

= The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds =

The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds is an action @-@ adventure game developed and published by Nintendo for the Nintendo 3DS handheld game console . It is the seventeenth installment in The Legend of Zelda series and a successor to the 1991 Super Nintendo Entertainment System title The Legend of Zelda : A Link to the Past . Announced in April 2013 , A Link Between Worlds was released in Europe and North America in November 2013 . A month later , the game was released in Japan under the title The Legend of Zelda : Triforce of the Gods 2 (Japanese : ?????? ??????????2 , Hepburn : Zeruda no Densetsu : Kamigami no Toraif?su Ts?) .

Players assume the role of a young boy named Link , who is tasked with restoring peace to the kingdom of Hyrule , after a malevolent sorcerer named Yuga captures Princess Zelda and escapes through a rift to the ruined world of Lorule . Yuga seeks to kidnap the Seven Sages and use their power to resurrect the Demon King , Ganon . Link is granted with the ability to merge onto walls as a painting after obtaining a magical bracelet and encountering Yuga . This new ability allows Link to reach previously inaccessible areas and travel between Hyrule and Lorule .

Concept development for the game began with a small team in 2009 . During this phase , the unique gameplay mechanic of Link merging onto walls was prototyped . However , development suffered several setbacks with production of the game ceasing entirely in late 2010 , as core team members were reassigned to different projects . A year later , development restarted and after several failed pitches to series creator , Shigeru Miyamoto , the game entered full production in 2012 . Changing the established conventions of the series became a goal for the game 's designers ; this led to a change in the game 's structure , allowing players to tackle and clear the majority of dungeons in any order they choose , and the introduction of the item rental system .

Upon release , the game received critical acclaim and sold over 2 @.@ 5 million copies worldwide within five months of release . The game 's audio , dungeon and puzzle design , open structure , and level of difficulty were highly praised by critics . The introduction of new features such as the wall @-@ merging mechanics and item rental system were well received , with reviewers complimenting how well they integrated with the existing gameplay formula . The game also received multiple awards and nominations from video game and media publications .

= = Gameplay = =

The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds is an action @-@ adventure game presented in stereoscopic 3D polygonal graphics , with gameplay predominantly experienced from a top @-@ down perspective . Players control a young boy named Link , who embarks on an adventure to rescue the Seven Sages and defeat Yuga , the game 's primary antagonist . The game is set in two kingdoms ? Hyrule and Lorule ? both of which bear an open world structure and similar layout , but contrast in style and tone . A Link Between Worlds is seen as a successor to the 1991 Super Nintendo Entertainment System title The Legend of Zelda : A Link to the Past , and is similar in many aspects . The worlds of Hyrule and Lorule in A Link Between Worlds are analogous to A Link to the Past 's depiction of Hyrule and the Dark World . A number of items , enemies , and audio tracks featured in A Link to the Past return in A Link Between Worlds .

The top screen of the Nintendo 3DS displays hearts , an energy gauge , and an action icon . Link 's life energy decreases when he is hit by an enemy and can be replenished by collecting hearts that can be found in a variety of ways , such as defeating enemies or breaking pots . The energy gauge governs item and ability usage , it depletes on use and replenishes over time . The action icon notifies the player of interactive objects . A map of the kingdoms is displayed on the bottom screen of the Nintendo 3DS , showing Link 's current position and marked locations . The bottom screen is also used to view and select Link 's gear and items .

Friendly and enemy non @-@ player characters inhabit the two worlds . Friendly characters can provide Link with assistance or side @-@ quests to complete . Link wields a sword and shield , which can be used to defeat enemies and deflects their attacks . Other combat items from past Zelda games return , such as the bow , the fire rod , bombs , and more . However , unlike previous

games , the methods for obtaining and using these items is different . Rather than finding them in dungeons , they are rented or purchased from a merchant , named Ravio . Should Link fall in battle , his rented items will be returned to Ravio . They also do not require ammunition , instead their use is limited by the replenishing energy gauge . Link 's total life energy can be increased by collecting heart pieces . His weapons can be upgraded by completing a side quest that involves searching for small hidden creatures and returning them to their parent . Link can also participate in several minigames to earn rupees , Hyrule 's currency .

As with many previous The Legend of Zelda games , solving puzzles and clearing dungeons remains a fundamental part of the gameplay . Progression through A Link Between Worlds is more open @-@ ended than previous titles , with the possibility of tackling many of the game 's dungeons in any order . Certain dungeon obstacles will require the use of the rented or purchased items . Towards the end of each dungeon , Link will encounter a boss that must be defeated . A unique mechanic that the game introduces is Link 's ability to merge onto walls and move horizontally along them . Link is presented as a mural when he is merged on a wall , and upon merging , the game 's perspective shifts to a side view to follow Link around corners . While merged to a wall , Link 's energy gauge will deplete . The mechanic can be used for traversing the environment , reaching seemingly inaccessible areas , and avoiding hazards . It plays a key role in solving many of the game 's puzzles and dungeons . Wall merging is also used as a means for travelling between Hyrule and Lorule , via fissures that connect the two kingdoms .

The game makes use of the Nintendo 3DS ' Play Coin and StreetPass systems . Play Coins can be used to request a tip from Hint Ghosts that are located at points of interest . If another system that has played the game is passed by via StreetPass , a shadow version of their Link will appear somewhere on the field . Players can fight against these Links , which are AI @-@ controlled opponents based on their game 's data . Winning against Shadow Links earns a rupee bounty based on their difficulty , and achievements can be earned for fulfilling certain conditions . A more challenging Hero mode is unlocked upon completing the main adventure .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds takes place in a fictional fantasy setting . Within the series ' timeline , A Link Between Worlds falls between the events of The Legend of Zelda : Link 's Awakening and the original title , The Legend of Zelda . The game is set in the two kingdoms : Hyrule , a location used in many past Zelda games , and Lorule , a new kingdom that acts as dark twin to Hyrule . A legend of Hyrule tells of the events prior to A Link Between Worlds . Ganon sought to dominate the kingdom using the power of a sacred relic , the Triforce . However , he was defeated by a legendary hero and sealed away by the Seven Sages . The Triforce was divided into three , to prevent evil from rising again . One part stayed with the royal family , one part returned to Ganon , and the third part took its rightful place in the heart of the hero and his descendants . Lorule was once a kingdom that also possessed a Triforce . However , it was destroyed in an attempt to stop Lorule 's people fighting for its power . Without a Triforce , Lorule decayed and became a ruined land . In A Link Between Worlds , Hyrule is ruled by Princess Zelda , while Lorule is ruled by her counterpart , Hilda .

= = = Plot = = =

Link , who is the apprentice of a blacksmith , goes to deliver a sword to a captain at Hyrule Castle , only to encounter a mysterious figure named Yuga , who transforms a descendant of a Sage , Seres , into a painting . After being knocked out during the fight , Link is found by a merchant named Ravio , who gives him a bracelet in exchange for being allowed to stay in his home , and tells him to report what had happened to Princess Zelda . After going to Hyrule Castle , Zelda gives Link the Pendant

of Courage and instructs him to seek out the pendants of Power and Wisdom in order to gain the power of the Master Sword . Along the way , Link encounters Yuga again and is turned into a painting himself . However , thanks to Ravio 's bracelet , Link is protected from Yuga 's spell and gains the ability to merge with walls and move around as a painting . After finding the other pendants and obtaining the Master Sword , Link returns to Hyrule Castle where he witnesses Yuga transform Zelda into a painting . Link pursues Yuga through a dimensional crack , arriving in the twisted decaying kingdom of Lorule . There , Yuga uses Zelda and the descendants of the Seven Sages , who he had all trapped inside paintings , to revive Ganon and fuse with him , obtaining the Triforce of Power in the process . Just then , Link is assisted by Princess Hilda , the ruler of Lorule , who traps Yuga in magic bonds .

Hilda instructs Link to find and rescue the Seven Sages , who have been scattered across her kingdom , in order to gain the Triforce of Courage . With help from Ravio 's services , Link accomplishes this and returns to Lorule Castle , where he discovers Hilda taking the Triforce of Wisdom from Zelda . Hilda reveals that Lorule fell into ruin after her ancestors destroyed their own Triforce . Deciding that in order to restore her kingdom back to its former glory , she needs Hyrule 's Triforce , arranging everything so that Link would bring it to her . Hilda attempts to use Yuga to obtain the Triforce of Courage from Link , but Yuga betrays her and turns her into a painting , stealing the Triforce of Wisdom for himself . With Zelda 's help , Link manages to defeat Yuga . He then restores Zelda and Hilda from their paintings . As Hilda feels bitter over her loss , Ravio , who is revealed to be Link 's counterpart , convinces her that stealing Hyrule 's Triforce isn 't the right way to save Lorule , having secretly sought out Link to help her see the light . After Link and Zelda return to Hyrule , they use the power of their Triforce to restore Lorule 's Triforce and bring Lorule back to its full glory . With his quest completed , Link returns the Master Sword to its resting place once more .

= = Development = =

= = = Concept and production = = =

In late 2009 , following the completion of The Legend of Zelda : Spirit Tracks for the Nintendo DS , the majority of its development team were immediately assigned to work on The Legend of Zelda : Skyward Sword for the Wii . However , three members of the Spirit Tracks team began working on a new handheld title in the Zelda series for the upcoming Nintendo 3DS console . Hiromasa Shikata and Shiro Mouri were two of the three members working on the new game . During this early phase , they had not considered developing a sequel to The Legend of Zelda : A Link to the Past ; instead they were building a game around the theme of " communication " . Around six months into the project , they presented their concept for the game to series creator Shigeru Miyamoto . It was poorly received , with Miyamoto calling the idea outdated . So , the team of three decided to rethink the concept of the game from the very beginning .

At this point , Shikata proposed the idea of Link being able to enter and merge onto walls ; this feature would eventually become one of the title 's unique gameplay aspects . Within a day , Mouri had created an initial prototype to demonstrate the feature , and seeing it in action led to an influx of ideas . Link was able to transform from a 3D character to a 2D character by entering walls , and then move smoothly around corners to reach places he previously could not . This ability opened up possibilities for creating new puzzles and using new mechanics . At this stage in the project , they were still considering the new game to be an extension of Zelda games on the Nintendo DS , so the prototype itself used the same viewpoint and design of Link from Spirit Tracks . Around October 2010 , the prototype was presented to Miyamoto , who approved of the new concept and was happy for development to begin . However , within two weeks of entering production , core members of the development team were reassigned to work on launch games for Nintendo 's Wii U console which was scheduled for release in 2012 . With the team disbanded , development of the game ceased .

In November 2011 , Skyward Sword released for the Wii , and Zelda series producer Eiji Aonuma

began thinking about the next project in the series . While Nintendo had released a remake of The Legend of Zelda : Ocarina of Time for the Nintendo 3DS , demand for a new and original Zelda title to be released on the 3DS was growing . Aonuma chose to revisit the idea of Link entering walls , as it had already been prototyped . With Shikata and Mouri still engaged in the development of Wii U launch games , Aonuma decided to revive the project without its core members , thirteen months after it had been initially shelved . Kentaro Tominaga was brought onto the team to continue where Shikata had left off . He refined the system of entering walls and designed some small dungeons , which he presented to Miyamoto in May 2012 . Tominaga planned to create fifty more small dungeons that would utilise the wall @-@ entering mechanic , however Miyamoto criticised this approach and instead suggested basing the new game on A Link to the Past . Aonuma then proposed combining the wall @-@ entering mechanic with the top @-@ down perspective and landforms of A Link to the Past . He felt that the shift in perspective when entering a wall would be complimented by the stereoscopic 3D capabilities of the Nintendo 3DS . Aonuma converted the two @-@ dimensional landforms of A Link to the Past into three @-@ dimensional space and then the team placed Link into the setting with the wall @-@ entering mechanic to test the feature . After several more presentations to Miyamoto , development of the project was finally allowed to progress in July 2012 . The development team began expanding before the end of 2012 , with people joining from other finished projects ; Shikata rejoined as director and Mouri returned as assistant director and lead programmer . Development of the game was completed in October 2013 .

= = = Technical and design = = =

Delay issues aside , the development team encountered further challenges in the creation of the game . Implementing the top @-@ down perspective became a particular issue and resulted in a lot of trial and error . With a true top @-@ down view , players would be unable to see characters ' faces and bodies . To circumvent this issue , objects in the world were tilted at an angle so that they were more visible in the top @-@ down view . Mouri requested that the game run at sixty frames per second instead of thirty to stabilise the stereoscopic 3D and smoothen movement animations . While doubling the frame rate increased the processing load , it allowed the developers to implement a feature where players could select items by dragging and dropping them from their inventory using the Nintendo 3DS 's touchscreen and stylus ; at thirty frames per second this feature felt too sluggish for the stylus 's movement .

Rethinking the conventions of a Zelda game became an important theme as development progressed . In previous Zelda games , the player would go into a dungeon , obtain a new item , and then move onto the next dungeon in a specific order . The development team felt that this formula was flawed as a player could get stuck on a dungeon and would be unable to progress further in the game . They wanted to give the player more freedom in the ways they could advance through the game , allowing them to tackle dungeons in any order and clear multiple dungeons in parallel , but this meant that the method for acquiring items had to be changed . They opted for a system where players could rent or purchase items using the game 's currency , rupees . In the final game , rented items are returned to the merchant when the player is defeated , however the team had considered other ideas for returning rented items , such as setting a timer on the rental period and imposing fees if they were returned late . The development team found out about the existence of the Nintendo 2DS console during the game 's production . As the Nintendo 2DS lacked 3D capabilities , the team decided to revise some of the game 's dungeon designs to be certain that they could be completed without the 3D effect enabled .

The designers thought that Link 's appearance should change when Link entered a wall and the perspective switched from a top @-@ down view to side view . They chose to make Link a mural while he was on a wall ; this led to the creation of Yuga , the game antagonist , a sorcerer that can transform himself and others into paintings . Aonuma mentioned that the idea of Link turning into a mural was inspired by Phantom Ganon jumping into paintings during his encounter in Ocarina of Time . As the game 's story takes place long after the events of a A Link to the Past and the player travels between the two worlds of Hyrule and Lorule , the development team chose A Link Between

Worlds instead of A Link to the Past 2 for the game 's English @-@ language title .

= = = Audio = = =

A Link Between Worlds features original music along with tracks from A Link to the Past . Ryo Nagamatsu composed and orchestrated new music for A Link Between Worlds , and played the flute music featured in the game 's milk bar . He also composed arrangements and adapted Koji Kondo 's original music from A Link to the Past . Nagamatsu wanted to balance arrangements of past music with completely new music to please both old and new players . He began by revisiting old tracks and thinking how he could best adapt them for A Link Between Worlds soundtrack . He was eager to include choral performances as a way to add tension to the eerie and unpleasant scenes in the game . Nagamatsu performed the vocals and made use of multitrack recording to layer the different vocals tracks . The audio team decided not use a live orchestra for recording the game 's music , the primary reason for this was to create optimal sound for the Nintendo 3DS . The reverberations and low @-@ pitch sounds created by a live orchestra were not suitable for the Nintendo 3DS speakers . The majority of the string music was created using a synthesizer , with Toru Minegishi playing guitar on one track .

= = Release = =

In April 2013 , during a Nintendo Direct presentation , a new The Legend of Zelda game was announced for the Nintendo 3DS with a release date scheduled for late 2013 . The game was described by Nintendo as a successor to the Super Nintendo Entertainment System title , The Legend of Zelda : A Link to the Past , set within the same game world but featuring new mechanics , new dungeons , and an original story . Shortly after the presentation , Nintendo released a gameplay video on the Nintendo eShop . Later in June , at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2013 , the English title for the game was revealed as The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds . In Japan , the game was titled The Legend of Zelda : Triforce of the Gods 2 . At the Seattle showing of " The Legend of Zelda : Symphony of the Goddesses Second Quest " concert tour in 2013 , A Link Between Worlds was playable along with The Legend of Zelda : The Wind Waker HD .

A Link Between Worlds released in Europe and North America on November 22 , 2013 , and later in Japan on December 26 , 2013 . The European version of the game contained a reversible cover sleeve ; the inside cover featuring multicoloured art and the outside cover featuring the golden @-@ hued version . Alongside the game 's launch , Nintendo released a bundle including a copy of the game and a themed Nintendo 3DS XL with the Triforce logo on . In 2015 , A Link Between Worlds was re @-@ released under the Nintendo Selects label , along with five other Nintendo 3DS titles . In early 2015 , Nintendo released the original soundtrack for A Link Between Worlds on CD in Europe via Club Nintendo . Music from the soundtrack was included in the 2015 concert tour " The Legend of Zelda : Symphony of the Goddesses Master Quest " .

= = Reception = =

The Legend of Zelda : A Link Between Worlds received critical acclaim upon release . Aggregate review website Metacritic assigned a score of 91 out of 100 based on reviews from 81 critics , making it the second highest scoring Nintendo 3DS game in 2013 , falling just behind Fire Emblem Awakening . It is also the fourth highest scoring Nintendo 3DS game of all time on Metacritic . Sales tracker Media Create reported that A Link Between Worlds was the top selling video game during its first week of launch in Japan , surpassing 224 @,@ 000 sales . As of March 31 , 2014 , A Link Between Worlds has sold 2 @.@ 51 million copies worldwide . It became the ninth first @-@ party Nintendo 3DS title to surpass 1 million units sold in the United States , achieving 1 @.@ 09 million sales as of August 2014 .

Many critics saw A Link Between Worlds as a worthy successor to A Link to the Past , but also remarked that the game was outstanding in its own right . The game was commended for making

enhancements to core and traditional elements of the series . New additions and changes to the established formula were also welcomed . Polygon reviewer Arthur Gies called it the best Zelda game in past twenty years , and GamesRadar writer Lorenzo Veloria said that it was essential title for every Nintendo 3DS owner . Reception towards the game 's puzzles was overwhelming positive ; praise was directed towards how well the wall @-@ merging mechanic had been incorporated into dungeon puzzles and integrated into every area of the game . Keza MacDonald of IGN thought A Link Between Worlds was the best puzzle game that Nintendo had ever created . Game Informer writer Dan Ryckert noted that some of the game 's dungeons and boss encounters were among the best in the franchise 's history . The level of difficulty present in the puzzles and dungeons was met with approval ; the challenge was described as a perplexing experience rather than a frustrating one by GameSpot editor Martin Gaston .

Discussing the usage of A Link to the Past 's version of Hyrule in A Link Between Worlds , Veloria thought that while revisiting familiar places was a nostalgic experience , the mystery of exploring new areas was absent and having to retread the same game world again was " somewhat unsatisfying " . Gaston called the loose structure and openness of the game a " revelatory change " , and was glad to see that some restrictions in previous Zelda titles were not present in A Link Between Worlds . The introduction of the item rental system was well received , with many reviewers pointing out that the system granted players with more freedom . Ryckert loved having items available from the beginning , says that it allowed him to experiment in combat . Both MacDonald and Gies agreed that losing rented items upon defeat added another layer of challenge and consequence to the game . Nintendo Life reviewer , Martin Watts found that streamlining the item system allowed the game to place a greater emphasis aspects such as exploration , solving puzzles and boss fights . However , Veloria expressed that not being able to find key items in dungeons was a drawback of the system .

Reviewers agreed that A Link Between Worlds excelled at making use of the console 's 3D capabilities . However , the game 's art direction was divisive among critics , with some writers expressing dislike for the graphics , and others calling the visuals gorgeous . The game 's music composition was complimented ; Ryckert called the game 's soundtrack one of the best in gaming , and Veloria though it was some of the best in the series , praising both the new compositions and the adapted renditions music from A Link to the Past .