

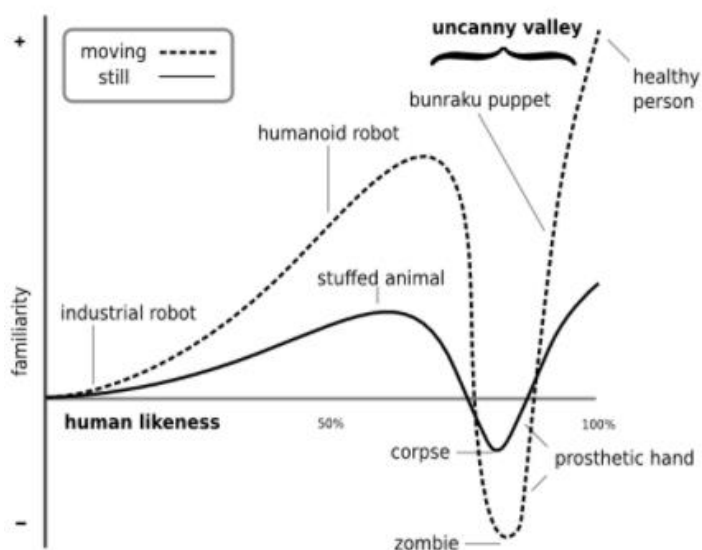
The Uncanny Valley

Teacher Notes

Background

In the Star Wars world, we are introduced to lots of different droids. A droid is a robot which has some form of artificial intelligence. The word comes from “android”, a word which describes robots designed to look and act like a human.

Most of the droids in Star Wars have features we recognise as human-like, for example C3PO can talk, and BB-8 has lights we would liken to ‘eyes’. This means we feel connected to them and this connection increases the more human-like they become, up until a certain point. The uncanny valley, a psychological theory put forward by Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970, suggests that people are increasingly comfortable with robots the more human-like they look and act, but only up to a point. After this point, the robot becomes creepy, as if you are no longer looking at a human-like machine, but a person who is not quite ‘right’. If a robot looks and acts completely human and avoids this ‘creepiness’, humans will have a very positive reaction to them.



Based on an image by Masahiro Mori and Karl MacDorman at <http://www.androidscience.com/theuncannyvalley/proceedings2005/uncannyvall>

The activity sheets help students to think about the features of robots and how alike (or not) they are to humans.