one of the most common conventional themes not only in literature but also in all branches of art. Painters throughout history use various symbols including Christian figures, angels, devils and demons to depict the contrast between the two sides (Turnbull no date). During the Renaissance era, religion infiltrated to daily life and deeply influenced both the painters and those they worked for.

Hieronymus Bosch, a Dutch artist of Renaissance period, is celebrated for his fantastic illustrations of religious concepts and narrative between Heaven and Hell through the biblical-themed landscape and the presentation of exotic humans, animals, monsters, and unusual semi-organic forms (The Art History no date). His most famous work is a triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* which describes good and evil through images of the beautiful Garden of Eden on the left and the damnation of hell on the right (Figure 1). The left panel shows the moment of God presenting Eve to Adam. The central panel is a board panorama crowded with animals, colourful oversized fruits, bizarre formations as well as nude figures engaged in sexual activities. The hellscape on the right features cold colours, tortured figures and frozen waterway as punishments for all the Cardinal Sins. (Museo Del Prado no date.) The evil, or villains, in this macabre scene are portrayed as bizarre, unusual forms or as exotic theriomorphic creatures devouring humans.

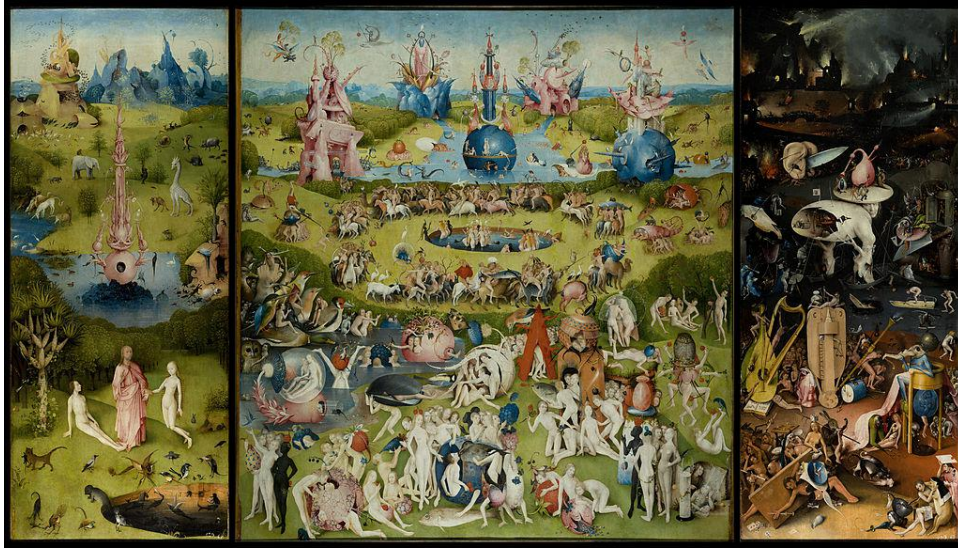


Figure 1: The Garden of Earthly Delights triptych (Hieronymus Bosch, 1490-1510)

During the Middle Age and Renaissance era, paintings of the devil often contain monstrous and terrifying images of horned, cloven-hoofed, foul-smelling and diabolical creatures of hell. The awful concepts of the Evil One, as Bernard Barryte, Cantor's curator of European art, explained, were meant to have a moral effect. However, the Enlightenment began to change the way humans perceived devils. As people started to believe in science, the concepts of devils shifted from horrific other to mankind itself. The visual of devils was made to look more human, and, in some cases, was romanticized. (Silverberg 2014.)



Figure 2: Satan Watching the Sleep of Christ (Joseph Noel Paton, 1874)

Some examples of devil concepts during the Middle Age and Renaissance period can be found in Coppodi Marcovaldo's "The Hell" (13th century) in which the devil is represented as a monstrous creature with horns, Agostino Musi's "The Carcass (The Witches Procession)" (16th century) in which the Devil is portrayed as a hybrid monster with animal features, and School of Hieronymus Bosch's "Last Judgement" (late 15th century) with all kinds of bizarre monsters. After the popular revolutions of the late 18th century, the Devil gained a more human form which can be found in Joseph Noel Paton's "Satan Watching the Sleep of Christ" (Figure 2), William Blake's "Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels" (1808), or Jerome Witkin's "The Devil as a Tailor" (1978).

2.3 Photography

Real-life references are a valuable source for artists and designers in general. Ballon (2009, 87–91) suggests analyzing indigenous traits and characteristics of real criminals which have been determined by law enforcement agencies to create credible, true-to-life villains with complex motive.

Real-life villains are commonly observed through prison mug shots. The Justice & Police Museum in Australia has published a special collection of approximately 2500 mug shots taken by New South Wales Police Department photographers from 1910 to 1930. What makes these vintage photographs notable and unique is that the subjects were allowed, or were invited, to freely compose themselves in front of the camera. Figure 3 belongs to the gallery, which shows a quartet posing for mug shots upon being arrested over a robbery. In the description of each picture, curator Peter Doyle states: "Their photographic identity thus seems constructed out of a potent alchemy of inborn disposition, personal history, learned habits and idiosyncrasies, chosen personal style (haircut, clothing, accessories) and physical characteristics." (Justice & Police Museum 2005.)



Figure 3: Mug shot of Hampton Hirscham, Cornellius Joseph Keevil, William Thomas O'Brien and James O'Brien (New South Wales Police Department, 1920)

The photos, in which subjects are allowed to compose themselves as they desire, can radiate colourful, and in some cases, eccentric characteristics of a person. By studying various real-life paintings of villains, character designers might not only be able to discover both common and unique villainous traits but also can make their characters original and vivid from those available qualities.

2.4 Theatre

In theatrical performance, both West and Asian, masks are used to represent characters. A notable example of masks usage in theatre is ancient Greek theatre in 5th century BC, which was performed to honour Dionysus, god of wine. According to Lloyd (2020), the ancient Greek masks projected various intensely exaggerated facial expressions to allow audiences to effortlessly recognize the characters (figure 4). Each mask carried distinct features to enable 3 onstage actors to perform different roles, the wide-open mouth in many of these masks was believed to amplify the actors voices so that they could be audible to every member of the audience in large open-air theatres.



Figure 4: Variations of ancient Greek theatre mask (The Kennedy Center Arts Edge, no date)

There are two genres of ancient Greek theatrical performance: comedy and tragedy. In comedy plays, the masks appear to be comical and ugly with enlarged or distorted eyes, nose or mouth, and are usually used to portray the role of the Fool, the Innocent, the Trickster, and occasionally the Villain. Unlike other comic relief roles in comedy performance, the villain archetype's purpose is to make dark topics less serious with their humorous nature and to keep the plot suitable for young audiences. On the other hand, tragic masks look more realistic, characterized the archetypes of the Hero, the Mother, the King and the Villain. The character's traits in tragedy plays may be influenced by traumatic or unfortunate events in their life. While the Hero, the Mother and the King often devote themselves to help or care for the others, the Villain may have chosen to pursue immorality due to any life-changing event that could have turned them against any individual or entity, developing in them a desire to revenge or destruction. (Bengdara & Attasi no date.) Unfortunately, no credible references could be found to prove whether there were specific rules for the features of hero or villain masks.

In Asia, masks and make-up are also universally used in the Japanese traditional theatrical forms Noh and Kabuki. In Noh performance, the main actor wears a special mask, *noh men*, which can change to various facial expressions depending on a tilt of an actor's head combined with the work of stage lighting (Cisse 2014; Goran 2016). There are over 200 types of Noh mask based on 5 categories: men, women, elderly, gods and demons; and each category contains variations of mask representing different men or women.



Figure 5: Demons, gods and women Noh masks (Inoue Corporation, no date)

Figure 5 shows a selection of typical Noh masks taken from 3 categories: Demons (or spirits), gods, and women. The top row consists of a demon (Oni), an outraged woman turned demon through her jealousy (Hannya), and a fierce, demonic god (Kijin). These evil masks carry scowling, angry expressions with inhuman red or gold-rimmed eyes, horns and a wide-open mouth with sharp fangs. The middle and bottom rows display an array of women masks varying in age, character and background. The women masks on the middle rows own a round face, phoenix eyes, black hair and red lips, which matches the standard of ancient East Asian idea of beauty. These masks represent a cute and youthful

girl (Koomote), a beautiful and elegant woman (Waka-onna), and the typical face of an aged woman (Syakumi). Ugly, wicked variations of the women masks are placed on the bottom row. The designs show faces sunken cheeks, chilling or scowling expressions, unusual complexion, combined with gold-rimmed eyes suggesting these women are not human. From left to right, the masks portray a witch disguising as an old mountain woman to deceive and harm travellers (Yamanba), a vengeful, jealous woman who turned into demon (Hashihime), a beautiful fox demon who spreads illness to the Emperor (Tamamomae). (Cisse 2014; Inoue Corporation no date.)

2.5 Movies

Similar to old literature, the silent film industry is a birthplace of many legendary villains who are either enamoured or feared by generations of audiences, as well as an inspiration for many famous evil characters these days. Almost a century ago, in 1922, *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*, directed by F.W. Murnau, was premiered in Germany which led to the debut of the popular vampire genre on the silver screen. *Nosferatu* was one of the earliest but also an unlicensed adaption of Bram Stoker's infamous *Dracula*, as well as one of the greatest horror movies of all time (Billson 2010). This seminal motion picture tells a story of Count Orlok, a vampire who has bizarre, nightmarish physical features with a bald head, pointed ears, elongated arms, nimble fingers with claw-like nails, two conspicuous fangs as front teeth, stiff-armed and hunched over gait (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Count Orlok from *Nosferatu* (Timeless Classic Movies, no date)

Because this vampire movie brazenly plagiarized Stoker's novel, Murnau attempted to avoid lawsuits by adjusting a few plot points, as well as changing the name from *Dracula* to *Nosferatu*. The most remarkable difference between the movie and the book is a death scene of the villain where Count Orlok was killed by utterly fatal sun's light, while in the book, solar rays were originally described to slightly weaken vampires only. Thus, the infamous vampire trope was established. (James 1993; Mancini 2016.)

Even though he is far from being a villain, Gwynplaine from *The Man Who Laughs* (1928) by Paul Leni, which is an adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel of the same name, is worth mentioning in this chapter as the character performed by Conrad Veidt is known as the primary inspiration for DC Comics' iconic villains, the Joker (Figure 7). The story follows Gwynplaine, a son of a rebel and political enemy of an evil King. After his father is executed by the King, Gwynplaine's face is disfigured with a permanent, rictus smile so he will "laugh forever at his fool of a father". He finds solace in the love of Dea, a blind woman who does not see his grotesquely grinning face, and work at a travelling carnival as "The Laughing Man".



Figure 7: Gwynplaine from *The Man Who Laughs* (The North Park Theatre 2019)

Gwynplaine does not mean to be a sinister character, yet with the tear-brimmed eyes and the unnervingly horrifying smile stretched across his face, he is treated as an outcast, which is reminiscent of Frankenstein's monster. The creators of the Joker, Bob Kane, Bill Finger and Jerry Robinson all agreed that the rictus smile of their lunatic clown was unmistakably inspired by Veidt's Gwynplaine. Even the swept-back hairstyle of the Joker's early designs was similar to that of the silent film character. (Newby 2019.)

Like *Nosferatu* and *The Man Who Laughs*, *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) is a classic motion picture adapted from a novel of the same name and is produced during the glorious era of silent movies. The villain, Erik, who is played by Lon Chaney is an unearthly creature haunting the Paris Opera House. The Phantom lives in the damp, dark passages located deep in the cellar of the theatre. He becomes obsessed with a young singer, Christine, and causes terrors in attempt to give her a leading role. Upon being rejected by the woman he loves, the phantom seeks violent revenge on her and her lover. (Rotten Tomatoes no date.) The phantom is described to carry a ghastly, deformed look: a skull-like face with no nose, sunken eyes and cheeks, jagged teeth and a few wisps of black hair on his head (Figure 8).



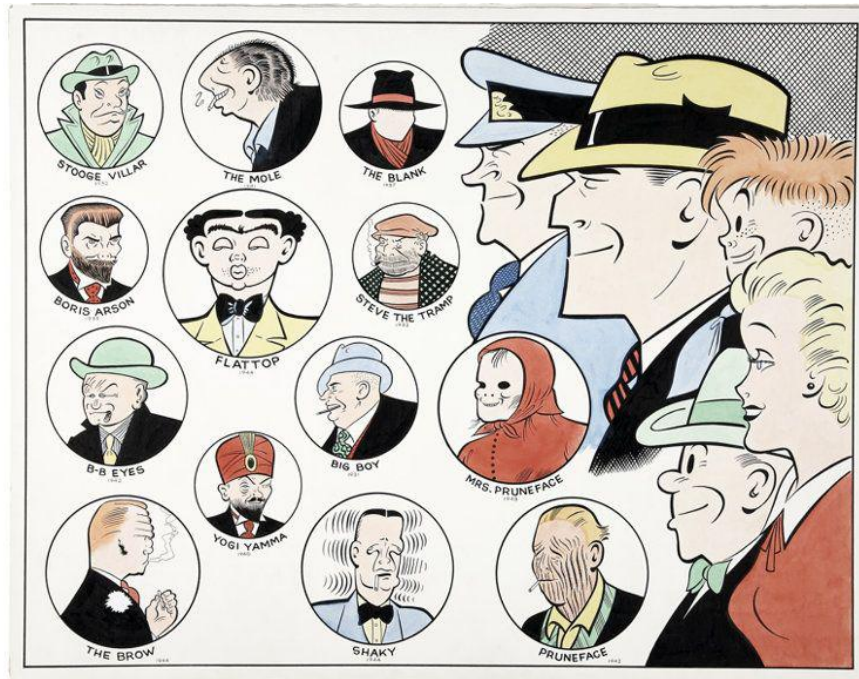
Figure 8: The Phantom of the Opera (Wikipedia/public domain)

According to the original novel and the 1925 adaption, Erik was disfigured at birth; however, in the 1943 version, starring Claude Rains, the Phantom has his face destroyed by acid. The phantom's deformity is the result of an injury or an accident became a popular trope in later film versions. Ebert (2004) suggests that what fascinates the audiences in this movie is the idea of a cruelly mistreated man going mad in self-imposed exile, desiring love which he believes to bring back some joy from the world that has mistreated him.

2.6 Comic books and graphic novels

Characters in comic books and graphic novels generally carry diverse physical features, from the anatomically correct body to the bizarre, comical-looking made in various shapes and sizes. Therefore, the comic villains might not only be frightening but also be hilarious to readers. A very notable example for unique looking comic books' villains is a formidable list of criminal characters from Dick Tracy, an American crime comic strip created by Chester Gould. Gould often depicted his villains as ugly individuals with comically grotesque, one of a kind appearances, for example, a killer with a perfectly flat head, a saboteur with nastily wrinkled face, a hypnotist with deep round eyes or a gangster with an abnormally small face set in the middle of his adult-sized head, while the heroes

was given an attractive or normal-looking face (Figure 9). The significant difference between the two opposite groups of character is used to emphasize Chester Gould's perspective that crime is ugly, heroes are right, without any moral grey area in-between (The Villains of the Dick Tracy Universe no date).



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Figure 9: Heroes and villains from Dick Tracy (Heritage Auction, no date)

Osamu Tezuka's villains and star system are the next subjects for discussion in this chapter. Tezuka, known as a pioneer of the modern Japanese comic, created over 700 works with more than 150 000 pages, vary from children's mangas to adult oriented series, thus earning himself the title Father of Manga. He employed a special manner of storytelling called 'the star system', in which characters are handled like movie actors. The term originally came from Hollywood, which is used to refer to movies or products that centre on top star actors. In this system, Tezuka created a stock of characters, and assigned them to various roles in his works. Each star has their own signature habits, expressions, and speech patterns similar to a real actor. Using the same characters the viewers already recognize and understand creates a more personal effect enriching the present story and allowing readers to make connections with the roles (Narrative in art 2011.)

An interesting example of Tezuka's villains star system is Rock Holmes, a character debuted in *Little Detective Rock Holmes* (1949) as an innocent yet mischievous child. He later took the role of an aspiring journalist who is imprisoned and suffers from emotional trauma in *Next World* (1951). In series *Vampire* published in 1966, Rock became a lead villain, who is smart, dangerous and was adored by fans due to their impression of his charismatic villainy. With the positive response from readers, in *Alabaster* (1970), Tezuka portrayed Rock as a more sinister character- an FBI agent who is narcissistic, racist, murderous, manipulative as well as a rapist. Even though this role has no empathy or redeeming qualities, Rock's earlier performances create a character depth and let the viewers make a connection with him as a likeable character. (Narrative in art 2011.)

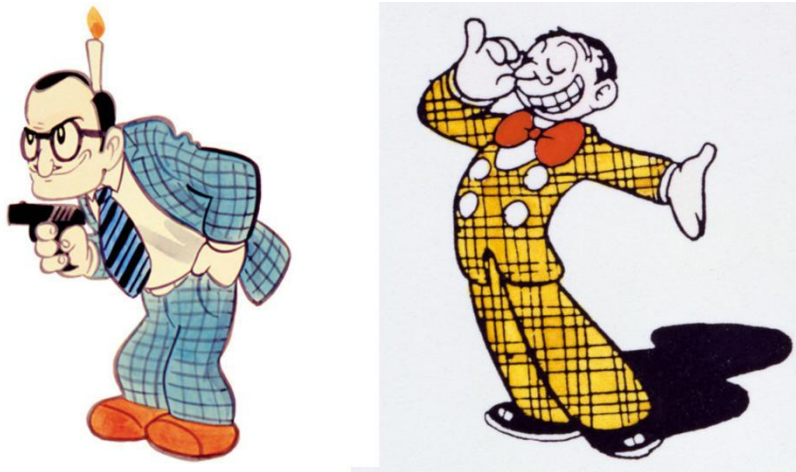


Figure 10: Acetylene Lamp and Ham Egg (Tezuka Osamu Official, no date)

Two of Tezuka's best known and often cast villains are Acetylene Lamp and Ham Egg (figure 10). The former, Lamp, is an unscrupulous and unsavoury character who will do everything to see his sinister plot succeed. He is a type of detestable character that is universally cast as a villain, yet he possesses a small speck of goodness and humanity. The other one, Ham Egg, is a greedy, dishonest and cowardly man who perfectly performs as a cringe-worthy villain in both lighthearted comedies or darker, violent tragedies. He is often cast as a henchman or lackey to Acetylene Lamp. According to Tezuka Osamu Official (no

date), many fans find the villainous combination of these two stars the real attraction of Tezuka's works.

3 VILLAINS IN VIDEO GAMES

The function of villains in video games might be similar to that of the ones from other media, at the same time, they can be significantly different as well. The villains in video games not only contribute to the narrative but are also a part of the mechanics. According to Extra Credits (2014a), depending on what kind of game being made, it is going to have one of two types of villains: mechanic villains and narrative villains, which this chapter discusses in more details.

3.1 Mechanic villain

Generally, the mechanic villains are made for gameplay purpose. They drive the action and effectively test the player's skill with the gameplay mechanic. Some famous examples of mechanic villains are Bowser from Mario, Dr. Willy from Megaman, and Genon from The Legend of Zelda, whose purpose is to serve as final challenges for players in the gameplay rather than a plot device, thus no complicated writing is required for this type of character. These villains can be goofy and comical if they are created for light-hearted games, such as the Bad Piggies from Angry Birds or King Dedede from Kirby, or an embodiment of pure evil for more serious contents, such as the Enchantress from Shovel Knight. (Extra Credits 2014a.) These villains are a unique part of games and are not likely to be compatible with any aforementioned media.

The primary goal of creating mechanic villains is to make the players satisfied with the challenges. As the game proceeds, the players should be required to utilize all their mechanic prowess to overcome these villains, and within the narrative, they should get a feeling of accomplishing something which can not be easily achieved by anybody with less skill. This is the reason why game designers often choose unknowable aliens or supernatural evils bent on humanity's destruction as their mechanic bosses. (Extra Credits 2014a.)

It is essential to have some justification for these villains to make it impossible for players to overcome the malevolent force right from the beginning. They might have an army to throw at the player like Browser and his Koopa Troopas, an impenetrable fortress, or a labyrinth littered with deadly traps which is a challenge for players to conquer before they ultimately reach the villains themselves, thus justify the rest of the game's action. (Extra Credit 2014a.)

3.2 Narrative villain

Narrative villains are more complex than the mechanic one, as they further the plot by providing an opposing force to the main character to create conflict and drama. To achieve the true ending, players might be required to overcome a great battle against them. However, these villains are not simply a final boss created solely for gameplay purpose as they exist to drive the narrative and make the game world more immersive and believable. Vaas Montenegro from Far Cry 3, Kefka from Final Fantasy VI, and Handsome Jack from Borderlands 2 are some of famous narrative villains in video game. Due to their vital role in the narrative, these video games villains are significantly analogous to those of literature and comic books.

There are various great examples of both types of villains, and neither is better than the other. Depending on the style of the story being created, one is more suitable than the other. It seems safe to conclude that the gaming industry has a solid grasp of building mechanic villains, as they do not necessarily possess complex qualities, along with the fact that these characters have been made as long as video games themselves have been. On the other hand, many games stumble due to the tendency to use mechanic villains when their plots need to be carried by narrative ones. It hampers the story-driven experience when the main villain who is supposed to play a major role for the plot ends up being a shallow big bad guy who desires world destruction because they are simply evil. (Extra Credits 2014b.) The qualities of the plot-driven villains, as well as the requirements to create a decent one, are discussed further in the next chapter.

4 QUALITIES OF VILLAINS

This chapter discusses the characteristics of villains as well as the necessary methods to flesh out believable, multidimensional ones mostly for story-driven games in particular but also are applicable to other media in general.

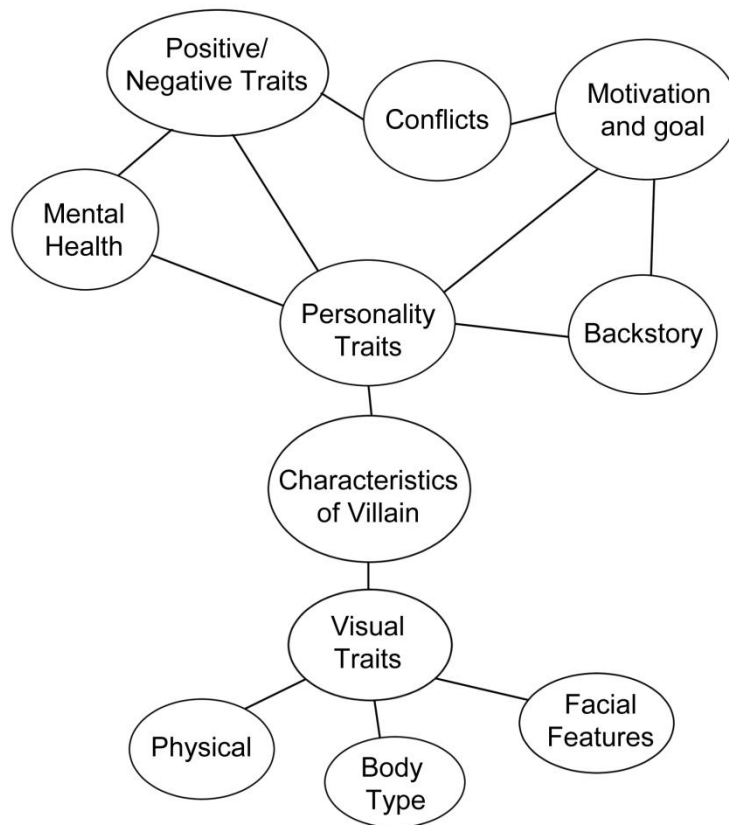


Figure 11: Qualities of villains and the connection between them (Ngo 2020)

Figure 11 indicates the qualities that are studied as well as the possible connection between them. A villain's backstory is a cause or an explanation for their personality traits, motive and goal, while the conflict within a story is often caused by the opposing motivation or personality traits between a hero and a villain; it also allows audiences to discover character's flaws. The hero archetype is also discussed and compared with the villain role throughout this chapter.

4.1 Conflict

In a story of heroes and villains, there is always a conflict between them. Conflict is a struggle between two opposing forces, and is considered to be the most important aspect when constructing a story. Conflict creates a plot, drives the story forward as well as refers to obstacles the characters must confront during their journey. (Studiobinder 2019.) The plot of *Romeo and Juliet* begins with an everlasting conflict between two families which leads to a tragic, forbidden relationship and the main climax of this play. The way conflict is resolved encourages characters to change or grow through their character arc.

There are 3 basic types of conflict: Man against nature, man against man, and man against himself. The first type of conflict refers to life-threatening situations where the characters fight against or survive external forces which cannot be controlled by human beings, including natural disasters, cataclysm, animals or extraterrestrial creatures. The second conflict is known as the most popular type of conflict involving a character stands in the way of the other, prevents them to reach their goal. This varies from good against evil to a more emotional and psychological aspect of conflict in relationships. The third type is internal conflicts where people fight against their own temptations, overcome their internal emotional flaws or change their response to external conflicts. (Ballon 2009, 132–137.)

The villains are one of the primary sources of conflict in the second type in which their goals often oppose or threaten the hero's, forcing them to overcome the challenge. Black (2017, 135–136) encourages to make the conflict specific and related to both hero and villain's goals. For example, the specific conflict between Batman and Two-Face from *The Dark Knight* starts after Batman fails to save Two-Face's lover, Rachel, which leads to him seeking revenge on people who are vaguely at fault for her death, including Batman. A good story involves both internal and external conflicts (Ballon 2009, 136). The characters can feel torn by their emotional turmoil while trying to resolve the plot.

4.2 Traits of villains

A trait is a distinguishing quality or characteristic belonging to a person which is formed by a person's behaviour and attitude towards the others. Traits make characters realistic and believable and like real people, they are neither good or bad, perfect or fundamentally flawed (Ackerman 2015).

Black (2017, 12) stated that the behaviour which is caused by traits sit at the core of the characters, and they are the aspect of character's personality that make give them a unique flare making them rise as a hero or fall into the pit of villainy.

4.2.1 Positive and negative traits

Creators might need to shade their villains in grey instead of black or white if they aim to make the character likeable to the audiences by giving them redeeming qualities, or positive traits. Great villains are similar to other people in that they are filled with polarities (Ballon 2009, 102).

Traits can be positive, negative, or neutral. Like humans, memorable characters are complex and should possess both flaws and positive qualities. Specific traits not only make characters more believable but also give them flaws or weaknesses to overcome to accomplish their goal. Traits can create conflict for the plot, for example, a selfish person might long to become more dependable and self-disciplined, but his negative trait is a hindrance, thus creating internal conflict within this character.

Some examples of positive traits are adaptable, brave, caring, charming, faithful, loyal, and responsive. Negative traits include aggressive, cowardly, deceitful, greedy, possessive, and untrustworthy. Neutral traits can be reserved, self-conscious, determined. Appendix 1 provides a wide array of personality traits for reference purposes.

In fact, a character can not be a villain if he or she does not possess at least one negative trait. A villain creating process should be started by choosing minimum

one or couple of negative qualities, whether it is power hunger, manipulateness or greediness. And to make the evil character realistic, at least one positive trait should be included. The positive traits serve as necessary redeeming qualities, which allows the audience to hate to love these characters and to empathize their craziness. They also help flesh out a multidimensional villain. For instance, Hannibal Lector from *Silence of the Lambs* is a serial killing psychopath, but he also is smart and treats the protagonist like a charming gentleman; or Voldemort is patient, intelligent, and loves his pet despite his cruelty. The existence of both kinds of traits creates balance for a character. The same treatment can be applied to the opposing role, the hero, by giving them at least one positive traits as a base, then including at least one negative quality for their flaw. (Black 2017, 15–18.) Neutral traits are added according to the creator's desire and story tactics. Something that should be kept in mind that all villains must enjoy their villainy.

Even though this is not compulsory in video game narrative, but it is recommended to give opposing traits to the hero and the villain to drive conflicts. With opposing core traits, the hero and the villain are either going to love or hate each other; they will fight not only over the grand world destruction but also the simplest of things (Black 2017, 15). An example of an opposing pair of hero and villain is Peter Pan and Hook; while Peter Pan is eternally young, interesting and immature, Hook is old, boring and mature. In the aforementioned example of *Silence of the Lambs*, despite Hannibal's attraction to the hero, the fact that one is a criminal while the other is a FBI agent is enough to drive both action and internal conflicts. In addition, the difference in theme representation can also be used to emphasize the opposition, such as in *Danganronpa* franchise by Spike Chunsoft, the group of heroes represents the main theme Hope, while the main villain is the embodiment of Despair.

Similar to opposing traits, having a hero and a villain possess the same traits is an interesting alternative to emphasize their difference. The roles of hero and villain are not defined by different traits, but rather their reaction and choices to different situations. When there are two characters who are similar and encounter

the same problem, the key to differences is their actions and reactions, as villains tend to make bad choices while the heroes see a different outcome with their alternative decision. For example, being brought up by the same parents, both Thor and Loki are arrogant, have god complexes and the ambition to lead their kingdom, yet when faced with the opportunity to earn the crown, Thor proves his worthiness by pushing his arrogance aside, while Loki gets consumed by his ego, makes awful decision leading to his failure. (Black 2017, 17.)

Sometimes around the middle of a story, characters might experience changes in personality or reactions, as known as behave out of character. These spontaneous reactions and personality changes do not negatively affect the development of the story nor audiences' experience, since it is normal for humans to act out of the norm. The plot might push a character to change as a part of his character's arc, help develop depth as well as conflict, for example, a villain might start to be skeptical about the validity of his actions despite being consistent in his bad deeds at first; an internal conflict which leads to either his redemption or his downfall. There is a possible situation where two protagonists have a conflict with each other in which one of them arguably end up becoming a villain.

4.2.2 Backstory

Bertrand Russel once shared a story: *I found one day in school a boy of medium size ill-treating a smaller boy. I expostulated, but he replied: "The big hits me, so I hit the babies, that's fair." In these words he epitomized the history of the human race.* The boy's action, as he himself explained, is the result of bullying from "the big", who could either be adult or kids bigger than him. This raised a question about the source of bad seeds: nurture or nature. Is a villain bad from birth or a victim of their upbringing or environment? All the answer is debatable, as one may say the culprit is an unpleasant environment such as abusive childhood and trauma, while others believe in the influence of genetics. (Ballon 2009, 93–94.)

Backstory is an important literary device used to shape a character. Current traits, behaviour and motives are the products of past events and experience which

have the biggest impact on a character, in both a good and bad sense. Imagine a strong and confident person, his upbringing could either be happy with love and support, or a horrible childhood but instead of falling the wrong side of the line, he fought back (Black 2017, 35).

A great villain deserves a backstory which allows audiences to delve into the source of their villainy. A backstory does not have to be tragic to gain sympathy to a villain, but it has to provide at least an explanation for their current traits, motives, or their behaviour.

It is the creators' decision to make their villain a natural born killer or a victim of the environment as long as it is convincing. If a human character's aberrant behaviour is caused by his brain chemistry and genetics, his backstory as a child may reveal some serious inappropriate behaviours that certain children would exhibit, such as bullying, torturing and killing animals, committing arson, showing a lack of guilt or empathy (Ballon 2009, 94).

On the other hand, if a villainous character's biography points out that he is a victim of nurture, the writer can consider some of possible scenarios in their childhood: a broken home, abusive parents, divorced parents, trauma, or constant bullying. In case a character's life-changing past event is not from his childhood or upbringing, but rather from society or cruel hands of fate, some suggestions are the loss of loved one, failure, betrayal, lack of sympathy, alienation, or discrimination. Their evil actions are usually the results of an aspect of their life that spirals out of their control. For example, the monster from Frankenstein's Monster becomes vengeful and violent because he is abandoned and alienated. Another good example is Joker from a movie with the same name premiered in 2019, The Joker at first is a clown and aspiring stand-up comedian, who lives with and cares for his single mother, but the combination of trauma, mental health problem and marginalization push him to become a criminal.

4.2.3 Mental health

There is an unpleasant fact that mental disorder is often portrayed as a villainous quality in media and pop culture, which leads to wrong assumption contributing to the stigma around these disorders, and in consequence, the discrimination against mental illness patients (Shepherd 2018). The explanation for the usage of mental illness is that humans are wrapped up in their expectation or normality and see any behaviour that they deem not normal and make it scary and unacceptable. While people only accept others that fall within a strictly controlled set of deviations, those suffering from mental health issues often produce behaviour deviating from the norms, hence the negative representations of mental illness patients. (Black 2017, 119.)

This thesis does not discourage creators from making sinister villains with mental illness. In fact, there are many great villains in literary and movies history that have these disorders. If a mental health disorder is included in character traits, it must be portrayed in an authentic way to avoid stigmatizing a sector of society. It is essential to conduct thorough research on the illness in its entity, medication, symptomology, patterns of behaviour, triggers, severity, coping mechanism, reaction, prevalence, and a person's awareness of their disorder and treatments. (Black 2017 ,133.)

A huge variety of disorders have been used to create villains, and the most common ones are personality disorders, including Schizophrenia, Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD), Sociopathy and Psychopathy (Antisocial Personality Disorder), and an anxiety disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Black (2017, 72–73) also stated that female villains tend to be given borderline personality disorder (BPD) because it is more common for women, whereas psychopathy and sociopathy are found more commonly in men. Some good examples are Hannibal Lecter from *The Silence of The Lambs* with Antisocial Personality Disorder, Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast* with NPD, and Harvey Dent (Two-Face) from *The Dark Knight* with MPD.

4.3 Motivation and goal

Motivation is the reason behind a character's behaviour and actions. It is the cause or moving force behind all the conflict, actions, and turmoil the characters experience in their adventure (Ballon 2009, 239). Both heroes and villains need their own motives; without believable ones, there is barely any real conflict in a story. Villains are an archetype that especially needs a motive. Without a decent motive to justify a villain's actions, they will fall into one, or all of these categories: a cliché, have no depth, or unbelievable character. Even a serial killing psychopath Freddie Kruger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* has his own reason for killing which is a desire for revenge. (Black 2017, 189.)

Motives for villains can be as simple and venial as greed, jealousy, or hatred; or they can be driven by high-minded and complicated motives such as ideology or philosophy. The demographic group and genre are often the two factors that decide the complexity of characters' motives. A light-hearted product for children frequently has their villain caused mayhem with a venial motive, while a story aimed at adults often evolves greater, more serious issues.

Regardless of its complexity, a villain's actions must align with their motivation and goals. Since actions speak louder than words, game developer is encouraged to communicate a villain's motivation and goal through actions rather than solely giving a speech about what they want. In some cases where the villain is compelled to reveal their motive and goal through speech, it is often in an occasion when they need to rally a potential ally to their cause, or an attempt to get the heroes to understand the reason behind their actions. It can be explained by the fact that the villains rarely see their actions as wrong doing. (Extra Credits 2014b.)

The goal is the what a villain wants, while the motive is the reason why he wants it (Black 2017, 30). Goals are different from motives because they do not drive behaviour, instead, they are outcomes, or something a villain attempts to achieve. For example, a goal of a bank robber is stealing money because he needs to pay

his debt, which is his motive. A fully rounded villain requires both a motive and a goal (Black 2017, 31).

Heroes and villains frequently have opposing goals, but it is possible to break the mold by giving them the same purpose. A great instance for this is Thor and Loki from the Marvel movies where both of them desire the Asgard throne, and attempt to prove themselves worthy as a King to their father, Odin. However, Loki wants to be a king for himself, whereas Thor wants to be a king for his people. (Black 2017, 31.)

4.4 Visual traits

The aesthetic is the first thing the audience will notice about a character's design. The audience tends to attempt to figure out the story of a character or to label the character's archetype based on the physical look. When thinking of a villain, what often comes to mind is the images of moustaches, slick hair, black clothes, disfigurements, or the way they cackle as if there are established rules of how villains would look like.

A character's personality should be projected through their visual design. No matter how well-described a character are, they will fall flat if their design is decided in a particularly striking way without an idea of why they are the way they are. For example, a character who possesses an outer appearance of pristine well manners tends to be obsessive compulsive which might influence their mannerism in the way they interact with other characters; or an assassin might be equipped with black leathers clothes, a hood and knives, but an evil duke who outwits his foes through devious politics should not wear the same attire. An appearance should be picked for reasons, not merely because how cool it is

4.4.1 Physical

McGinley (2013) listed 5 popular physical traits that are often recognized on villains, namely scars, slicked-back hair, facial hair, tattoos, and audible lung problem. Scars are often proof of a battle or a tragedy; they give the character a

tough, fierce, intimidating looking. Slicked-back hair has been a common hairstyle for decades which gives an impression of upper-class men and has become one of the most common villain's physical traits thank to various notorious villainous figures such as Joker, Dracula, and Hannibal Lecter. Facial hair such as moustache or goatee give an impression of an untrustworthy, sneaky and cunning person, and is one of the most common traits that associating with cliché villains. Tattoos tell a story of a person living hard on the street or a suburbanite making bad drunken mistakes (McGunley 2013). In some cultures, they are the symbol of the underworld and commonly associate with yakuza or Russian mobsters. The last trait, audible lung problem, does not refer to internal lung defects or illness, instead, it symbolizes the corrupt soul within their lungs as they breathe (McGinley 2013). There are no rules that someone having some of these traits has to be a bad person, nor a bad person has to possess these features, but rather, they give audiences an impression of a classic villain on screenplay.

In the past, the evil ones were mostly created with an awful, grotesque and deformed physical appearance, implying that the ugliness outside mirrors the evil inner nature. Nowadays, the villains have become more attractive, and their beauty contrasts with their evil nature. Human beings tend to be attracted to things that look visually appealing, and when they see an attractive character, they want to know more about it, thus makes good looking a positive trait for villains. Attractive villains are mostly presented in East Asian culture, from common folk tales telling stories about beautiful female demons charming men, to modern pop culture such as anime or Chinese and Korean TV drama.

In addition, most of villains tend to be older than the heroes which allows them to be stronger, smarter, more experienced and harder to defeat, such as Voldemort and Harry Potter, Scars and Simba, or other Disney villains.



Figure 12: Two appearances of Eveline from Resident Evil 7: Biohazard (Capcom 2017)

In some cases, creators choose to an innocent, harmless appearance for their villain, such as children or elderly persons, on purpose of deceiving other characters and audiences. For example, Eveline from Resident Evil 7: Biohazard is one of the main villains of this game who appear as a young, innocent child and later on, as an old lady sleeping on a wheelchair (Figure 12). In the past, the Bakers rescued the ‘young’ Eveline, a genetically-modified human, and sheltered her while being unaware of how dangerous she is, which led to the tragedy of their family. While most of players themselves are completely unaware of the aging Eveline at the present time.

4.4.2 Body type

Body type of character always can be broken up into shapes or forms. Shape language is a common technique used in character visual design. A combination of shapes projects a large part of their personality as well as affects how the audiences subconsciously perceive a character’s qualities. Solid square shapes are usually perceived as something stable and heavy. Due to their wide side and symmetry, they provoke the feeling of security, trust, dependability and masculinity which makes them the common shapes used in heroes design. Squares also express confident or stubborn personality. Circles are perceived as friendly, safe and harmless due to the lack of sharp edges. These soft shapes are often present in characters such as children, animals, and chubby adults. Lastly, triangles are angular shapes which always project danger. They are unstable,

and often convey aggression, action, and conflict. Designers often use triangles and pointy shapes to present their villain characters. (Tilman 2011, 68; Nikolaeva 2017.)



Figure 13: Pointy shapes on Bowser's design (Ngo 2020)

Angular shapes on a villain's body are often presented through their torso, armour, sharp teeth, fangs, horns or claws. Figure 13 shows an image of Bowser, the main villain from Mario, with his body made with multiple pointy shapes which clearly emphasize his aggression and danger.

As being mentioned above, when the designers need to hide their character's true nature, shapes can be used in that case. A villain shaped with soft round shapes often forms the audience's expectation as a friendly character, only to break it later on.



Figure 14: GLaDOS from Portal 2 (Valve Corporation 2011)

A good representative to illustrate the aforementioned concept is a character named GLaDOS from the game Portal 2 (Figure 14). She is an artificial intelligence constructed with many friendly round shapes completely contrasts with her ruthless, sociopath character (Nieminen 2017, 12)

4.4.3 Facial features

Similar to their body, angular shapes play the same crucial role in constructing a villain's face. Triangles are commonly used to shape some facial features such as eyes, eyebrows, nose, cheekbones, chin and even their wide smile. Disney villains are great examples of usage of angular shapes on facial features (figure 15).



Figure 15: Disney villains (The Walt Disney Studios 2019)

In general, without relevant information, people have a tendency to use faces to make judgments about other individual's personality (Goldstein et al 1984, 549). The term Physiognomy is used to call a practice of assessing a person's inward character from their outer appearance, especially their face, which was popular in the 19th century in the West. In Eastern Asian culture, a similar practice of studying facial features judging a person's personality as well as their fate and future is called Nhân tướng học in Vietnamese. These practices assess a person's character based on their shape of nose, eyes, lips, chin, cheekbones, the width of their forehead and the position of moles on their face.

Louis Allen Vaught, a physiognomist born in 1859 had self-published his book "Vaught's Practical Character Reader" (1902) illustrating a wide array of facial features that are believed to reflect the shape of a person's spirit. Figure 16, a page from Vaught's book, visualizes certain shape of nose, eyes, chin and head which point out a tricky and deceitful person.

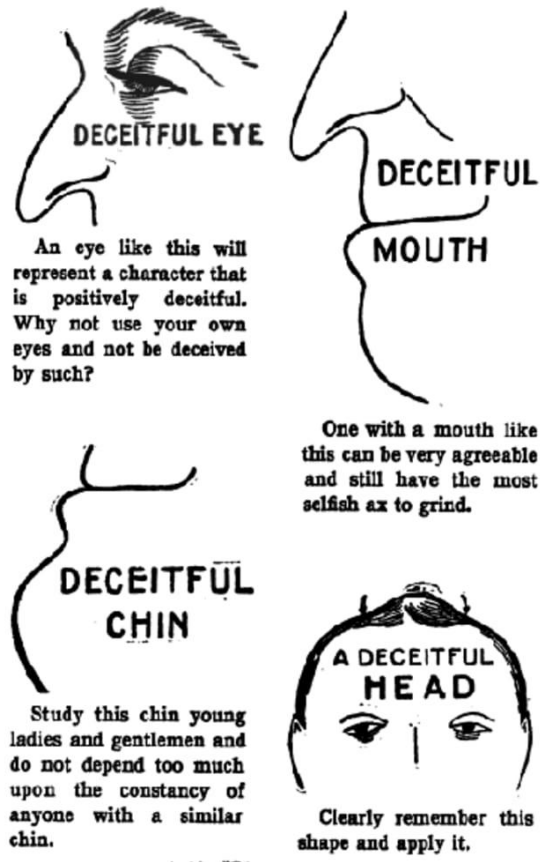


Figure 16: Tricky and deceitful person's facial features (Vaught 1902)

Even though physiognomy has been criticized for its lack of evidence throughout history and fell into disrepute back in 19th century, various studies in modern time have suggested that facial appearances do contain a kernel of truth about human's personality. It is also a useful source of reference when designing villainous characters.

4.4.4 Colour

Colour significantly affects the audience's perception of character and personality. It tells the audience about a character: if they are red, they might be angry, hot-headed, or brave; if they are green, they are jealous, if they are in black, they might be evil. Heroes and villains themselves have an array of colours that are commonly used for their design to primarily project their characteristics, and secondly for aesthetic purpose. McGuire (2017) and her colleagues have conducted research by, firstly, picking 40 Disney heroes and 40 Disney villains

and pulling out their most dominant colour (Figure 17a); then, picking a smaller group of 22 Disney heroes and 22 Disney villains (Figure 17b). Both infographics show similar distributions on dominant colours of both groups of character.

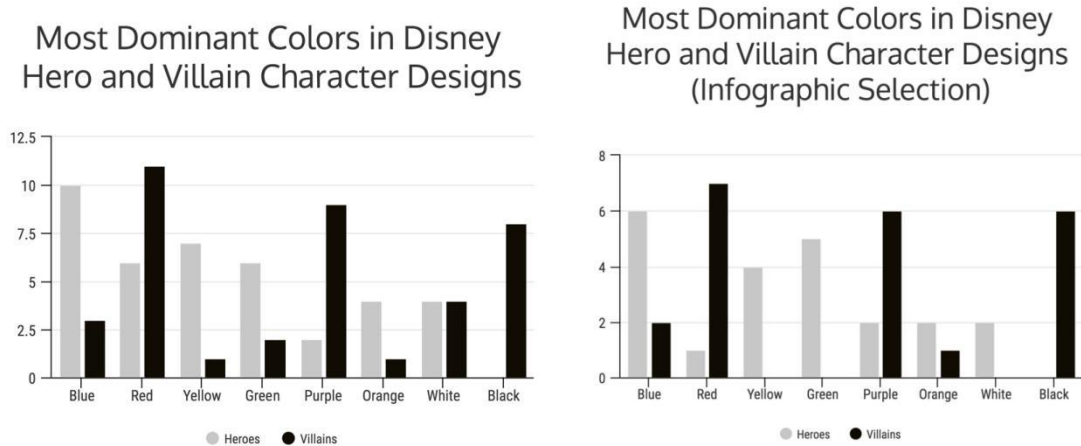


Figure 17.a. Dominant colours in 80 Disney heroes and villains designs, b. Dominant colours in 44 Disney heroes and villains designs (McGuire 2017)

As can be seen from the figures, red, purple, and black are the dominant colours of villains, whereas blue, yellow, green and orange are the dominantly used on heroes. Purple is one of the most villainous colours; it associated with power, nobility, luxury, ambition, and cruelty and are used on villains with noble background such as Maleficent from *Sleeping Beauty*, Dr. Facilier from *Princess and the Frog*, the Evil Queen from *Snow White*. Disney also uses the purple colour on heroes with the same background, such as Aladdin and Anna. Red often associated with determination, passion which can both be heroic and villainous qualities. Disney characters who feature black prominently in the design are villains, including the vilest ones without redeeming qualities such as Scar from *The Lion King*, and Ursula from *The Little Mermaid*. Villains with prominently innocent, pure white design often mislead the audience about their true evil personality like Take Bellwether from *Zootopia*. (McGuire 2017.)

5 PROJECT

The purpose of the art project is to confirm whether the author is able to implement their research into an actual set of designs. The author plans to set up

3 stories for different genres of video game. Following the process discussed above, the summary of the stories as well as their conflict will be defined first, followed by the personality traits of characters, then visual designs.

Although the project is for video game, no mechanic aspects are discussed or clarified since they do not relate to the subject of this thesis which is about character archetype. In addition, due to time limitation, only a summary of story, character's personality and background are written rather than a fully detailed plot with character's arc and the result. Therefore, the author has not put their characters into action and seen how they perform in the narrative. The specific goal is to create decent, believable villains by fleshing out their traits, motives and background, and to confirm if their visual design projects who the characters are.

5.1 Ideas and visual creation

Several concepts have been considered and sketched out for the project. With knowledge gained from background research, the author aims for a diversity of characters, and finally decided to create at least three or four villains, including female, male and non-human characters. The author also picked 3 different concepts to apply to their characters, namely superpower, deception, and revenge.

The first villain will be introduced with their background and personality followed immediately by their physical appearance. After that, these steps will be repeated for the second, third and fourth characters instead of dividing this sub-chapter into two sections for writing and visual separately. This method makes it more convenient to readers to connect the personality traits of the villains to their visual design and vice versa.

5.1.1 The first ideas

For the first ideas, an attempt was made to create a supernatural type of villain who possesses superpower and appears to be pure evil. This character is a villain for a horror survival game where the protagonist gets lost in a mysterious

mansion full of shadow monsters in an unknown world without any escape. The game world is planned to be something akin to an alternative dimension parallel to the human world, such as the Upside Down from Stranger Things series. The goal of the protagonist is to survive and look for a way to return to the human world.

The villain is a mystical, sadistic woman who is capable to control the shadow monsters and takes delight in the others' suffering. Her personality traits are blood-thirsty, destructive, aggressive, yet taunting. She is also a confident and elegant kind of character. When she is in a state of injury, or loses control of the situation, she is completely driven by her instinct, becomes even more terrifying

A motivation and a backstory had been written for this character before her visual design was created. However, as this character's motivation and background highly connect with another character, and to keep this chapter organized and easy to keep up with, her physical appearance will be introduced first.

Figure 18 shows this villain's visual design inspired by Disney villain, Maleficent, and the witch concept. The black colour on her attire and hair suggests pure evil. Her body is constructed with many pointed shapes on her hair, chin, eyes, elbow, arms and lower body which show off her aggression and danger. A pale complexion and long, pointy claws emphasize that this woman is not human. Her posture, straight standing with raising arms, showing off the curves of her body, speaks her confidence. A set of four facial expressions are produced to allow the creator and audiences to have a gasp on her personality. The first picture captures a moment of her enjoying killing. The second picture illustrates her taunting, mocking expression. The third expression appears when she slowly loses her patience. And lastly, when the situation spirals out of her control, or when suffering from physical injury or mental stress, she would let her instinct take over.



Figure 18: Visual design of the female villain (Ngo 2020)

In the past, this supernatural villain used to be a kind, innocent young woman who had just started her career as an actress. This text will refer this character as Carol. Carol appeared to be a reserved, well-mannered, somewhat nervous and awkward woman. She was an ordinary human with no abnormal behaviours or odd qualities. For some reason, Carol was one of the early victims who gets trapped in the parallel dimension and attempted to survive on her own.

Environment's hostility and solitariness were the reasons her sanity slowly deteriorated, along with the negative influence of the energy of the shadow world that made her body morphed into supernatural phenomenon and developed inhuman traits.

From Carol's design in Figure 19, her body is primarily constructed with soft, feminine round shapes contrasting with her monstrous counterpart despite the fact that they are the same person. A round face, big eyes, a white dress contribute to her young, innocent looking. Her hair style and attire are inspired by 1920s Western fashion, considering the event in her past takes place around that time. The facial expressions emphasized her innocence and nervousness, such

as an awkward smile. The last drawing illustrates Carol trying to escape the claws of a monster in the parallel world.



Figure 19: Visual design of Carol (Ngo 2020)

Aside from the conflict between the hero and the villain in which one person tries to survive and escape while the other tries to harm them, the author creates a conflict within the villain: a conflict between the current monstrous entity and the remaining human part. The normal Carol is aware of her situation and is hopelessly trying to reverse it, driven by her desire to return home, whereas the villainous Carol, driven by the monstrous instinct, has long since given up and starts killing for joy. The human part of her is eligible for sympathy, but the evil part has no redeeming qualities.

5.1.2 The second idea

Inspired by the legend that is a fear for many children, the second idea carries a creepy cute, light-hearted theme which tells a story of a child and her journey to look for her beloved teddy bear kidnapped by the monster under the bed. Unlike the bed time legend, the monsters under the bed does not get the children,

instead, they steal their plushy friends. The idea is the author's attempt to make a variation from the popular myth. It can fit into an RPG games where players can make their own choices. There are two villains built for this idea: two nightmarish monsters clumsily disguising themselves as a cat and a rabbit plush toys.

The first villain, a monster hiding under a cover akin to a cat made with several parts of its victims, possesses animalistic traits such as aggressive, unintelligent, gluttonous, and often acts on its instinct. It also appears to be honest and quite naive, and frequently be seen devouring helpless plush toys to satisfy its everlasting hungry stomach.

The name Jasper, refers to the debut name of Tom Cat from Tom and Jerry, is chosen for this cat-like villain. As being shown in Figure 20, Jasper's body is assembled from various mismatched colourful parts of its preys, ill-fated plush toys. The vibrant colour scheme, dominated by the red colour, suggests that this character is childish, aggressive, short-temper and constantly hungry. Like other villains, Jasper is constructed with many pointy shapes which can clearly be seen through the spikes and horns protruding from his body, patched clumsily with colourful stitches, as if it does not spend much effort to hide them. There are other triangle shapes in the design such as its ears, teeth, nose, collar, torso, and claws. Jasper is also transparent with its emotions and intention as being shown through its speech pattern in the figure.



Figure 20: Visual design of Jasper (Ngo 2020)

The second villain, known as Blanca, possesses traits that contradict to its fellow: intelligent, calm, scheming and deceitful. It plays a role of a deceitful villainous character who uses sweet words to gain trust only to reveal their bad intention once their goal has been achieved. While Jasper's homicidal behaviour is driven by its physiological need, Blanca's ultimate motive is its obsession with building its own kingdom by kidnapping various plush toys from the human world and making them its residents, which is the primary reason why our hero starts her journey. Blanca's goal is using the hero to take down 'the dumb Jasper', who is continuously killing off its precious 'residents'. The bunny also shows its dictatorship and murderous personality if someone disobeys it.

The white and purple colour scheme along with round shapes are what prominently made of Blanca (Figure 21). White represents purity, while purple represents nobility and wisdom. Pastel colours are added to enhance its adorable, fairy-like image. Its overall appearance is a hybrid of bunny and goat, with a pair of bird wings behind its back. Its monstrous spikes and horns are neatly hidden underneath its cover instead of letting them protrudes like Jasper. Because Blanca is an intellectual creature unlike Jasper, it wears clothes as well as polishes its physical appearance. Although it is supposed to deceitfully appear friendly and innocent, its big black hollow eyes and an unsettling grin suggest otherwise. The author does not intend to completely hide Blanca's true nature, but rather let the players question if they can trust this creature.



Figure 21: Visual design of Blanca (Ngo 2020)

The author was debating whether to build a proper backstory for these two characters. Due to the fact that they are inspired from a bed time legend, which is something that can not be easily explained, it might be more intriguing to leave the backstory untold. Without a backstory, the audience is allowed to freely interpret these characters in particular and the whole story in general with their imaginary.

5.1.3 The third idea

A villain driven by his desire for revenge is the last idea for this project. No specific time period has been decided for this story, but it might take place between the 1920s and the 1950s in England, the story follows a detective pursuing serial murder cases. The villain of this story is the mastermind behind these cases, who takes revenge on those responsible for his sister's execution, including the protagonist.

This villain does not possess any superpower or non-human quality like the ones from the previous two ideas. He can be described as an intelligent, serious, determined and cranky man who treasures his family. After his younger sister, the only family member, was convicted of murdering her abusive partner, he let himself taken over by the undying desire for revenge. To this character, his

sister's action is clarified as self-defense against her violent husband rather than an attempted murder.

The character is given a gloomy overall appearance with monochromatic palette to emphasize the fact that he is stuck in his past (Figure 22). He has a serious, intimidating yet sorrowful looking on his face. It is difficult to know what he is up to just by looking at his facial expression. The only physical traits that the author believes to give off the impression of a villain is swept back, curly hair and thick, heavy eyebrows hardening his overall expression.



Figure 22: Visual design of the male villain (Ngo 2020)

5.2 Questionnaire

It is important to the author to gather feedback from the audiences. In the beginning, the plan was to make two surveys, one for the story and character's background, the other for visual designs. However, because the author has difficulty in figuring out an effective solution to gather evaluations for the story and

character's background and, additionally, the time they have for this project is limited, they decided to conduct one questionnaire to ask the others' opinion on the characters' visual design. The goal is to discover how the villains' physical appearance projects their character and personality, as well as to find out the audiences' perception of the characters' visual design without any detailed information provided.

5.2.1 Questionnaire making process

The questionnaire was conducted remotely via Google Form due to its convenient way of sharing online and visualized statistics generated automatically from multiple-choice questions. The goal was to have approximately 13 participants, every level of experience in Character Design is welcomed to take part in. This helps gather a wide range of opinions from both people with experience in the field to the audiences who have none.

The questionnaire was mostly constructed with multiple-choice questions asking participants to pick the traits that they think were relevant to the character's visual. Explanations are mandatory, and the participants can give either a very brief statement or a detailed justification. This allows the author to have an insight into the participant's feeling and perception for the questionnaire that is heavily based on subjective observations.

The purpose of the first question is to map out the demographic group taking the questionnaire based on experience (Appendix 2/1). The data gathered from this question allows the author to find out whether experience affects the answer for the main questions. The "enthusiast" option was expected to dominate because the initial list of participants mostly consists of game design students and hobbyist artists.

Though there are three approaches for the three ideas, all of them are somewhat similar to each other. For the first villain and her past self, there are four sets of traits provided to the participants to pick which they think is the best description for each character. There might be two or three plausible options in the same

question, for example, the question for Carol consists of “nervous, reserved” for the first option, and “kind, innocent” for the second option. All of those traits are exactly what made of this character. Because this type of questionnaire does not have a correct answer, giving more than one plausible choice is believed to allow the author to observe which option provokes a stronger feeling.

The question for the villains from the second ideas slightly varies. The participants were asked to choose at least 2 traits from a list that they thought these characters possessed. Some monologue and dialogue were provided to emphasize the contrast between these two, and to give out a hint of traits that can not be easily detected through non-human figures, such as gluttonous (hungry) or intelligent. For the last villain, the participants were given a free rein to interpret this character by writing down what they thought about him. The answers might come with an immensely wide range of options.

5.2.2 Results

Appendix 3 indicates the results received for the questionnaire. The statistic reports 18 answers in total, much higher than being expected. Each participant only answered once. The high participants count is the result of pushing the questionnaire to more people on social media. It only took some participants roughly 10 minutes to finish the questionnaire as they prefer going with their first impression and writing their thought down immediately, while the other spent up to 40 minutes to analyze the designs.

There are 10 people choosing enthusiast as their experience in Character Design, while surprisingly there is only 1 person with professional level. However, the lack of professional participant does not significantly have a negative influence on the results. The author expected that the participants would only provide a very brief explanation for their choices, but in the end, the result went beyond this expectation as the majority of participants wrote down very detailed character analysis regardless their experience.

The girl, Carol, is the first character presented to the participants. More than half of them picked the first set of traits consisting of nervous, reserved and cowardly, while 22 percent of the participants chose the second option including kind, innocent, and shy. The author expected many people would pick the first option, but did not foresee it to be dominating. The cowardly trait is not planned for Carol at first, however, many participants perceived her nervous expression and her frightened face as cowardice. Some participants expressed they were hesitating between the first and second options, as they both sounded plausible based on the character's face, posture, and even the mole under the left eye. Interestingly, 3 answers suggested she was a deceitful person due to her eyes and the awkward smile, and the author believes the art style is the main reason.

The result for the lady in black follows the expectation. More than half of the answers are the third option, including supernatural, monstrous, sadistic, and destructive thank to her exaggerated expressions and claws. On the other hand, the rest had a strong feeling that she was a charismatic and attractive lady, or a determined, serious yet taunting person. Some participants also said they were unsure between two options. Only two answers pointed out the connection between the villain and the human girl thanks to a subtle trait which is their beauty mark.

As being mentioned about, some monologue and dialogue were added to Jasper and Blanca's pictures to give a hint of personality traits which are hardly detected on non-human characters. The most picked traits for Jasper are gluttonous, aggressive, and naive, which are the initial personalities for this character. Some find it hilarious and child-like due to the mismatched colourful appearance. Some participant said Jasper looked scary, whereas some said it looked more confused than evil.

Before conducting the questionnaire, the author had taken down the image of furious Blanca with spikes protruding from its head due to the fact that when being put into the position of a player, the participants are not supposed to see that image in the early stage. However, it is not easy to fool the audiences as 13

of them chose to not trust the bunny. The trait of deception was detected due to various features such as the hollow eyes and mouth, the jester attire, and the sugary words it speaks. The result is not hard to predicted because even though Blanca is a deceitful character who fakes its goodness, it is also made to look suspicious at the same time. According to the explanations, the eyes are the main factor reflecting the word “suspicious”, which fully serve their purpose. Other popular traits are friendly, calm, intelligent, and scheming.

Many mixed responses were received for the last question. Without a context, only 4 people interpreted this character as a villain, and other 4 people perceived him as a morally grey character in a positive way or an anti-hero. Perhaps, the approach taken for this character is both safe and risky at the same time. The overall design does not feature any typical villainous trait of a person with a twisted mind who does evil deeds. The purpose is to make this character looks more human and likeable than the rest of villains in this project. However, it also made him look less a villain, with answers saying he looked more jaded or stern, or even a protagonist than a flat out bad guy. Personality traits that were recognized by most of the participants are smart, determined, cranky, serious, tired and lonely. Interestingly, some people were able to point out more subtle qualities such as a caring big brother, a man with a complicated background or being haunted by his past.

The author is content with the results of the questionnaire due to the fair amount of answers sharing a similar point of view as theirs. Without detailed information or a context, the audiences might view a character in a significantly different way from the creator. Improvement can be made from these answers to produce better designs and to achieve the wanted result.

6 CONCLUSION

The research successfully managed to present the criteria that made a credible villainous character. The thesis was also able to answer how this archetype was perceived in different time periods and cultures through several examples in the

second chapter. The background research was applied to the project to flesh out a set of character with story, conflict, background and motivation.

Researching various movies, literature, paintings, comics and other media throughout history gave the author an insight into the way people depicted the concept of Evil in different cultures and period. Because it was impossible to conclude every piece of art and literature from every culture over the world, only a few prominent and iconic examples were analyzed. The information gained from this research was sufficient to answer the secondary question.

Creating a credible villain with character depth is a challenging task. Some mandatory factors should be always carefully taken into account, including the conflict for the story or the characters, personality traits, background and motivation for narrative and psychological aspect. When creating visual design for a villain, it is important to keep in mind that the appearance must connect to the character's personality and their role in the story.

Due to time limitations and the lack of an effective solution to conduct a questionnaire for feedback on the character's stories, the author could not confirm if their project satisfactorily fulfilled the writing requirement from the background research. In addition, the theoretical research time had overextended, the quality of the story and concepts of character was slightly affected. On the other hand, personality traits and visual designs were put together decently. The data collected from the questionnaire proved the fair success of the visual designs projecting who the characters were, though improvement must be made to achieved the desired result.

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Positive Traits				
Accessible	Dignified	Humble	Neat	Self-confidence
Adaptable	Disciplined	Humorous	Obedient	Self-disciplined
Affectionate	Educated	Idealistic	optimistic	Sensitive
Ambitious	Eloquent	Imaginative	Orderly	Sincere
Amusing	Encouraging	Independent	Original	Sociable
Benevolent	Energetic	Innovative	Passionate	Solid
Brave	Enthusiastic	Intelligent	Patient	Stable
Bright	Faithful	Intuitive	Perceptive	Straightforward
Brilliant	Fearless	Invulnerable	Persistent	Sympathetic
Compassionate	Forgiving	Keen	Pioneering	Tasteful
Considerate	Friendly	Kind	Polite	Thorough
Courageous	Generous	Liberal	Powerful	Thoughtful
Courteous	Gentle	Logical	Precise	Tolerant
Creative	Genuine	Lovable	Profound	Unassuming
Daring	Gracious	Loyal	Protective	Understanding
Decent	Grateful	Mature	Quick-witted	Upright
Decisive	Hard-working	Meticulous	Rational	Versatile
Determined	Heroic	Moderate	Reliable	Warm
Devoted	Honest	Modest	Resourceful	Willing

Negative Traits				
Abrasive	Coarse	Finicky	Inconsiderate	Predatory
Affected	Cold	F frivolous	Insensitive	Prejudiced
Aggressive	Combative	Fussy	Insincere	Pretentious
Aloof	Complacent	Gloomy	Insulting	Procrastinating
Angry	Compulsive	Greedy	Intolerant	Quixotic
Apathetic	Dishonest	Grim	Irrational	Rash
Arrogant	Disloyal	Grumpy	Irresponsible	Resentful
Artificial	Disobedient	Grumpy	Jealous	Obnoxious
Authoritarian	Disorderly	Guarded	Judgemental	Obsessive
Base	Disorganised	Gullible	Killjoy	Sadistic
Blunt	Disrespectful	Hatred	Lying	Selfish
Boastful	Disruptive	Hesitant	Malice	Unkind
Boorish	Distant	Hostile	Malicious	Unreliable
Boring	Envious	Ignorant	Mean	Untrustworthy
Calculating	Erratic	Immature	Mechanical	Vengeful
Callous	Extravagant	Impatient	Melodramatic	Vain
Careless	Extreme	Impolite	Miserable	Vague
Caustic	Fanatical	Impractical	Negative	Weak
Cheerless	Fearful	Impulsive	Neglectful	Withdraw

Neutral Traits				
Absentminded	Deceptive	Impassive	Ordinary	Restrained
Artful	Dreamy	Impersonal	Outspoken	Sarcastic
Ascetic	Droll	Intense	Paternalistic	Sensual
Big-thinking	Dry	Invisible	Political	Skeptical
Boyish	Effeminate	Irreverent	Predictable	Smooth
Breezy	Emotional	Maternal	Private	Solitary
Busy	Enigmatic	Mellow	Progressive	Strict
Casual	Experimental	Modern	Proud	Tough
Chummy	Formal	Moralistic	Pure	Unambitious
Complex	Glamorous	Mystical	Questioning	Unchanging
Confidential	Guileless	Neutral	Quiet	Undemanding
Conservative	Hurried	Noncommittal	Religious	Unsentimental
Cute	Hypnotic	Obedient	Reserved	Whimsical

5/6/2020

Project survey

Project survey

I'm working on my Bachelor's thesis about a character archetype. But to make this survey accurate, I won't reveal any specific information about what archetype I'm writing (unless we are classmates or you already heard me rambling about my thesis).

The purpose of this survey is to confirm if my character visual designs project the character's personality, or to see how audiences perceive my characters.

The participants will look at the pictures, and answer the questions by picking what they think is the character's personality traits. Brief explanations are mandatory. If you are not sure why you perceive a character that way, a short sentence like "I just feel like that" or so is also acceptable. (I still prefer a brief explanation btw)

I hope you have fun doing this.

Thank you for taking this survey.

You're are my hero <3

***Required**

1. Your experience in Character Design *

Mark only one oval.

- None at all
- Minimal
- Enthusiast
- Professional

Set 1

5/6/2020

Project survey

2. Which traits do you think this character has? *



Mark only one oval.

- Nervous, Reserved, Cowardice
- Kind, Innocent, Shy
- Deceitful, typically "I don't trust her"
- Heroic, Fashionable
- Intelligent, Scheming, Greedy

3. Why did you choose that option? (e.g. her expression/ posture/colour,/shape...)*

5/6/2020

Project survey

4. Which traits do you think this character has? *



Mark only one oval.

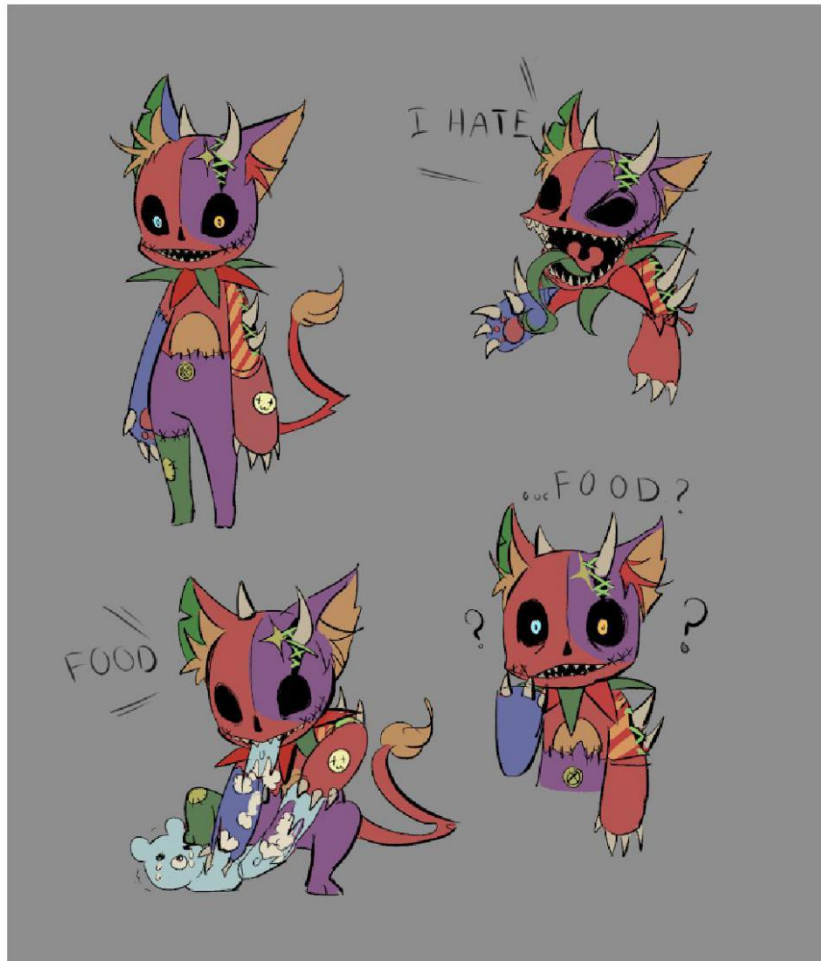
- Beautiful, Mystical, Greedy, Hilarious, I totally want to date her
- Aggressive, Short-tempered, Serious
- Supernatural, Monstrous, Sadistic, Destructive
- Powerful, Heroic, Violent

5. Why did you choose that option? (e.g. her expression/ posture/colour,/shape...) *

5/6/2020

Project survey

6. Pick at least 2 traits that you think this character has. *



Tick all that apply.

- Greedy
- Stupid
- Naive
- Friendly
- Hungry
- Intelligent

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/153rFmQeB-s7JszbFLPgAv7YOeyMIE3ldpocT6VOJ8/edit>

6/11

- Aggressive
- Homicidal
- Scheming
- Deceiful
- Hilarious
- Emotional
- Full of love

7. Please explain your choices (e.g. Its expression looks.../ the colour red makes it looks.../ the shapes.../ I just feel that way) *

5/6/2020

Project survey

8. Pick at least 2 traits that you think this character has. *



Tick all that apply.

- Good
- Stupid
- Friendly
- Flirty
- Caring
- Deceitful
- Intelligent
- Calm
- Aggressive
- Scheming

5/6/2020

Project survey

- Trustworthy
- Pure
- Homicidal
- Noble

9. Please explain your choices (e.g. Its expression looks.../ the colour white makes it looks.../ the shapes.../ I just feel that way) *

Set 3

Almost there

5/6/2020

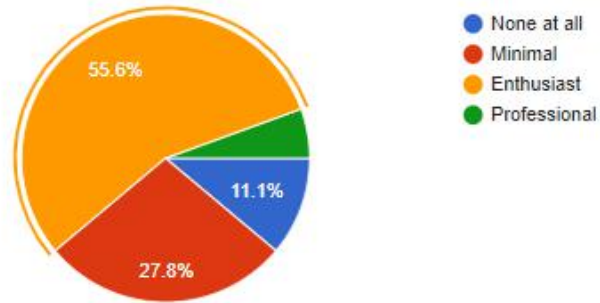
Project survey

10. By looking at this character, what kind of person do you think he is? Please give a brief explanation (e.g. He looks like a villain because.../ His expression/ hairstyle/ outfit makes me feel like...) *



Your experience in Character Design

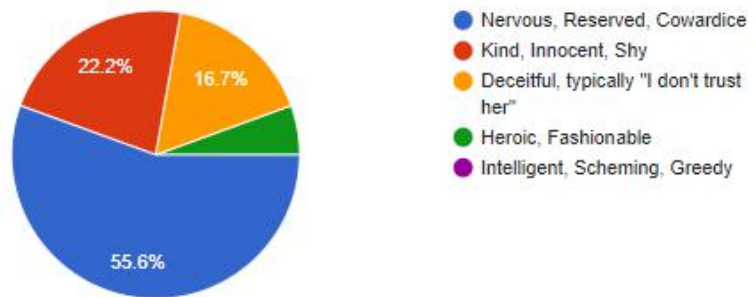
18 responses



Set 1

Which traits do you think this character has?

18 responses



Appendix 3/2

Why did you choose that option? (e.g. her expression/ posture/colour,/shape...)

18 responses

Facial expression and posture

Eyes

In the drawing in which she is smiling, she looks a little nervous thinking about the opinion of others about her smile, but she still looks like a kind person.

Her top right expression displays a twisted expression that isn't typical of a normal smile, plus those giant black hands surrounding her makes it seem though that she's hiding something.

My 1st impression is that she seems to be an innocent, proper yet fragile lady (short brunette hair [I often associate short hair with youth], pale-colored dress [seems pretty light - innocence], the black gloves & shoes and the pearl necklace & earrings + light makeup give off an elegant, formal feel). Her shape looks soft, though with a few edges (either a motif or possibly suggesting a recluse, aloof character). Attire & mannerism suggests that she come from a wealthy background, her going out/attending a ball is just as likely. She also gives off a goody-2-shoes character feel, but also looks very reserved [posture]. Also according to mole readings (should be taken with a grain of salt hsdhfk), people with a beauty mark on the outer corner of their eyes will be generous, honest and peaceful, although they might also meet sudden death (which i hope not!!).

Though when i moved on to her expressions, I noticed how her eyebrows are furrowed- which might be indicative of a nervous & worried personality. The expression on the upper left supports that notion even more (furrowed eyebrows & shy smile : hesitant, "i'm trying to be polite but uhhhahaha"). The one with her appearing frightened have some interesting details i noticed : small torn on dress hem, slightly messy hair, one knee on the ground stance. This suggests that she has been running away from the unknown black entity, and is likely still intent on escaping its grasp - most likely due to fear & cowardice (she's gonna be cornered very soon if she does nothing! or she *has* been cornered, in which case ruh oh)

her expression, her closed body language, her wide eyes

her outfit and choice of hair + makeup gives off a middle class vibe, so it scratched out being fashionable or greedy imo. Her expression of meekness gives off the impression she's a sideline character roped into something dangerous because of those she's associated with more than her direct actions. Finally, though she does come off kind and shy, reserved and nervous just fit the bill more upon first and second glance given how frightful or uneasy she seems.

her pose seemed me that she's constantly tense, and her smile looks a little tight

Her pose and faciel expressions, she also seem to be someone who is unsure of herself or her words and actions

Because of her expression and her appearance (clothes, body language)

Overall, I can conclude that she's a polite, innocent yet shy woman. Honestly, I'm torn between the 1st and 2nd option, but I'm going for the 1st one for now since it seems broader in terms of character traits (and you might put the frightened one here for a reason).

Her posture shows that she is a very shy one, even afraid of starting a conversation with strangers easily. From her way of dressing and make-up can all prove the person she is. She's kinda shy and a bit of introvert.

Perhaps it's the style. I often don't expect characters with these kinds of accessories and non-natural make up look to be innocent, reserved, nor heroic. That, along with her hairdo, sharp eyes, and mole gives off someone with a sort of an arrogant personality. However, the way she's presented with often "sad" and high eyebrows gives the impression that she's trying to look innocent, same with how she wears white. The black gloves and shoes does make it look suspicious though. Maybe if it wasn't for this style with the black shadows and such, I might chose the nervous option.

She has a very typical heroine vibe going for her, and although she looks scared of what is chasing her/attacking her, it doesn't seem that it will make her stop from going forward! Her classy fashion sense makes me think she's very proper and lady-like, so maybe she comes from a very well-off family and/or is rich herself! Her expressions also transmit that she's a serious person most of the time, but she can have moments where her expression breaks (the smiling face) and maybe her "good girl" façade breaks.

her expression, posture

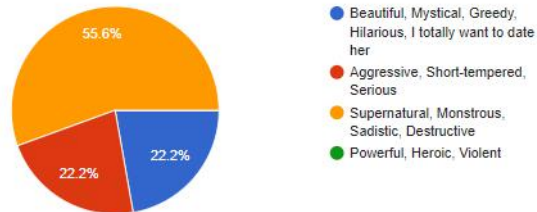
her outfit and hair gives me the feeling that she's kind. Though her expressions and demeanor somehow also tell me that she maybe an anxious,shy person.

Her expressions. Her clothing and hair also seem reserved.

I'm not totally sure about the cowardice part but the first thing that comes to mind is "nervous, shy, reserved". It's the way she seems to be shrinking in to herself and make herself look smaller. She also looks very prim and proper.

Which traits do you think this character has?

18 responses



Why did you choose that option? (e.g. her expression/ posture/colour,/shape...)

18 responses

Shape and color and posture

Expression, posture

I don't know how to really describe it, but I only feel respect for this woman, this character looks like an empress to me, you can see that she is an elegant and determined character, that she can get angry but only when she knows that it is because she is right (Basically, please step on me)

There monster-like projections from her hair definitely reflect that of a supernatural-influenced design. The top two smiles on the top with the lack of an iris give off a twisted, sadistic vibe.

Ok ok now this one seems harder compared to the first one as in oh god i'm indecisive. First impression goes: evil (very obvious from stance, color scheme and shape). Seems to be very elegant and beautiful and like to stay that way (the hair bow sure is an icon, dress trail, curved & small waist). She gives off a Maleficent vibe (intimidating and mystical, those claws and versatile hair look dangerous, otherworldly). Very interesting note is how she heavily resembles the first girl (hairstyle, mole on the corner of eye, eyeshadow) - so I'm speculating that she's either the good girl's counterpart or the other side of her (the 1st picture disagrees with the notion that the 2 are completely the same person though, but still relevant in a way). Some extra stuff i thought about is maybe she's in disguise for most of the time (disguised as a plain civilian to blend in and stalk her prey?) Moving on to expressions- this opens to a lot of her personality traits it seems! First one from upper left had her probably doing her work and seems to be enjoying it (violent blood[?] splatters, disheveled/sharp hair, a confident and ecstatic expression accompanied by white eyes - very scary and sadistic). 2nd one next to the 1st is similar to default reference, but with white eyes, furrowed eyebrows and a smile with upturned corners- she either is taunting someone, or is feeling exhausted (slight parallel to 2nd expression of the nice girl, shadows below eyebrows often indicates i'm-done-with-it or serious emotion, i'm leaning more with taunting). 3rd one is kinda straightforward (annoyed, but nowhere near furious nor aggression). The last one spooked the hell out of my soul, she looks like she's channeling her power, kinda resembling a banshee. The black eyes, agape mouth, furrowed eyebrows and veins makes me think she's straining herself, her hair is full-on flying in all directions with visible shapes of sharpness & mouths makes her look threatening and monstrous, but then she seems sorrowful somehow?

Overall, she seems to be the elegant & supernatural villain type. Again, very torn between options, in my opinion she's a mix of 1 and 3. And she's hawt, i bet a lot of people want to take her out! but please dont take my soul good ol ma'am.

First impression comes from her dressing. All black long dress is a strong way to express the feeling of something mythical and elegant. However, her face plus her claw-like fingers is making her a definitely not-friendly lady. Her expression of white eyes, devilish smile are other example of how this lady will make you cry if you mess with her. Moreover, her transforming look with snake-like hair is definitely not from a normal person but a Witch.

She reminds me of one of those Disney villains, particularly with all the black and the purple eyelid. The way her hair manifests and the spikiness of her design would have me attributing her to be monstrous. When her eyes go white, she seems to be enjoying destroying things. Aggressive and short tempered may also work but I don't know what would give me the impression of her being serious in the straight-laced way.

Comparing her to the first design shown in the survey, it's clear that both women have a connection (similar hair style, same birthmark near the left eye and the black gloves that both wear) and I have guesses that they are either the same entity that can transform or maybe a case of a "Jekyll and Hyde" where two personalities are in conflict....!

She appears to be violent and has supernatural powers, but to know if her actions are for the greater good or not at this point is unknown.

her expression

To me she seems very sinister and powerful. her expression and posture help communicate that she may be confident, mean and scary. Her outfit and hair show me that she could be a darker, more evil character with supernatural abilities. (part of the first option is applicable too because I also totally want to date her)

Her expressions, claws and shape shifting hair.

I'm gay, Quinn. I don't know what else to tell you.

Jokes aside, she does have this "evil" aura about her. She seems confident and sure of herself and her capabilities. Which makes me think that she has a short temper and will blow up whenever things don't go her way.

Her posture speaks of confidence and charisma. This is someone who knows what they want and how to get it.

from her expressions she seems really aggressive and serious, but also like she has a mischievous side! so one and two, I'd say. also I want to date her

i almost wanna go with the first option purely for the date her part lmao but why she does seem short-tempered and witty, sadistic and destructive are the most prominent features her expressions and demeanor give off. Like she's mock you for giving up so easily and have no patience for the heroic types that's talk for too long about how they'd defeat her.

it seemed to me, that she don't like when someone taunts her, or messing around with her, or even underestimates her

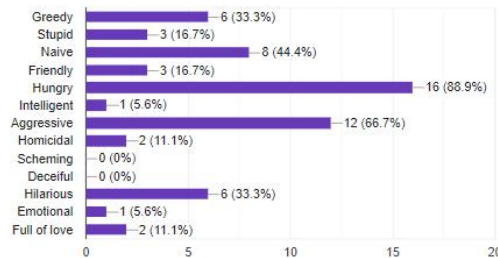
Her pose and expressions. She also seem to be someone who is aggressive, short-tempered and serious and yet taunting. She is beautiful and I'd date her

Dark colors with pointy shapes, her pose and expression

Set 2

Pick at least 2 traits that you think this character has.

18 responses



Please explain your choices (e.g. Its expression looks.../ the colour red makes it look.../ the shapes.../ I just feel that way)

18 responses

Face shape, expression and dialogue

Its expression looks aggressive. The pointy silhouette also suggest the same thing. The impression on its trait of gluttony is based mostly on the captions.

He gives me the impression that he is a character who solves problems with blows (because he is not very intelligent and he is not very good at speaking). And he gives me the impression that he is really stupid since he never received a good education (but that only makes him a cute little monster (?))

It is always seeking food plus it has a violent method of eating. These traits reflect the bear's greed and hunger.

I am going to die writing another long-winded paragraph on this fhskdjfb but hell aint this just makes me want to type. I'm gonna go shorter with this one.
 First glance : Capricious and feral. Numerous patches of random colors with torn spots, sharp claws/horns and stitches, carnival/clown motif. Reminds me of FNAF. The crooked, spiky smile that can unzip itself is terrifying on its own.
 From the expressions: Minimal, repetitive speech, single-minded (signifying lack of intelligence, capitalized text makes it seem mindless). Seems very aggressive & greedy from the one upper right & corner left (jack-in-box jumpscare, relentlessly severing the blue teddy bear for eating [poor thing :(), blacked out eyes). Last one showing a surprised/confused expression, wondering where their food is (comical, but also seems dumb). Unpredictability/mood swing when looking at the reference sheet overall
 Extra note: quinn you're hella good at what you're doing. this shall be the source of my fear for days

First of all, his acts when he is hungry make him look like he has a very short temper as well as an bottom-less stomach. However, from the color and the look of a clown, he seems good enough as a friend if you know how to calm him down. he does have claws and scary eyes but they seem not very strong enough to express that he cannot be a nice friend. On the hand, he look like a very trustful friend if you can make friend with him.

This creature's haphazardly stitched together colorful appearance gives off a childish and aggressive vibe. The sharp horns and claws and in places like their ear and tail halps add to that but also how there's a murderous or violent side to them, looking at how they attack the stuffed animal. If it wasn't for the words written, I wouldn't have guessed the "hungry" part but I've heard of how red is the color mostly used in fast food logos because it increases appetite so it's the "hungry" color. Red is also just something you'd associate with aggressiveness or danger, and the usage of two different tones of red does make it stand out.

I feel like this mascot type demon would serve has as a comic relief character, while also appearing to have a sad background (the way it's stiched up and attacking a teddy bear that was in good shape makes me think that there's something behind its attacks besides the hunger...);

The character shows to be quite naive in its expression asking for food, so maybe it can be quite cooperative if it had something in its favour (and he's very likely to get tricked because of that)

its expressions looks hungry and naive

the expressions, colors, and sharp shapes make it look creepy and aggressive; though it appears to be stitched out of stuffed animal parts, and made of bright colors, which can also be seen as playful and mischievous.

Their speech, aggressive poses, their chaotic and mismatched appearance.

I feel like it's a very innocent and simple-minded creature. Maybe it was created to be aggressive and fight for some reason or for someone, but at its core, it's just an innocent, child-like being that was just "created" to be bad.

it looks more confused than evil, like... a very stitch from lilo and stitch feeling!

It most certainly feels like a naive creature that had a few kinks left unfixed by whatever created it. It's build looks artificially put together and unnatural, so it's easy to assume it isn't a finished product by any standards, probably having only the most basic of survival tactics on it's mind like food. (could be mistaken as harmless, goofy or flat out stupid, but i don't see those traits being in it's control if perceived that way on accident).

i guess he needs a food to restore energy, but at the same time he is very voracious,that's why he sometimes can be aggressive and greedy, he's also hilarious when see some food for him and that makes him look cute

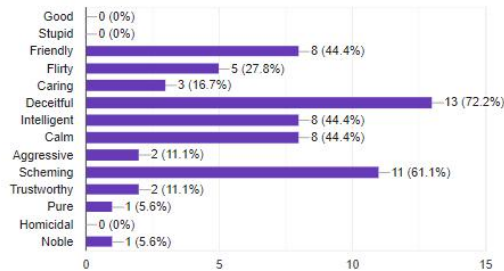
The expression and the different fabric/the way the plush was build (dirty). They seem to be similar to a loud whiny kid that only wants to eat.

Its dialogue "food", "hate" and its actions

Appendix 3/6

Pick at least 2 traits that you think this character has.

18 responses



Please explain your choices (e.g. Its expression looks.../ the colour white make looks.../ the shapes.../ I just feel that way)

18 responses

I just feel like I don't trust her

Its grin is sinister, in contrast with its light and calming colours suggest a trait of deception

It seems a character who is willing to help you but he wants something from you in the end, I mean, wanting to sleep with you in the same bed or a kiss on the cheek or something like that xD (Colors influence my response)

The "darling~" is a bit condescending, as if they're only speaking in that manner in order to get us, the viewer to warm up to them. But in actuality, they may have an ulterior motive.

First glance: Approachable yet suspicious. Pastel color scheme, lacey ears, angel wings and overall soft shapes, also carnival themed, somewhat resembles a card soldier? Ruff & checker design seems high-class/noble. Giveaway for suspicion is expression (Comedy mask expression, seems stuck and can't change). A sweet, dotting/flirty angel - though arouses slight distrust due to how ominous the overall design gives off.

From the expressions: Poses & speech is the focus for characteristics. 1st one depicts them crossing their legs with a hand on mouth (mischievous, yet taunting). 2nd one with a standing stance, slightly reaching their hand out. From the text bubbles, can be inferred that they're capable of coherent speech and understanding of emotions (1st one: can only say that when they're focused on listening and understanding what the other is saying, the ~ at the end make it seems flirtatious or sweet) - signs of intelligent.

Extra note : i wanna hug them!! also if you took some inspiration from kokichi for this one i swear to god

This character is a very interesting one. It can a very nice character or an evil one. I would say it depends on the situation and the background story. The strongest point that tells us if we can trust this character completely or not is from its eyes. Every character has their own personality and most of the time it comes from the expression of their eyes only. This one's eyes are smiling without pupils drawn in it making it a scary and deceitful person.

Design-wise, they seem to have the mixed characteristics of a devil and angel, perhaps more a devil in angel's clothing? Their hollow grin, stitched up parts, and the horns are what makes me think of such, along with that claw sticking out on one side. Other than white, they have quite bright shades of colors that has me inclined to think of them as playful, or specifically flirty with that line saying "darling" and that pose of having one leg above the other. Their lines insinuate that they want you to just trust their intentions. Their claim on "wanting to help" while holding out the arm with the claws does not make them look trustworthy.

Although this character has a very pure appearance (very white and using soft fabrics with patterns and the lace as its ears),the character seems like the type to deceive and betray a person for its own interest and benefit, given its confident pose and his small dialogue shown here that makes you doubt his word.

The never changing smiley face can also be a factor to take into account since it is like the character is wearing a mask of sorts to not show its real emotions...!

face expression looks deceitful and the dialogue might have some intention behind it

the colors,shapes, and cute look are mostly calming and friendly. Though, the claw, horns and expression show there may be an untrustworthy, malicious side.

Their words, face and cute appearance give the feeling of a calculated false friendliness.

EVIL. THE DEVIL. I DONT TRUST THIS LITTLE BASTARD.

I don't know why exactly, but its the face, the eyes and the mouth. The shapes make it look really mischievous and devious. I get the feeling like i'm making a deal with the devil if i talk to him and he's going to be sneaky and backstab me when i start getting more comfortable around him.

VERY SCHEMING, the pastel colors and dialogue make it seem like it wants you to trust it!

The classic teardrop eyes and jester attire, perfect for any manipulative prick creature out there lol. It's palette almost makes me think it's a vanished noble guard or ex-good guy, the patchwork could imply it used to be something good but was reformed for an opposing intent. This creature is definitely laid-back in it's methods of trickery, but also doesn't come off as the type to lose composure even when found out, probably would be indifferent to failure.

I guess it's just like he act

The expression and bubbles. The character gives a trustworthy, caring, friendly and calm aura because of the color theme and the clean look. However, their smile and bubble speech makes it look like this is a lie so they are actually scheming, deceitful and due to that, they are smart.

Its dialogue and its poses

Set 3

By looking at this character, what kind of person do you think he is? Please give brief explanation (e.g. He looks like a villain because.../ His expression/ hairstyle/ outfit makes me feel like...)

18 responses

Definitely a villain. For me it's mostly because of the eyes and his eyebrows, but also the nose and his facial expression in general

First impression: enigmatic man with a complicated background. His expressions suggests him being a kind person with a gloomy outlook on life.

He seems an aggressive character, he has a sentimental side but he is very difficult to see, he makes sure he is safe in every situation, he prefers himself before others

He seems like a morally-aligned character (in a positive way). A mature individual who seems determined to to get what they want and not afraid to approach it in their own manner. Also gives me detective vibes given the long brown trench coat + neat clothing.

He looks like a very ominous gentleman to me! Could be an anti-hero
Appearance: Neutral & dark color scheme, long coat, dark swept-back hair, sharp jawline, thick eyebrows with dark nose tip. Gives off a cold day in British vibe. Looks like a vampire, and seems very tall. The way he's dressed up makes me feel uncertain! If he has a hat then he might look like a mafia.
Expressions : Not inherently aggressive as far as I interpret. Seems calm & collected for most of the time, though also seems aloof and difficult to approach. Not someone you'd like to mess with. With expressions & mannerism like that I bet it's very difficult to know what he's up most of the time.

My first look at him reminded me of Alucard aka Adrian Tepes in Castlevania series, but in a modern clothes. His pointy face and ears make him a perfect Vampire. However, he also has a warm looking instead of a scary one, making him fit well in a nice story as a main protagonist. He looks smart, elegant, noble (good for a main protagonist Vampire or a Victorian-era detective). His can be a very detail-orientated and a strict person but not a bad villain.

He does not look very friendly. The darkness on his face, especially eyes makes him seem tired or grumpy. His swept back, curly, widow's peak showing hair and eyebrows makes him seem kind of villain like. His long coat gives off the impression that he's somewhat sophisticated or materialistic.

This man gives me detective vibes, as his posture and serious demeanor show he's very serious and suspicious of his surroundings. He has a morally gray vibe, as in I feel like he's determined to fight for his objectives and might have to face moral dilemmas along the way, and possibly regretting some if they were the ones deemed the worst options.
His monochromatic palette and overall appearance enhance the fact that this man is still stuck in his past and is hiding secrets.

He looks like a villain because of the dark color scheme and his expression is angry and sour

He seems like he could be a friendly, but suspicious side character. his hair and expression seem untrustworthy, and sharper.

He seems serious and aloof, quick to anger. His coat makes me think of an investigator.

He doesn't get enough sleep. He's either a noble or a detective or some other fancy position. He looks like he has a low tolerance for bullshit and for stupid people. He looks like a very logical person.

He feels like one of those overworked businessmen trying hard to make a living and keep their business afloat until they get a big break, but the job ends up being too big for them to handle alone. THAT type of story protagonists.

hmm very serious and closed off, dealing with some issues under the surface that he won't talk to anyone about

the emphasis on the sharper points of his appearance (i.e nose, ears, eyes even eyebrows) make me think he's more jaded and stern than a flat out villain. He gives off the impression he won't hesitate to throw you off a cliff if you get in his way, but he'd rather not resort to evil to get what he wants to do done. Maybe an ex-bad guy or villain who's on the fence about some things. Overall a headstrong and determined character that might falter morally here and there.

his expression makes me feel like he is a lone wolf, can be rude and aggressive,

They do look like a villain, however, they give me tired uncle vibes. As if they seem untrustworthy but they are actually caring and have a big brother/dad vibes. The hairstyle and choice of clothes give that vibes but they may be a kind of detective because of the clothing choices.

Smart, nerdy, traditional, mystery type of guy