

Phenotypic Plasticity

When Elina and Nori venture into the Depths of Despair to save Nalu, Elina's wings do not give her enough strength to propel herself through the water as effectively as Nori can with her tail. In order to swim against the strong current and help Nori, she had to trade her wings for a tail and undergo Morphological Remodeling.

Phenotypic plasticity is an organism's ability to change its physical traits (morphology), functions (physiology), or behaviors in response to environmental cues. This allows a single genotype to produce different phenotypes—observable traits that shift under varying environmental conditions. Much like a caterpillar mimicking a flower or a twig in response to internal or external signals (e.g., light, temperature, food quality, predator presence).

The source of these transformations varies based on the available biological resources and the immediacy of the environmental demand. Initially, Elina's metamorphosis is mediated by her necklace, acting as an external prosthetic cue that temporarily overrides her default morphology. However, her final transition is triggered by the True Self Berry, a biochemical catalyst that induces a permanent, internal shift in gene expression.

This demonstrates that phenotypic plasticity is not a singular event, but a flexible response system: whether through a temporary environmental signal or a profound metabolic ingestion, the organism reallocates its physical 'self' to match the constraints of its reality.

