Week 6: Personal Narrative for VR

Starting from a Personal Memory

This week, I focused on developing a personal narrative for Ana's immersive experience project. Instead of creating a completely fictional story, I wanted to explore something from my own childhood and think about how a personal memory could become an immersive VR experience.

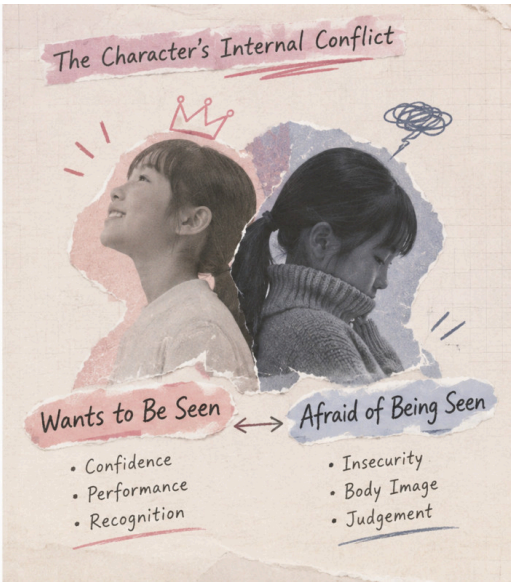
I decided to develop a story called *The Turtle*, based on an experience from primary school.

When I was younger, I was quite thin, which made my Adam's apple more visible. At that age, I believed that Adam's apples were something only boys had. One day, a female friend noticed mine and made a joke about it. Although it was probably just a casual comment to her, it made me question whether there was something wrong with my body. This experience gradually changed the way I behaved. I started paying more attention to my appearance, comparing myself with other girls, and trying to hide my neck with turtleneck sweaters.

What interests me now is the contrast between who I was before and after this experience. I used to be confident, competitive, and happy to speak in front of others. However, after becoming conscious of this physical feature, I began to feel uncomfortable when people looked at me.

I wanted to explore this contradiction through VR: **a girl who wants to be seen, but gradually becomes afraid of being seen.**





Revisiting the Story Concept

This week, I continued developing my narrative VR project, *The Turtle*, based on feedback from my previous discussion with Ana.

The story is inspired by a personal childhood experience and explores body image, shame, and how other people's opinions can influence the way we see ourselves.
In the earlier version, I focused mainly on the protagonist's childhood memories and emotional experiences. However, after discussing the story with Ana, I realised that although the emotional theme was clear, the narrative lacked strong conflict, and the protagonist's emotional transformation was not convincing enough.
Ana suggested that I could introduce fictional events to strengthen the story, rather than following my real experience completely. She also encouraged me to think more carefully about what specific event or person could change the protagonist's perspective.
This feedback helped me reconsider the structure of the story. I wanted to keep the emotional truth of my childhood experience while using fictional elements to create a stronger and more engaging narrative.

Developing Conflict and Character Growth

One of the main changes I made this week was to strengthen the conflict and make the protagonist's emotional development clearer.
In the original story, the protagonist gradually becomes insecure about her body after being questioned by her classmates. During the school's New Year celebration, she tries to hide her Adam's apple by lowering her head, which leads her teacher to describe her as a "turtle hiding its head."
I decided to keep this event as the main emotional conflict in the first half of the story. It creates a contrast between the girl's original desire to be seen and her growing fear of other people's attention.
To make her later transformation more convincing, I introduced a fictional character: another girl who also has a visible Adam's apple but does not try to hide it.
When both girls experience similar comments from their classmates, the protagonist faces a choice between remaining silent and supporting her friend. She eventually decides to speak up, even though she is still afraid.
I wanted this moment to show that personal growth does not always mean completely overcoming fear. Sometimes, it begins with making a different choice while still feeling uncomfortable.
Through this change, the story now has two contrasting moments: the protagonist lowers her head to hide herself in childhood, but later chooses to stand up and respond.



Restructuring the Narrative for VR

After developing the main conflict and character growth, I started reconsidering how the story could work as a ten-minute VR experience.

The previous version contained seven scenes, covering different periods of the protagonist's life. However, I realised that frequent scene changes might interrupt the emotional experience and leave players with too little time to explore each environment.

To address this, I simplified the narrative from seven scenes into five, while keeping the key events and emotional turning points.

I also began exploring the idea of using the school stage as the central space of the experience. Instead of creating completely separate environments, the stage could gradually transform into different memories, such as the classroom, bedroom, and hospital.

For example, the bedroom mirror could briefly transform into a hospital examination room, allowing the doctor's words to appear as a fragment of memory rather than a separate scene.

I think this approach could make the transitions feel more natural and dreamlike. It also allows the environment itself to reflect the protagonist's emotional state.

Through this process, I started thinking about VR storytelling less as a sequence of scenes and more as a continuous experience shaped by memory, space, and emotion.

English

After revising the narrative structure, I began thinking more carefully about how to use VR to tell the story, rather than simply presenting it as a short film.

One of the main ideas is to let players experience the story from the protagonist's first-person perspective. During the childhood scenes, players see the world through the young girl's eyes, while the environment changes according to her emotions.

For example, when her classmates question her appearance, their faces could gradually become larger and move closer. Their voices could also overlap and come from different directions, creating a feeling of being surrounded and watched.

I also explored several simple interactions that could connect the player's physical actions with the protagonist's emotions. Players might raise their hand during the host audition, examine their reflection in a mirror, adjust their collar to hide their neck, or hold a microphone on stage.

Later in the story, when another girl is being mocked, the player could choose to step towards her. I wanted this small physical movement to represent an important emotional decision: choosing to support someone instead of hiding.

Another important idea is the change of perspective at the end. The player returns to the childhood stage, but this time experiences it from the adult protagonist's point of view. Instead of being the frightened girl under the spotlight, they become someone watching her with understanding.

I think this change of perspective could be one of the most meaningful parts of the VR experience. It allows the same memory to be experienced in two different ways.

Through these ideas, I hope to use interaction, spatial sound, and environmental changes to communicate emotions that might be difficult to express through dialogue alone.



Reflection and Next Steps

This week, my main focus was developing the narrative structure and exploring how the story could become a more immersive VR experience.

One of the biggest challenges was finding a balance between my personal memories and fictional storytelling. I wanted to keep the emotional honesty of the original experience, while creating stronger conflicts and a clearer reason for the protagonist's emotional change.

Through this process, I realised that a meaningful story does not always need a dramatic ending. For me, the most important moment is not when the protagonist completely overcomes her insecurity, but when she makes the decision to respond differently, even though she is still afraid.

I also learned that designing a story for VR requires a different approach from writing a traditional film script. The player's position, physical actions, and relationship with the surrounding environment can all become part of the storytelling.

Simplifying the narrative from seven scenes to five also helped me think more carefully about pacing. Instead of including as many events as possible, I want to give players enough time to experience the important emotional moments.

For the next stage, I plan to develop a storyboard to explore the player's perspective, movement, and interactions in each scene. I also want to experiment with how the central stage can transform into different memory spaces.

Another important step will be reviewing the timing of the experience and deciding which interactions are necessary to support the narrative.

Overall, this week helped me move from writing a personal story towards designing an experience that allows others to understand and feel its emotions through VR.