

## 2. LITERATURE STUDY

### 2.1. CHARACTER DESIGN THEORY

A character presents the narrative story by their mannerisms, characteristics, their interactions with the surrounding environment, and their visual designs. Nieminen (2017) concluded that a character's appearance has a large effect on how the audience will receive a story. It is because the visual designs of characters are their own language that communicates the intent and story behind the characters without requiring them to speak first. The aspects of a character design usually consists of *Shapes, Variance, and Colour* (Bancroft, 2006). Variance can be broken down as the *Silhouette, Proportion, and Posture*. Other aspects that can be taken further are *Facial Features* and *Costumes*.

For the purpose of this article, the aspects that will be discussed are Shapes, Colour, and Costume used in character design. The Author concluded all aspects of character design theory that are able to be “re-designed” despite using the same base model into the three aspects. Similar themes can be found with how video game characters' re-skins are often made by changing those three aspects; colour reskins being the simplest, before building up to skins with different costumes that will then change the character's visual design entirely with different visual shape language.

#### 2.1.1. SHAPES

A character's design can be broken down into shapes—circles, triangles, and squares. A complex character design is made of combined shapes that are altered in some way (Bancroft, 2006). Hence why the use of shape language in a character design is important, as it plays part in presenting the character's personality visually.

There are symbolisms associated with certain traits within the use of geometric shapes (Tillman, 2011). According to Bancroft (2006) and Tillman (2011) circular shapes tend to be associated with appealing characters with “positive” traits such as friendliness, joy, kind, or childlike in nature. Squares are

associated with traits like solid, dependable, or strong. On the other hand, triangular shapes are associated with traits opposite of circular shapes—which lends them to play into “negative” roles such as aggression, tension, villainous, or sinister. However, it is important to note that shapes are interchangeable as long as it fulfils the criteria needed for the story (Bancroft, 2006). Bancroft (2006) pointed that in some cases, round shapes may represent isolation from the outside world similar to a shell. It can also align with harmlessness and disinterest. Which plays into the opposite of angular shapes that are associated with active and aggression. In this case, squares are more aligned with passivity or stillness similar to what Tillman (2011) suggested.

Associating certain traits with shapes is not for the purpose of stigmatising but simply for the visual language it provides. Fogelström (2013) pointed out that shapes in character design aid the creation of appealing characters with clear silhouettes that distinguish them easily in the eyes of the audience. Distinguished character designs enable the audience to perceive the presented narrative story visually and efficiently.

### **2.1.2. COLOUR THEORY**

Much like shapes, colours have their own associated traits. The use of colours in character design supports the presentation of a character’s personality and visual story (Tillman, 2011). The meanings attached to colours can be distinguished by universal experience, personal association, and cultural background (Zammitto, 2005). Hence why traits associated with colours may vary though there are widely known shared symbolisms. For the purpose of character design intended for popular media, the use of colour meaning is narrowed down to the commonly associated symbolisms.

Warm colours such as red, orange, and yellow tend to be associated with more positive traits compared to those that fell in the cooler spectrum. Luo (Zammitto, 2005) suggested that this is because warm colours are associated with higher temperature and cool colours with lower temperatures. Zammitto

(2005) also made a point that the saturation of colours are also ascribed with symbolism; as saturated colours are associated with joy and desaturated colours with listlessness.

Here is further expansion on some colours with their commonly associated traits.

1. Red

Action, passion, aggression. This colour tends to be associated with something fast paced (Fogelström, 2015). Red is also associated with love—passion and/or eroticism in sexual context. In Chinese culture, red is associated with joy and celebration.

2. Orange

Joy, strength, warmth, and optimism. In some cases, orange may be the colour for eccentricism and something unusual that is meant to catch attention.

3. Yellow

Like orange, yellow is also associated with joy and optimism due to its association with the sun in many cultures. It is also associated with a more delicate happiness, cleverness, and good humour. However, yellow can also be associated with sickness or ruin (Zamitto, 2005) due to its pallid nature and its ties in medical diagnosis (Hickey, 2015).

4. Green

Balance, reservation, fertility, and vitality. Green is universally associated with nature. Green is also associated with envy, fear, and illness (Hupka et al., 1997). In western culture, green is associated with wealth due to the green dollar bill print (Taylor, 1962).

## 5. Blue

Calmness, contemplation, melancholy (sadness), and devotion. Blue is universally associated with water and the sky. It's often considered cold and linked with solitude. In some cases blue is associated with royalty.

## 6. Purple

Mysticism, magic, mystery, and fantasy. Purple is often considered an unusual colour and therefore associated with anything irregular or fantastic in nature.

## 7. Black

Death, hidden, grief. Universally acknowledged as the colour of mourning. However, black is also considered stylish, authoritative, charismatic, and formal (Taylor, 1962).

## 8. White

Purity, innocence, and light. White is also associated with cleanliness and sterility. In some cases white is the colour of mourning. White is also the colour of “empty”—and associated with numbness (Hupka et al., 1997).

### 2.1.3. COSTUME

The Department of Theatre and Dance from Appalachian State University eloquently describes that costume is what makes up the visual appearance of the actors—in theatre context. In the case for an animated film, the ‘actor’ can be understood as the character themselves. Tillman (2011) described costume as a component that makes a character appealing to the audience; to catch their interest by presenting a story visually. Fenghui (2023) further expanded this by explaining that costumes allowed actors (characters) to express personality and emotions.

The development of a character can be shown through their visual appearance; and costume makes up a large part of it. Costume consists of

clothing, accessories, and hair and make-up. All of the elements allow the expression of lifestyle and cultural connotation that makes up the narrative (Fenghui, 2023). In the stylistic world of animation, costumes can also make up the shapes component of character design.

## 2.2. 5 STAGES OF GRIEF MODEL

The *5 Stages of Grief*—also known as the Kubler-Ross Model—is a psychology model by Psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. In her book *On Death and Dying* (1969) and later works (2014), Kubler-Ross presented 5 Stages of Grief that consists of *Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance* in no particular order nor consistency. The model has the purpose of reflecting how people cope with loss but not necessarily how they mourn (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014). The article will discuss the *Denial, Depression, and Acceptance* stages of grief based on the Kubler-Ross Model.

The three stages of Denial, Depression, and Acceptance are chosen largely because the stages fit the needs of the film's narrative. The three stages made great and most effective representation of the kind of mourning period that Arjuna went through by categorising them into three narrative arcs. Kubler-Ross in both her 1969 book and 2014 update strongly emphasised how grieving process is not rigid nor linear and it highly depends on each individual's unique experience. Her model of grief is more so a suggestion than a rigid categorisation (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2014). In the case of Arjuna; her grief does not require the presentation of Anger and Bargaining stages.

The Denial stage is often credited as the first reaction to a grievous event. Denial means the person experiencing grief will deny what they experienced as a defence mechanism; in order to protect their psyche (mind) from the burden of reality that causes them pain in the form of grief. Stability is important for a person in this stage in order to give them enough time and space to contemplate death—or other causes of grief such as terminal illness—to cope with it. Depression is the stage of grief most are familiar with. It is the stage where the person experiencing grief

despairs and becomes sullen. They might also isolate themselves from communities and neglect to care for their own needs. The last stage of grief in the model is Acceptance. The acceptance of death—or other causes of grief—is often a sign that the grieving person is ready to move on. The individual realises and accepts the inevitable mortality—or pain—with retrospective view and stable emotions.

The 5 Stages of Grief model invoked a lot of criticisms since the time it was first presented. One such criticism is from an article titled “*Cautioning Health-Care Professionals*” (Stroebe et al., 2017) that warned how the model overtly simplified the process of grieving. Grief and mourning process are very personal and specific to the individuals that experienced them. As such, the model might have the opposite intended effect where it took light of someone’s grief experience.

However, as established previously, the simplified expression of grief that comes from the Kubler-Ross Model is ideal for fictitious work. In the case of the film, the model supported the breaking down of the mourning process into separate stages. While imperfect, the 5 stages of grief are easily applied in the process of character design—in which the visual of the character can easily represent the grieving process by following the simplified model.

Further exploration of the concept of each stages in the Kubler-Ross Model are broken down into a table below (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014).

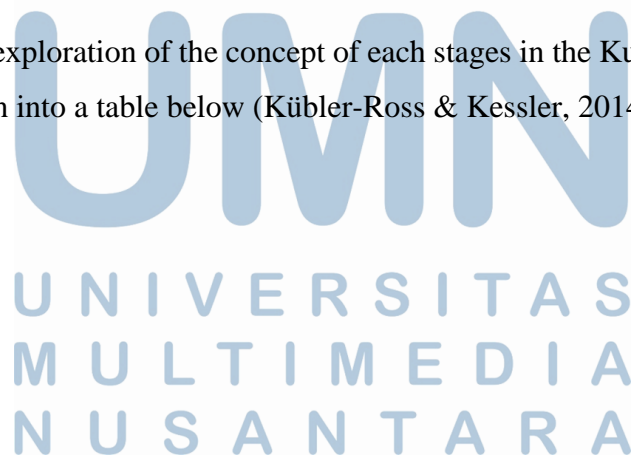


Table 1. The 5 Stages of Grief Breakdown

	<b>Denial</b>	<b>Anger</b>	<b>Bargaining</b>	<b>Depression</b>	<b>Acceptance</b>
<b>Emotional expressions</b>	Erratic, deceiving (assuming faux optimism)	Anger, aggression	Gullible, desperate	Despair, sadness, melancholy	Numb, apathetic – beginning to move on
<b>Events associated</b>	Finding out about death	Questioning the causality of death	Considering the cause and effect of death	Grieving about death	Comes to term with death/the loss
<b>Action</b>	Defence mechanism	Reaction	Defence mechanism	Reaction	Reaction
<b>Conflict</b>	Internal	External	External	Internal	Internal
<b>Possible associated colours</b>	Yellow and/or red (from faux optimism)	Red	(1) Orange; something unusual/irregular (2) Green; for illness	Blue	(1) White; for apathy/numbness (2) Black; (also) for numbness (3) Red and/or yellow; for moving forward (action)

(Sources: Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2014; Zammito, 2005)

It should be noted that as it is stages of grieving *process*—the stages are not rigid and easily interchangeable or adapted to fit the emotional states a grieving person goes through (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2014). In such, Depression may also translate to the period of emotional maturity wherein one learns to cope with their sorrows and emerge with more determination. Similarly, Acceptance stage is also associated to a “joyous”/positive period where one begins to let go of their pain to move on forward.