

# Developing Fictional Characters in Picture Stories: A Lesson on Minangkabau Customs for the Alpha Generation

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**How to cite:** Fitri, D., & Sahrul, S. (2025). Developing Fictional Characters in Picture Stories: A Lesson on Minangkabau Customs for the Alpha Generation . *Gorga : Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 14 (1), 43-50 . <https://dx.doi.org/10.24114/gr.v14i1.64499>

**Article History :** Received: January 13, 2024. Revised: February 21, 2025. Accepted: June 30, 2025

## ABSTRACT

Cultivating respect and appreciation among others is paramount in interpersonal interactions, thereby establishing an ethical foundation for effective communication. The Alpha generation, known for its challenging social nature, can benefit from learning Minangkabau customs and etiquette as a means of developing effective communication and social skills. This design aims to educate children about Minangkabau cultural norms through the design of character designs tailored for the Alpha generation, specifically children aged 7-10 years, who are in the third grade of elementary school. The design is presented in a fictional form as a communication medium. The research methodology employed includes the glass box method and the 5w + 1H analysis method, which are recommended to enhance the design's effectiveness. Data was gathered through observations of children's interactions and their display of polite behavior towards both peers and older individuals. These observations served as the inspiration for this design. The resulting design presents a learning media platform that features visually appealing character designs. The ultimate goal of this design is to create a character story that embodies Minangkabau manners, serving as a fictional narrative for Alpha generation children. This character design will later be used to represent the broader identity of Minangkabau, which will be further developed into a picture storybook for the next stage of the project.

## KEYWORDS

Manners, Minangkabau, Alpha Generation, Fictional, Characters.

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## INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a habit according to the rules and ethics in a region, politeness is applied in everyday life (Sarila et al., 2023), such as politeness in the environment, politeness in communication, and politeness in greeting with those around. This is important to note in carrying out socialization in order to create good relationships. The rules in politeness in communication by (Utari et al., 2020) state that communication ethics are related to the learning process in society. The use of politeness in speaking frankly and certain small talk becomes an interaction between individuals and their environment (Alpetoti & Fakihi, 2022). The main goal of creating good communication is expected so that individuals can recognize good speech and can be implemented in everyday life (Meiratnasari & Wijayanto, 2019). Efforts are made to create a sense of respect and mutual respect between each other. Because children need to learn how to communicate well in socializing with their surroundings.

In Minangkabau, the reference for politeness in maintaining norms of politeness in everyday language is kato nan ampek (Alpetoti & Fakihi, 2022). Kato nan ampek consists of kato mandaki, kato manurun, kato malereng, and kato mandata (Navis, 2006). Kato nan ampek has a close

relationship with socio-cultural factors of society and the rules that bind the Minangkabau people, positioning people based on language according to their capacity is a form of appreciation that creates harmony in social relations between language speakers and conversation partners (Srisaparmi & Fitrisia, 2024).

The application of Kato Nan Ampek can serve as a foundation for building social relationships, fostering a strong individual character among the next generation. This is achieved through an understanding of cultural values that shape children's attitudes and behaviors. Character formation extends beyond mere environmental influences, habits, and reading materials. (Heristian et al., 2022). Based on the moral character at the age of the alpha generation as the next successor, the first step in forming character strengths is honesty, integrity, caring and compassion, gratitude, and the courage to take the initiative. In this case, providing an understanding of culture is a must, in order to maintain the surrounding culture and customs (Development, 2021). The application of implementing speech using kato nan ampek has a good impact on the Minangkabau environment. The accompaniment of local culture and customs with child development is an action in the child's daily life.

The design of the kato nan ampek character reviewed from several designs with different themes has been done by Budi Darmo with the title *Designing a Children's Book: Tommy & Darkness to Overcome Fear of Shadows (Ages 6-12)* designing a book by creating a character design as a character in a picture story later, which contains children's emotional expressions (Darmo et al., 2024), while the designer takes the principle of using character design that explores emotions in every moment that is adjusted to the theme of politeness in everyday life according to the customs that will later be applied to the picture story book. The design by Putri and colleagues with the title of designing a game concept art as a learning medium in kato nan ampek, a character design in the form of a character in a game designed for education for teenagers about one of the manners in Minangkabau, namely kato nan ampek, (E. A. Putri et al., 2023). While the design of the picture story book designs characters for children aged 7-10 years at the Elementary School level as characters from the Minangkabau politeness picture book. Another design by Kharismanata in 2024 created a mascot as a medium for introducing wayang as a preservation, to represent an identity or culture through a medium in the form of characters, while the designer introduced the Minangkabau cultural identity through characters in illustrated story books. The design by Rino Yuda created a mascot for Isbi Aceh as a visual representation of Aceh, while the character that the designer will work on also represents the visual form of Miangkabau which is realized in illustrated story books (Yuda et al., 2022).

The primary objective of Minangkabau culture-based education is to introduce and apply customary values and traditions to the children of Generation Alpha. This is achieved through the design of engaging and educational fictional character designs, utilizing visual communication as a medium. These characters are meticulously crafted to incorporate typical Minangkabau cultural elements, such as the incorporation of traditional attire and cultural values into the integration of characters with moral principles. Through interactive or visual narratives presented in the form of characters, this design aims to foster a deep understanding and appreciation of local cultural heritage among children. It is anticipated that this design will prove beneficial in the future, enabling children to acquire knowledge and comprehension in an enjoyable and age-appropriate manner, while simultaneously cultivating a profound love for their cultural heritage.

Thus, the character design adjustment is adjusted to the Minangkabau culture, so the character is designed for elementary school children. Character design is a form of effort to form an identity that represents an object as a whole. Forming a visual impression that can be produced through a medium in the form of creating a character design (Kharismanata et al., 2024). This creation aims to represent an identity or culture through a medium as a character in an illustrated story book that discusses manners in Minangkabau, specifically targeting the city of Padang Panjang.

## METHOD

The method used is the glass box method, where this method is a rational thinking method that is objective and systematic. There are four stages, the preparation stage, incubation, illumination, and verification. Conducting observations for information needs with the processing stage produces

a rough sketch, so as to find the flow in the next process with some additional input. The design stage discusses the understanding of children aged 7-10 years, regarding kato nan ampek politeness in Minangkabau, at a time when there was an expansion of external influence and minimal special treatment for learning about kato nan ampek available in the city of Padang Panjang. Therefore, efforts are made to optimize how to convey an understanding that is easy for children to understand. The analysis method used is 5W + 1H.

The analysis method used in this design is the 5W+1H analysis, to solve problems and generate ideas in solving problems and determining the target audience. (1) What (What) is the problem that occurs? Lack of understanding of children regarding politeness and kato nan ampek which are easily understood by children, (2) Who (Who) experiences this problem? The problem by children in West Sumatra, the Alpha generation born in 2010 to the present, is more focused on the age range of 7-9 years, precisely grade 3 of Elementary School, (3) When (When) the problem occurs? It occurs when the culture has begun to be influenced by children towards outside culture and the influence of technology so that the Minangkabau culture fades, as well as minimal introduction to culture and customs, (4) Where (Where) the problem occurs? It occurs generally in West Sumatra, especially in Padang Panjang City, (5) Why (Why) does this problem occur? Lack of introduction and understanding of interesting and easily understood information by children, (6) How (How) to overcome this problem? Presented in digital illustrated story book media, attractive illustrations, entertaining displays make children better understand what is conveyed by recording information concisely.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Design Concept

The outcomes of this design present illustrated story characters that emphasize the principles of politeness within Minangkabau culture. Notably, this fictional character is specifically crafted to captivate the attention of children belonging to the Alpha generation. The character design with a modern design but still integrates elements typical of Minangkabau culture, such as traditional clothing and traditional symbols. The characters and stories presented not only convey moral messages about politeness, but also build emotional connections and children's love for local culture. This character design is planned to be applied in an illustrated story book, which will be an educational medium. This book will be worked on in the next stage with an attractive visual approach, easy-to-understand narrative, and interactive elements to increase the involvement of alpha generation readers. Through illustrated story books, it will help children understand the meaning of caring for each other, with the delivery of easy-to-understand meanings which are one of the polite attitudes that are related to everyday life (Sari & Wardani, 2021), therefore the creation of characters is designed to convey the story well. Character design is a form of effort to form an identity that represents one object as a whole. Forming a visual impression that can be produced through a medium in the form of character design creation. This creation aims to represent an identity or culture through a medium in the form of characters.

The results of the character names that will be created for the design of Minangkabau polite characters, are based on the use of local names both in terms of pronunciation and the uniqueness of the name from Minangkabau. The characters designed are of two types, the first type is a girl named Upiak with characteristics, soft, funny, full of spirit. The second character design is a boy named Buyuang. Buyuang has characteristics, wise, diligent, and polite. The designation of Buyuang and Upiak uses the Minangkabau language which is usually familiar and called by parents in Minangkabau as a favorite child.

Based on the results of observations made, from the alpha generation, children prefer characters with lots of expressiveness and humor. The design that is intrinsically linked to the values of Minangkabau cultural politeness exhibits the characteristics of character visualization, characterized by traditional clothing, friendly expressions, and the children's fondness for cartoon characters in the form of anime. This fusion of culture with anime style represents a unique and distinctive cultural phenomenon.. Thus, it can create a desire for children to conduct further reviews in the character later.

## 2. Creative Concept

The design is in the form of a Minangkabau cultural design, starting with conducting observations that are adjusted to the target, by carrying out the initial stages of the process by working on creating a typical Minangkabau character by combining typical elements so as to provide an indirect cultural sign in its development.

The design of a boy's character is designed for ages 7-10 years. The boy's character is named "buyuang", which is a nickname for children in Minangkabau. The character design will be adjusted to the target audience, namely the alpha generation children. The character design is illustrated with several forms of body poses, which will later reflect the image of the Minangkabau polite picture story book. In designing the character and the story, it is adapted to be more modern and considers several aspects, such as simplifying the clothing elements on the character to be simpler and easier to remember by the target audience (R. C. Putri & Irfansyah, 2024).

## 3. Boy Character Design (Buyuang)

The characteristics of the visual form of buyuang have a round face shape, slightly large eyes and a polite smile that gives a friendly and wise impression. In addition to the design of the face of buyuang, the character wears everyday clothes according to Minangkabau customs that have been adjusted to the theme that will be worked on. The basis for the design of the clothes used from the buyuang character is the penghulu clothes, the penghulu clothes consist of saluak, black clothes, clothing, belt, black keris pants, loose shirt neck, and sandals. Based on the elements that have been described, the character design will be adjusted to the era and comfort of the child who will be used in everyday life. The design of clothes will adopt several elements such as clothes, pants, saluak, sandals, and belts so that they still give a Minangkabau impression.

The use of color in characters is inseparable from the Minangkabau element, namely the basic color of marawa. The color of marawa has the meaning of life and nature in Minangkabau, marawa consists of three colors, namely black, yellow and red. Yellow symbolizes majesty, and the power of this color is identical to the luhak of flat land. Red as a symbol of courage and fighting spirit, is known as the typical color of luhak agam. The black color symbolizes resilience and simplicity representing the diligent and persistent nature of the Minangkabau people.

Based on this marawa color, the designer developed and adjusted the coloring in the application of the buyuang character. Therefore, the use of characters tends to be reddish black and a little dark. The use of color is influenced by the meaning and adjustment for the alpha generation, several color tones are used that lead to the marawa color. Thus, it does not eliminate the distinctive color, besides this choice can also be attractive to children of the alpha generation.

## 4. Girl Character Design (Upiak)

The second character design is a girl, designed with an age of 7-10 years, the same as the buyuang character. The girl character is named "Upiak", which is a nickname for girls in Minangkabau. The character design will be adjusted to the target audience, namely the alpha generation children. The character design is illustrated with several forms of body poses, poses showing a funny attitude implicitly from the character of Upiak which will later reflect the image of the Minangkabau polite picture story book. The characteristics of the visual form of Upiak have a round face shape, slightly large eyes giving a cute impression, and a friendly smile giving a cute and adorable impression and a little careless. The character of Upiak is made a little careless in order to provide a more interesting plot in the story later.

In addition to the design of the face of the upiak, the character uses bundo kundang clothing as a guide, adjusted to everyday life according to Minangkabau customs with the theme that has been taken. Bundo kundang clothing consists of tinkuluak, kaluang, salendang, galang gadang, baju kurung, balapak cloth, sandals and small bracelets. Based on the elements that have been described, the character design will be adjusted to the era and comfort of the child who will be used in everyday life. The design of clothing will adopt several elements such as clothes, pants, saluak, sandals, and belts so that it still gives the impression of Minangkabau.



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Based on this marawa color, the designer developed and adjusted the coloring in the application of the Upiak character. Therefore, the use of characters tends to be reddish yellow which is identical to the color of the bundo kanduang. The use of color is influenced by the meaning and adjustment for the alpha generation, several color tones are used that lead to the marawa color. Thus, it does not eliminate the distinctive color, besides this choice can also be attractive to children of the alpha generation.

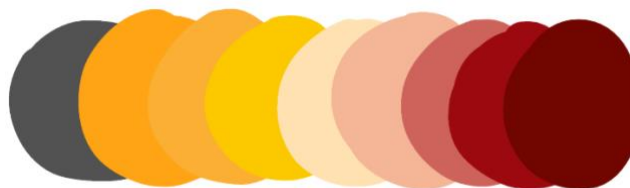
## 5. Message Concept (Color)



**Figure 1.** The Color of Marawa in Minangkabau

Color is something that is closely related to the delivery of expressions of feelings that can affect the atmosphere (Zahra & Mansoor, 2024). The colors used are the colors of marawa. Marawa is the great flag of Minangkabau in Minangkabau customs. Not just a pennant, but has its own meaning and significance for the Minangkabau people. Marawa is a term given to flags, symbols, or pennants that represent the Minangkabau people, nature and culture. Marawa comes from the word Marwah which means honor or glory. Upholding marawa means a symbol of upholding glory or honor for those who have dignity. Marawa and its colors come from the Tambo Alam Minangkabau and have been used since the Pagaruyung Kingdom in the 14th century AD. Marawa consists of two types of color combinations: First, a combination of four colors, namely; black, yellow, red and white, called Marawa Kebesar Adat Minangkabau. Second, three colors, namely; black, yellow and red, called Marawa Kebesar Alam Minangkabau (Yangsén, 2023).

**The yellow** color in representing the nature of Minangkabau symbolizes clear water, tame fish, and cool earth. This understanding is reflected in the reflection of the Tanah Datar Luhak nan Tuo district, which is said to be the area of origin of the Minang people, precisely from Nagari Pariangan. The red color in the symbol of the greatness of Minang nature is interpreted as (relatively) murky water, fierce (or agile) fish, and warm (hot) temperature and soil. **This red** color is reflected in Luhak Agam, which is the second oldest area in Minangkabau history. This Luhak is called Lunak nan Tengah because it is younger than Luhak Tana Data but older than Luhak Limopuluah Koto. Luhak Agam's area is quite large. **Black** is a color similar to charcoal, namely thick and dark. At the connotation level, the natural beauty of Minangkabau is represented through the color black, which symbolizes the fertility of the land (the water is sweet), its great fishery potential (there are many fish), and has a relatively stable temperature, not too cold and not too hot. This meaning is reflected in Luhak Limopuluah Koto or Luhak nan Bunsu, which is the youngest luhak among Luhak nan Tigo.



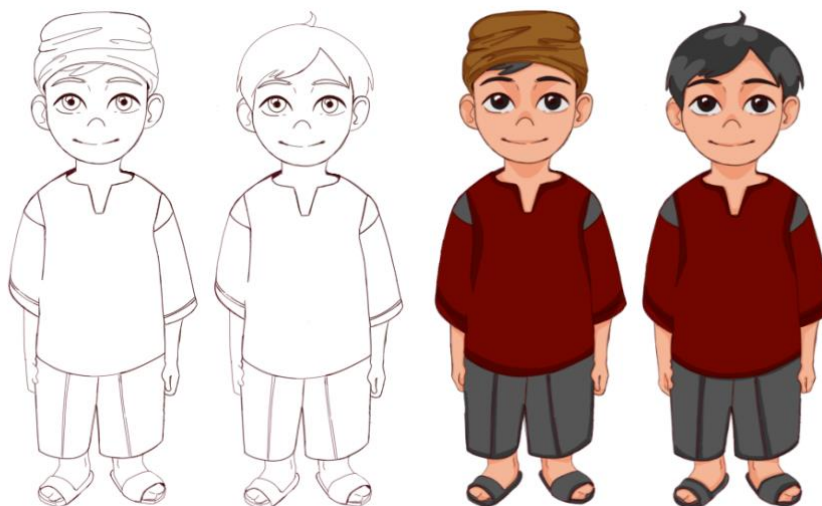
**Figure 2.** Character Color Palette

The colors used are the basis of the marawa color developed according to the nuances of the alpha generation children, the colors taken are predominantly bright, because bright colors have a lot of light pigments so that they give a cheerful impression. The use of colors for male characters named buyuang and upiak using pastel colors creates a cheerful and imaginative atmosphere. These pastel colors also affect the comfort of vision and are easy for children to remember.

Line.

Lines are one of the most important elements in an image. The use of lines in an image can give a unique impression in an image. Lines greatly determine the nuance in creating an image, such as curved lines, lurus lines, zigzag lines and diagonals. Curved lines will create a soft and friendly impression, so they tend to have a feminine impression. Lines can convey emotional expressions through visuals, which have a beautiful content that can be used as an expression of the work (Okativiani, 2023). Curved lines are usually used to show a good impression with the target of women, children, who need affection and tenderness in every stroke of the image. So in this design, the designer uses lines with soft elements containing curved elements in the development of the characters of buyuang and upiak. The main reason is because the target in character design is specifically for alpha generation children, so it must have soft elements and a comfortable nuance.

## 6. Character design draft results



**Figure 3.** Buyuang Character Sketch and Coloring



**Figure 4.** Upiak Character Sketching and Coloring

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the design that has been done in building fictional characters through illustrated stories about learning about Minangkabau customs for the alpha generation using the glass box method, is the development of modern western modern design thinking with a design process that is carried out in a planned manner consisting of four stages. The first stage of preparation, preparation is carried out by compiling problems and backgrounds regarding the character. The second stage of the incubation stage is the stage of thinking in finding ideas, then continued with the third stage, namely the illumination of the sorting of ideas that will be taken until the process of making rough sketches, the final result is verification of the work done. introducing characters to children aged 7-10 years. This character shows the entity of Minangkabau culture through a combination of typical Minangkabau elements. Such as the use of traditional clothes that have been adapted to the present era, and still show the characteristics of the Minangkabau tribe. This method helps produce a problem solver, such as that used in the development of character design with upiak and buyuang in the Minangkabau politeness picture story book. By developing character design using in a picture story book, it makes the flow of explanation in the storyline more helpful. With the depiction of characters according to the target of the alpha generation. In this stage, the picture book aims to produce characters in effective picture story books and can convey messages to children in an interesting and relevant way to everyday life according to Minangkabau culture. To ensure success, it is recommended to conduct in-depth research on the audience regarding interests, as well as problems faced in Understanding Minangkabau polite picture story books. Character design includes iconic elements in Minangkabau in illustrations, which are visually appealing can increase involvement and understanding in discussing Minangkabau polite books through the characters that have been created. Through these strategies, it is hoped that the characters can play a good role in overcoming children's understanding of politeness in Minangkabau. So this design is expected to help children recognize culture and politeness in Minangkabau.

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