

= Children of Mana =

Children of Mana , originally released in Japan as Seiken Densetsu DS : Children of Mana , is a 2006 action role @-@ playing game for the Nintendo DS handheld console . It was developed by Square Enix and Nex Entertainment , and published by Square Enix and Nintendo . It is the sixth game of the Mana series ? following 2003 's Sword of Mana ? and the first entry in the World of Mana subseries . Set in a high fantasy universe , Children of Mana follows one of four young heroes as they combat an invasion of monsters and learn about the cataclysmic event that killed their families .

While it reprises the action role @-@ playing elements of previous Mana games , such as real @-@ time battle sequences , Children of Mana features an increased focus on user @-@ friendliness . Unlike earlier Mana titles , Children is a heavily action @-@ oriented dungeon crawler , in which the player progresses by completing randomly generated levels . Both the main plot and side @-@ quests require the player to fight through dungeons and defeat boss monsters before returning to the central Mana Village . Like many of its predecessors , the game features a local cooperative multiplayer component .

Children of Mana was designed by series creator Koichi Ishii , directed by Yoshiki Ito , and produced by Takashi Orikata and Katsuji Aoyama . The game was a moderate commercial success : it sold 100 @,@ 000 copies in its first week of release , and over 280 @,@ 000 copies in Japan by the end of 2006 . While critics praised the graphics and music as beautiful and unique , they found the combat simplistic and repetitive , and the story insubstantial .

= = Gameplay = =

Like previous games in the Mana series , Children of Mana features a top @-@ down perspective , in which the player characters navigate the terrain and fight off hostile creatures . The player controls a main character , chosen from one of four options . Each of the characters have different ratings from one to five in four areas : the damage they do with magic , the speed that they can attack , and the amount of health and mana they have . The game plays out nearly identically regardless of which character is chosen , except for a few quests specific to each character . Unlike previous games in the series , the main character typically has no companions during the game ; however , a cooperative multiplayer option is present for up to four players , who all appear on each players ' screens . This multiplayer mode is only present with local WiFi , and progress is only saved on the host player 's game .

Unlike previous games in the series , which were more typical action role @-@ playing games , Children of Mana is a dungeon crawler , and the majority of the gameplay takes place in selected locations rather than on an open world map . The player selects these areas on the world map to reach them . The primary objective in each location is to clear the dungeon of monsters . Each dungeon is divided into different randomly generated floors , and to progress between each zone , the player must find an item called a Gleamdrop , then carry it to a pillar of light called a Gleamwell . The player must repeat this process on each floor of the dungeon until the last floor is reached , where a boss monster lies . The player can not return to previous floors unless they die or leave the dungeon ; upon returning , they start the dungeon over at the beginning . When not clearing dungeons , the player stays in the Mana Village , which contains shops to purchase equipment . Dungeons can be returned to later by accepting quests from townsfolk in the Dudbear shop . During these quests , the dungeon itself is slightly altered : the player 's starting position may be different , the number of floors can change , and the monsters and boss monster contained may change . Like the main quests , Dudbear quests involve clearing the dungeon of monsters , sometimes to acquire an item from the end of the dungeon .

The game retains the real @-@ time battle mechanics of previous games in the Mana series . The game sports four weapons with their own unique abilities : sword , flail , bow and arrow , and hammer . The player can have two weapons ready to attack with at a time , and any of the four character options can use any weapon . The player can change which weapons they have available

at any time . Each weapon has standard normal attacks , special attacks , and fury attacks . The fury attacks are the strongest and require a full Fury Gauge to use , which is filled by striking enemies with standard attacks and taking damage from enemies . Different weapons can have different effects on the environment , such as the hammer 's ability to smash pots . In addition to weapons , the player can select from one of eight Elementals , which provide different magical attacks and magical enhancements to weapon attacks . The player can switch between Elementals in the Mana Village . Elemental attacks can be made stronger by equipping Gems , which can also boost the player 's attributes .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Children of Mana takes place in the world of Fa 'diel , split into the five continents of Jadd , Topple , Wendell , Ishe , and Lorimar , as well as the island of Illusia . At the center of that island , the beginning point of the game , stands the Tree of Mana . Several years ago , an event known the " great disaster " took place at the base of the Mana Tree and many lives were lost . During this event , a brave young boy and girl used the Sword of Mana to save the world from disaster . Now , one of a group of orphans sets out to investigate the details of the event that killed their families .

The four main characters of Children of Mana are Ferrik , Tamber , Poppen , and Wanderer . They all live together in the Mana Village , near the Mana Tree . Ferrik is a fifteen @-@ year @-@ old boy who is said to be brave , bright and cheerful . He lost his parents and sister in the great disaster . After his life was saved by a knight , he has been honing his skills with the sword . Tamber is a sixteen @-@ year @-@ old girl , with a sense of truth and justice , and an air of maturity about her . She lost her parents and little brother due to the great disaster . Tamber 's weapon of choice is the bow . Poppen is a nine @-@ year @-@ old boy , who is stubborn and fearless . He lost his mother at birth and his father in the great disaster . Poppen 's weapon of choice is the flail . Wanderer is a traveling merchant , a tradition kept throughout the series . He is a member of the Niccolo tribe of rabbit / cat people who lost his family due to the king of Lorimar during the great disaster . Wanderer 's weapon of choice is the hammer .

= = = Story = = =

One day , following a flash of light , the stone at the base of the Mana Tree cracks , distorting time and space . The hero recalls that their friend Tess , who is a priestess , went to the Mana Tower to pray , and goes to find her . After reaching the tower with an Elemental in tow , the hero finds the tower is infested with monsters . Upon fighting their way to the top of the tower , the hero finds Tess , frightened but unharmed . Suddenly , a giant flaming bird descends upon the two . The hero attempts to fight it , but finds that the bird is protected by a barrier . A sword then falls from the sky , causing the bird 's shield to fade away and allowing the hero to slay the beast . When the bird is defeated , a mysterious man garbed in black appears and attempts to take the Holy Sword , which is still stuck in the ground , but is prevented by the appearance of a barrier when he tries . The man disappears , and the hero attempts to grab the sword . No barrier appears to prevent them , and they take what turns out to be the fabled Sword of Mana .

Upon returning from the Mana Tower , the hero discovers that three mysterious pillars of light have struck in the lands of Topple , Jadd , and Lorimar . After being asked by the leaders of the village , the hero investigates these places and finds dungeons full of monsters with a huge monster at the end . After these three tasks are completed , the mysterious man appears once again , identifying himself as the Mana Lord . He steals the Sword of Mana and causes a large storm in the land of Wendel . The hero journeys there to stop the Mana Storm by confronting the Mana Lord . When the Mana Lord is about to kill the hero , a group of gems appear around the hero to prevent his attack . The Mana Lord then decides to kidnap Tess and vanishes .

After returning to the Mana Village , the hero heads for the Path of Life under the roots of the Mana Tree . At the end of the Path , the hero finds the Mana Lord waiting , and the two fight . Upon his defeat , the Mana Lord reveals that he was one of the two children of Mana who had saved the world during the great disaster , and rather than trying to hurt anyone , he was simply trying to fulfill the reason he was created : " to fill the world with the power of Mana . " He tells the hero that the other child of Mana is spreading disaster through the world and must be stopped . He proceeds to give the Sword of Mana to the hero , then commits suicide by throwing himself off a cliff . This shift in power causes a rift to open in the sky , where the second child of Mana is waiting . The hero destroys this second child , the Scion of Mana , restoring the world to peace .

In the aftermath , Tess and the Elementals are entrusted with care of Illusia , while everyone else must leave . Moti says that Illusia will be protected as a haven and that humans will not return for many more years . They embark to Jadd to start a new life in a new world .

= = Development = =

In 2003 , Square Enix began a drive to begin developing " polymorphic content " , a marketing and sales strategy to " [provide] well @-@ known properties on several platforms , allowing exposure of the products to as wide an audience as possible " . The first of these was the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII , and Square Enix intended to have campaigns for other series whereby multiple games in different genres would be developed simultaneously . Although no such project for the Mana series had been announced by this point , it was announced in late 2004 that an unnamed Mana game was in development for the upcoming Nintendo DS platform . In early 2005 , Square Enix announced a " World of Mana " project , the application of this " polymorphic content " idea to the Mana franchise , which would include several games across different genres and platforms . These games , as with the rest of the series , would not be direct sequels or prequels to one another , even if appearing so at first glance , but would instead share thematic connections . The first release in this project and the sixth release in the Mana series was announced in September 2005 as Children of Mana for the DS .

Children of Mana was developed by Nex Entertainment , who had previously created dungeon crawl games in the Shining series , in collaboration with Square Enix . It was designed by series creator Koichi Ishii , directed by Yoshiki Ito , and produced by Takashi Orikata and Katsuji Aoyama . The game features an opening cinematic by Production I.G. The game was planned from the start as a " fun @-@ for @-@ all action type game " taking advantage of the DS 's capabilities . Ishii was especially focused on creating a truly cooperative multiplayer game , which he had wanted to create since Secret of Mana (1993) , the second game in the series . Despite this , he chose not to utilize the DS 's Nintendo Wi @-@ Fi functionality in order to effect an experience in which players would interact with people in the near vicinity rather than remotely , in congruence with the local multiplayer found in Secret of Mana . He also designed the multiplayer to create a sense of chaotic excitement , such that players could interact without focusing on the difficulty or competing against each other . Several of the game 's design choices were meant to focus more on the action components , such as attacks sending enemies flying across the screen and the use of both the buttons and stylus to keep the controls simple and directly connected to the action . The randomly generated dungeon crawling mechanic was also a means toward this end . Although Ishii has said that the games in the series are only thematically connected , he has also asserted in an interview that Children is set ten years after the 2007 game Dawn of Mana , which depicts the events of the cataclysm .

= = = Music = = =

The score for Children of Mana was composed by Kenji Ito , Masaharu Iwata , and Takayuki Aihara . Ito had previously composed the music for the first game in the Mana series , Final Fantasy Adventure (1991) , as well as its 2003 remake Sword of Mana , which was the most recent game in the series prior to Children . This was the first soundtrack in the Mana series to feature work by Iwata and Aihara , though Iwata had previously worked for Square Enix on many other titles . The

music of the game covers a range of styles , including rock , jazz , and classical . Due to the limitations of the Nintendo DS hardware , Chris Greening of Square Enix Music Online said that not all of the synthesized instruments are " especially aesthetic or realistic " . The album *Seiken Densetsu DS : Children of Mana Original Soundtrack* collects 33 tracks from *Children of Mana* on two discs and is nearly an hour and a half in length . It was published by Square Enix on May 9 , 2006 , on the Japanese iTunes Store , but has not been released as a stand @-@ alone physical album .

= = Reception = =

Children of Mana sold almost 103 @,@ 000 units in its first three days in Japan ? between March 2 and March 5 ? which was considered below expectations and partially blamed on product shortages of the Nintendo DS . According to Enterbrain , by the end of 2006 *Children of Mana* had sold just over 281 @,@ 000 copies in Japan . It received mixed reviews from critics , with numerical scores that range from 58 to 90 out of 100 . The game 's presentation was praised , especially its graphics ; Greg Mueller of GameSpot said that " the saving grace of *Children of Mana* is the appealing visual style of the game . " Raymond Padilla of GamesRadar praised the " beautiful and unique art style " , and 1UP.com 's Jeremy Parish said that the graphics are " almost painfully cute " . IGN 's Mark Bozon and RPGFan 's Neal Chandran compared the game to a painting and a storybook . The music was also praised ; Bozon called it " pretty stunning " , Chandran called it " quite good " , and Mueller said it " fits the tone of the game very well " .

Critics such as Mueller were generally more negative about the gameplay , finding it repetitive . He claimed that there is " no break from the monotony of dungeon clearing " , while Rob Fahey of Eurogamer said the game is repetitive and uninspiring . GamePro concluded that " the downfall of *Children of Mana* is its repetitiveness , " and Chandran felt that most players would be sick of the gameplay before finishing half of the game . The reviewers from the Japanese *Sh?kan Famits?* magazine , while giving the game an especially high score , noted that the gameplay could be considered insufficient compared to prior titles in the series . Bozon , while giving the game a more positive review than many others , felt that the thinness of the gameplay was bolstered by the multiplayer component , saying that " the game 's entertainment value goes up in leaps and bounds during multiplayer " , a point with which Fahey agreed to a lesser extent .

In addition to the general dungeon @-@ clearing gameplay , the combat itself was criticized by reviewers like Padilla , who said that " the weapon use is the most disappointing facet of this game " . Both Fahey and Mueller felt that the combat , while initially fun , quickly became boring due to the simplicity . Chandran added that magic spells were too slow to be useful in combat , further reducing the complexity of the gameplay . Chandran and GamePro both criticized the " sparse and slow " story , while Fahey dismissed it as " a gossamer @-@ thin layer which tries and fails miserably to hold everything together " and nothing more than several role @-@ playing game clichés stuck together . Padilla concluded that while the game had several good elements , it ultimately failed to live up to its potential as a *Mana* game .