

The Legend of Zelda belongs to the Action and Adventure genres.

Contra belongs to the Action genre.

Dragon Power belongs to the Action Adventure genre.

Kirby's Adventure belongs to the Platforming genre.

## Genre / Comparison Game Descriptions

Contra is a classic side-scrolling/3D NES Action game where 1 or 2 players go on an adventure as commandos to save the world from an alien invasion. In it you can jump, swim, crouch, fire your gun and find unique weapons all with the goal of defeating an evil organization bent on world domination!

Dragon Power is a top-down NES Action Adventure where the player goes on a quest as Goku to collect the Dragon Balls and unlock their legendary power. Along the way, the player battles numerous different enemies and unlocks new martial arts techniques to put the player in the shoes of one of the most beloved characters in all of fiction.

In Kirby's Adventure, an action-platform game, Kirby is able to eat enemies in front directly and get their ability. This eating mechanism is so OP that it needs to be limited, allowing the player to perform meaningful decisions. In addition to the distance and directional constraints, the most impactful design is that Kirby will lose the special ability when he (Google: Kirby's gender) is hit by an enemy. The design enforces a path-dependent playing experience, as well as keeps an exciting environment by weighting more on every hit.

## Contrast: Contra - Action

The first big difference that can be noticed off the bat between The Legend of Zelda and Contra is how the adventures through the games are structured. Contra, originally made as an arcade

game, has more of an arcade style progression - the player goes through a side scrolling or 3D level with a set number of lives, all to reach the end of the stage where they have to complete some objective or fight a boss, and after succeeding at that they move on to the next stage. In this sense, Contra feels much more rigid than Zelda, which plays much more like an open world game. In Zelda, the player can go in whatever direction they would like to from the start of the game, and the game is so much less guided that the player could even leave the starting area without picking up the first weapon, a sword, in which case they would have no way of defeating enemies at all. Both progressions have their pros and cons: in Contra, your objective is simple to understand, which is great for the medium it was initially played on but maybe takes away a bit from that adventuring feel. In Zelda, on the other hand, your immediate objectives are harder to interpret because of the lack of guidance, but the freedom you are given from the beginning makes the game play much more like an adventure.

Another difference comes in the two games' methods of gameplay. Contra, throughout its first level, is a side scroller while The Legend of Zelda is a top-down experience. This gives Contra an added dimension over Zelda, as platforming becomes an integral part of the game. Again, this plays into the medium that the game was initially created for. The platforming of Contra makes the game a challenging bullet hell, forcing the player to try again and again and feed more coins into the arcade machine they were playing on in order to complete the game. Zelda, created for the NES, has no such goal: the game is still difficult, but with a top down approach the game places more emphasis on exploration and adventure. Making the game top down gives the player at maximum 4 different directions they can choose to go in, while in a side scroller there is only ever 1 direction (usually, at least) the objective will ever be in. Again, like the first difference mentioned above, Zelda makes a choice that emphasizes adventure over the more action oriented Contra.

Contra and Zelda also differ in their mechanics of weapon acquisition and usage. In Contra, new weapons are like power ups: the player only ever has one type of weapon at a time, and they

acquire different ones through power-up boxes. In Zelda, however, the player can acquire new weapons in certain locations throughout their adventure which they then keep for the rest of the game. Contra's method of dealing with its weapons makes the gameplay experience different for a short amount of time, as the player has to adjust their style of play according to the gun they've picked up on the fly. Zelda's method instead gives the player a toolbox of weapons to use over the course of the game, making combat more methodical and strategic than the high pace, high action combat of Contra.

## Contrast: Dragon Power - Action Adventure

An instant and noticeable difference between Zelda and Dragon Power is how the two games progress their stories. In Dragon Power, the game begins with dialogue between Goku and a female character, who through their interaction the player learns they have to save. Instantly, the player is given a clear direction and objective by the game. In Zelda, the player is given no information or dialogue to start the game, and is left somewhat directionless. Though these two games are quite similar on the surface (both are top down action adventure games) this point instantly feels like a lot of the comparisons made earlier between Contra and Zelda. Dragon Power, though it is top down like Zelda, is actually very linear in its progression, and dialogue scenes like the one mentioned above gives the player objective after objective to complete, making the game place more emphasis on the action between the objectives. Zelda, on the other hand, is not as linear at first glance which makes it, again, feel more like an adventure than Dragon Power.

Another difference comes in the difference of player control mechanics in the two games. In Dragon Power, that player character is a martial artist, and to go along with the natural athleticism of that kind of character, the player can jump. In Zelda, however, the player doesn't have the ability to jump. These gameplay choices add to the specific characteristics of the main characters and overall

gameplay objectives of the entirety of both games. With Dragon Power, the player has to be acrobatic and dextrous to succeed in combat, and the jump helps them do that, but in Zelda the emphasis is placed more on using the weapons you have the right way in order to complete combats, making Dragon Power more straight action in its combat while Zelda is more puzzle/strategy-esque.

Dragon Power and Zelda also differ in the abilities of their enemies. In Dragon Power, through playing the first stage a couple of times, the enemies are much more frustrating than those of Zelda. It's not clear what the best way to beat some of them is, and with some tankier enemies it feels the best way to fight them is just to spam the punch button. This very clearly takes away from the experience of being a slippery martial artist, somewhat undermining what I feel was the goal for the gameplay of Dragon Power. With Zelda enemies, all of them have clear traits with some also having patterns to how they move or appear, allowing the player to have a clearer picture of how to beat them. This difference in choices makes dealing with Zelda enemies hugely less frustrating than dealing with Dragon Power enemies, in turn making the gameplay experience simply much more enjoyable.

## Contrast: Kirby's Adventure - Action - Platformer

In Kirby's Adventure, Kirby's movement has some (won't call it strong) momentum, and it is not grid-adjusted, whereas in TLoZ, Link's movement has no momentum and is grid-adjusted. There are different reasons respectively. Practically speaking, for the grid movement, Kirby's Adventure is a Platformer game, Kirby moves in a less restricted area and will not face the problem in TLoZ where Link is hard to align with the grid of the map. Someone may argue that even with the grid adjustment, it is still able to add momentum to Link. And that's absolutely true. I propose my assumption for this difference to be the balancing of the game. In TLoZ, most enemies are with health of more than one hit. Meanwhile, Kirby can defeat or eat any non-Boss enemy by one shot. From the movement and

momentum's perspective, the player is doing a trade off (bet): If Kirby is not close enough to the enemy, his attack cannot hit the enemy, but if he gets so close to the enemy, then Kirby gets hurt and loses the ability. The lack of momentum will destroy this trade off mechanism: the game will simply be too easy when Kirby can turn around immediately to attack or avoid the enemy .

Let's talk about weapon / attack / fight design here. There are two things very noticeable to me.

1. Kirby will lose his ability everytime he gets attacked, but Link is for sure going to keep his sword and bow. The similarity is that at maximum health, Link's sword can be thrown out, so technically Link loses his ability as well when he is hitted.
2. Kirby's basic attack has some lags, where Link's basic attack is immediate.

First thing first, as mentioned in the previous part, this is the art of balancing the ability in game. But more-over, this enforces a path-dependent gameplay experience. Unlike TLoZ, where the weapon is quite fixed, the fact that Kirby can lose and gain weapon / ability quite often makes the fight versatile, and even playing in the exact scene, the experience can be quite different. It also inspires the player to try different things out, understand, and choose the best weapon for defeating the boss. The playing while learning experience is exceptional in Kirby's Adventure.

For the attack lags, my understanding is that Kirby's Adventure pushes the player (although not formally) like passively to use abilities. The basic way of attack is either swallow air and attack, or swallow the enemy in, but since they are laggy, it's not always (always not :) ) the best choice. And in addition, the swallow lag makes it not so easy for Kirby to get abilities / swallow bullets from bosses, making the game more engaging. (In comparison, in TLoZ, we better just use the sword and bow.)

Finally, I would like to talk about the structure and aesthetic differences:

1. TLoZ structures as an open world like adventure game. Whereas Kirby's adventure is somehow a hub world game where we get entrances to each smaller game world.

2. TLoZ's theme is dark and dangerous, Kirby's Adventure looks more cartoon / adorable / vibrant/ innocent instead.

Kirby's structure separates different slices of the game (linearly), so that every time Kirby runs out of health, we simply start again from the exact small slice. And even in the same slice, the experience can vary vastly if the player chooses a different ability. This ensures a more relaxed experience than TLoZ, in which the player might get lost in the open world.

The artistic style and world settings match perfectly in two games. In TLoZ, the player knows that "the world is dangerous" at the very first part when we get the sword, and the world, the enemies, indeed looks dark and cold. In comparison, in Kirby's Adventure, everything is very cute. The rounded shape, pink body, and swallowing animation of Kirby is innocent. The addition of claw machines and museums in between fights are relaxing. And the overall vibrant color theme is refreshing. It matches with the fighting setting in that it is not meant to be a really hard game.