

Advanced Character Performance

S H A R M A I N E W I L L I A M S



AI PROMPTS

1. **Morning Dew Dance:** The cow spirit dances gracefully among dewy grass at sunrise, with sparkles of light reflecting off the droplets.
2. **Harvest Festival:** The cow spirit helps villagers harvest crops, playfully nudging a few pumpkins or apples into baskets while the townsfolk laugh.
3. **Moonlit Meadow:** At night, the cow spirit frolics in a moonlit meadow, chasing fireflies and creating trails of glowing light.
4. **Wisdom of the Woods:** The cow spirit guides a lost traveler through a mystical forest, illuminating the path with a soft, warm glow.
5. **Rainy Day Joy:** During a rainstorm, the cow spirit jumps joyfully in puddles, splashing water and creating a colorful rainbow.
6. **Cloud Surfing:** The cow spirit floats on fluffy clouds, playfully leaping from one to another while enjoying a view of the world below.
7. **Cozy Campfire:** The cow spirit sits around a campfire with other spirit animals, sharing stories and roasting marshmallows, creating a warm, communal atmosphere.
8. **Spring Awakening:** The cow spirit awakens the flowers in spring, causing them to bloom with a gentle touch, bringing color back to the landscape.
9. **Silly Mischief:** The cow spirit pulls harmless pranks on woodland creatures, like tying their tails together or hiding their acorns, all in good fun.
10. **Starry Sky Guardian:** The cow spirit ascends to the night sky, transforming into constellations, watching over the sleeping world below.

Here I generated some prompts from ChatGPT to give me some ideas to get me started.

My INDEPENDENT PROJECT

My independent project explores the world of splash screens in Video Games, and the visual impact these have on the user's expectations for the game ahead. The hypothetical game in question is a farming game, including a character I have made that is a hybrid of a cow and a human, with bright colours and a bouncy personality. Through this project in advanced character performance, I would like to explore another side to this character's personality.

The scene I have in mind includes the lonely farmer talking to her scarecrow. The beginning will show how isolated she is, but then the scarecrow will come to life.

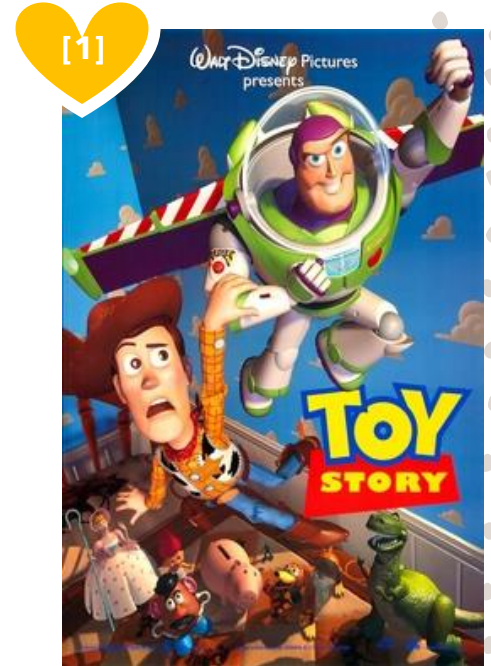
The concept of personification and inanimate objects coming to life bring a sense of whimsy and joy. We see this in media like the 'Toy Story' [1] movie franchise, where the toys coming to life show the child's imagination, and 'My Little Pony' [2], a show that was created to create storybuilding for Hasbro's pony toy line.

PERSONIFICATION IN 'TOY STORY'

In Toy Story [1], Pixar use personification and anthropomorphism to bring their characters to life. They have human-like qualities, emotions and motivations. The characters in this film, like Woody and Buzz Lightyear are presented as more than just inanimate objects, with their own goals and personalities much like people.

The audience is encouraged to empathise with the characters through these changes through relatability, and the ability we have as humans to see these toys as real.

Much like the concepts explored in this movie, I plan to bring a scarecrow character to life and give both characters that emotional depth that binds the viewer and player to the characters.



Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)



anthropomorphism

/ˌænθrəˈpɒːfɪz(ə)m/

noun

the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to a god, animal, or object.

THE CHARACTER



The character I created for my project is a human girl with some characteristics of a cow.

She was inspired by the character 'Apple Jack' from the 'My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic' [2] franchise. In this universe, these cartoon ponies live life as humans do in the real world, and their bright, animated appearance appeals to children and encourages imagination.

I simplified this design below. This will closer reflect the style I will use in the animation, as a simpler design is easier to animate.



ANIMATION PRINCIPALS

Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston created the 12 animation principals in their 1981 book, 'The Illusion of Life' [4]. These principals are considered the foundations of any great animation to this day.

The 3 most important principals I want to focus on mainly in this project are:

SQUASH AND STRETCH

This principal involves exaggerating and deforming an object or person during movement.

I could use this when the character is sad in the beginning, using it to squash down her posture with her shoulders drooping. I could also use it when the girl and scarecrow are bouncing around with excitement near the end.

TIMING AND SPACING

This principal involves using the proper timing in a scene to give them more emotional impact.

I could use this when the character is sad in the beginning, giving time for the viewer to empathise with her.

APPEAL

This principal highlights the quality of the design and charm of the character which makes them memorable.

The character was created with charm in mind, taking aspects from beloved animated franchises and children's shows.

THE UNIVERSE

In 'My Little Pony' [2], the landscapes pictures in the backgrounds are highly exaggerated. The hills are drawn with high, curved lines, and the trees are simple, almost childlike in style. The backgrounds in this show are consistent with their wonky shapes and vibrant colours. As a result, the show feels more whimsical, again echoing that childlike imagination.

I would like to mimic this style in my own animated work, drawing on the playful, imaginative qualities of the backgrounds.



[2]



SCENE ANALYSIS - ARGUMENT

I wanted to look at this scene specifically because there is a lot of intense emotional tension between the characters. The scene revolves around two characters, Dani and Christian, a couple that are going through strains in their relationship. Dani is grieving the loss of her sister, and an argument ensues between the pair where she confronts Christian about his lack of support, however, Christian is dismissive and manipulative.



Dani and Christian are side by side, both at eye level showing neutral perspective.

Dani steps forwards from the dark into the light.

They are face to face; Dani is stood whilst Christian is sat.



Christian stands up and their positions swap, showing how he turns the situation around and takes control.

Dani pleads with Christian, sitting on the couch and further lowering her position, portraying her vulnerability.

Christian turns away, looking towards the exit.

This scene highlights the contrasting emotional states of both characters. Dani is grieving, she feels emotional and isolated, however, Christian is dismissive.

The composition of these shots show close-ups of Dani's face, which gives a tight and claustrophobic feel, showing how overwhelmed she is and her vulnerability. This, juxtaposed with Christian's far-away shots is a visual indicator of him being distant to Dani in her time of emotional need. The framing and camera angles in this scene show the conflict between these characters in a way we may not even notice in the beginning, but it makes us feel uneasy.



REFERENCES

[1] *Toy Story*, Pixar Animation Studios, 1995

[2] *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, Hasbro Studios, 2010.

[3] "Anthropomorphism," *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, [Online]. Available: <https://www.oed.com>. [Accessed: Nov. 2, 2024].

[4] F. Thomas and O. Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*. New York: Disney Editions, 1981.

[5] *Midsommar*, directed by A. Aster, A24, 2019.