= Kingdom Hearts ? =

Kingdom Hearts ? (????? ??? ?? , Kingudamu H?tsu K?) , stylized as Kingdom Hearts ? [chi] , is a Japanese role @-@ playing browser game developed by Square Enix and Success Corporation , and published by Square Enix for web browsers as the eighth installment in the Kingdom Hearts series . Gameplay involves players navigating a customized avatar through Disney @-@ inspired worlds fighting enemies , along with taking down bosses in multiplayer matches in competition with other teams .

Kingdom Hearts ? is a prequel to the Kingdom Hearts series as a whole , set 100 years before the events of Kingdom Hearts . It takes place before the Keyblade War , which established the organization of the Kingdom Hearts universe as of the original game . The player assumes the role of a Keyblade wielder who joins one of five factions led by Keyblade Masters fighting for control of the limited Light existing in the world . The game 's plot is connected to Kingdom Hearts III , the next main entry in the series . The title refers to the legendary ? @-@ blade , a weapon central to the series ' story arc .

The game was designed as a playing experience that newcomers to the series could come to . Its presentation was compared to that of a fairy tale , as depicting the usual style of the series would have been difficult on the platform . Both Tetsuya Nomura and Yoko Shimomura , veterans from the main series , returned as director and composer respectively . Since release , the game has received favorable opinions from players .

= = Gameplay = =

Kingdom Hearts ? is a role @-@ playing video game set in the universe of Kingdom Hearts which includes original characters and locations as well as ones from Disney and Final Fantasy media properties . Before beginning , players create their own character . Players can customize the gender , hair , and clothing , and choose accessories themed after both Square Enix and Disney universes present in the Kingdom Hearts series . Story missions are unlocked by the player . After a certain amount of the available content has been completed , new story missions become available . Players navigate their surroundings by dragging their cursor across the screen . Players navigate different worlds defeating monsters known as the Heartless . The base game is free to play , with optional microtransactions . Actions use up AP , which can be replenished by either waiting or by using potions , which can be earned or bought . Rare items such as special cards can also be purchased . Alongside the single @-@ player mode , there is a multiplayer mode where teams of players take on Raid Bosses , gigantic Heartless with high HP .

Enemies appear on @-@ screen , and can be engaged by clicking on them . During the player 's turn , three cards are randomly drawn from a deck of nine , each resulting in an attack . If the cards ' combined strength and attached skills are insufficient to exhaust the enemy 's HP , the heartless will counterattack . If the player survives this attack , or continues by spending additional AP , a new turn begins . Upon defeating an enemy , the player earns Lux , experience points , and Munny , an in @-@ game currency . The player also earns Fragments , cards based on the characters original to the Kingdom Hearts series and those from Disney and Final Fantasy franchises : the fragments are imbued with different properties depending on the character , such as physical or elemental strikes . Players can level up their cards to improve their attack and defense . Players can strengthen their Keyblade using materials found in each world , and new Keyblades are acquired as the story progresses . Each strengthens different types of cards - for example , Starlight is an all @-@ around Keyblade offering boosts for Power- , Speed- and Magic @-@ type cards , while the Snow White @-@ inspired Treasure Trove is Power @-@ type focused .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Kingdom Hearts ? is set before the legendary Keyblade War , when disputes between Keyblade wielders over the Light that created the world sparked a war between Light and Darkness , triggering a calamity that created the world of Kingdom Hearts as seen in the first game in the series . Prior to the war , an unnamed Keyblade Master bestowed a book called the Tome of Prophecy to five of his six apprentices before disappearing . The Tome has the ability to predict and even manifest objects and people from the future . The five apprentices learned of a prophecy foretelling the world falling to Darkness and the Light being destroyed . In order to prevent this , each of the apprentices decided to attempt to prevent the prophecy from coming true . As part of their efforts , they used the Tome to manifest powerful warriors from the future as the Fragments . Each eventually begins hoarding pieces of Light , called Lux , from the monsters known as Heartless , and each creates their own factions themed around their individual animal icon : Ursus , Anguis , Unicornus , Leopardus , and Vulpeus . The player character , a newly awakened Keyblade Wielder , chooses to support one of the factions and works to ensure the chosen faction 's supremacy . The story serves as a prequel to the Keyblade War , which all other Kingdom Hearts games occur after .

= = = Story = = =

Kingdom Hearts ? opens in pop @-@ up book format , showing Kairi and her grandmother in Radiant Garden while Kairi is told a story about the Light and the Darkness . The narrative switches to the distant past where a newly awakened Keyblade wielder , who is controlled by the player , is given a choice of joining one of five factions or " unions " known as Anguis , Leopardos , Unicornis , Ursus and Vulpeus . Once the player chooses , they are brought to Daybreak Town and assaulted by an army of Heartless coming through a portal . Before the player is overwhelmed , however , a powerful Keyblade wielder known as a Foreteller arrives and pursues the Heartless back through their portal . A cat @-@ like creature named Chirithy , which had been accompanying the Foreteller , befriends the player 's character and explains their destiny . The player must use their Keyblade to collect Light and stop the Heartless from conquering every world and spreading Darkness . Chirithy also reveals he has been tasked by the Foreteller to aid the player in his training , and part of that process is the finding of powerful cards called Fragments to augment their power .

After exploring the area and defeating several Heartless , the player is approached by the Foreteller , who tells them that defeating weaker Heartless is possible to do alone , but they will need others help to defeat more powerful opponents . The Foreteller also describes how many others are collecting light as well , though some may secretly be doing to to gain power instead of fighting the Darkness , and the player must decide who to trust . Chirithy then encourages the player to explore other worlds and help rid them of the Heartless before it is too late . The player then visits the illusion future visions of Disney worlds , where they interact with the locals and help defeat the hoards of Heartless . The player is brought to each world under Chirithy 's direction , and together the two characters search for the origin of the Darkness . As the player succeeds in defeating the forces of evil , Chirithy begins to reveal the full extent of his knowledge regarding the war between Light and Darkness . Chirithy remembers being born in a place of Light , with his creator smiling upon him in the beginning . The creator would later vanish , but before doing so he renamed six of his followers and gave five of them a prophecy of the future . The five , later known as the Foretellers , were shocked to discover that the future ended with a great battle in which the Light would be defeated and the eternal reign of Darkness would begin . To save the future , the Foretellers began to use the hidden powers within the written copy of the prophesy known as the Book of Prophesies (which creates the future worlds that the players travel to) . Through this book , the Foretellers traveled to the future to grow more powerful and save the Light from final defeat . The power retrieved from the future is manifested as the Cards the player gathers to grow stronger .

As the player moves from world to world driving out the Heartless , they return to Daybreak Town where they meet another Keyblade wielder named Ephemera , who is part of a rival union . He wishes to explore a mysterious tower that lies within the center of the town , and against Chirithy 's wishes , the player agrees to help find a way in . Ephemera , however , abandons the player to

explore the tower himself . During the player 's exploration , the tower is discovered to be the base of the Foretellers and while there , the player is confronted by Master Ava , the Foreteller they had met previously . She challenges the player to test their strength , and afterwards tells the player they have sadness in their hearts which links them to the Darkness . Undeterred , the player continues their mission and later meets another Keyblade wielder named Skuld who comes from Ephemera 's union . She expresses an interest in further exploring the mysterious tower of the Foretellers . She and the player encounter warring Foretellers from different unions and new kinds of Heartless that are revealed to be corrupted Keyblade wielders as well as a dark vision of Chirithy .

To further understand the mysteries of the Foretellers and the future , the player , Chirithy , and Skuld re @-@ enter the Foretellers tower where they are caught by a Foreteller . They are also told that Ephemera was a traitor to his Union and that he has disappeared . The player then challenges the Foreteller to a duel , assuming Ephemera has been captured , but is easily defeated . The Foreteller reveals that she is in fact Master Ava , and that the player 's quest was a test of their character to see if they are worthy of leaving this world before the Great War between Light and Darkness . Keyblade wielders that can resist the Darkness and fight for what they believe in , like their friends , are worthy of becoming elite Keyblade warriors known as Dandelions and going on to the World of Light and avoiding the coming universal war . All who stay will become a part of that war and must face an uncertain future . Skuld accepts the offer , but the player 's character is uncertain if they should join Ephemera , who has gone on to the World of Light , or stay and fight to save the future . The story continues without revealing their choice . Later , they encounter two Keyblade warriors accusing each other of stealing Lux from their Unions and the player is forced to fight Master Aced and loses . Another Foreteller named Ira arrives to stop the fighting . Aced claims that he is collecting more Keyblade warriors to prepare for the upcoming war before leaving . Ira informs the player , Skuld , and Chirithy that this war can 't be avoided and there will be no winner . The only Foreteller who may have a solution is Gula so the trio go to look for him . When Gula is found , he reveals that the only one who can change this is the Master , the Foreteller 's mentor , who had disappeared recently along with the sixth apprentice , Luxu . Meanwhile , Ava tracks down Luxu , who had been ordered to watch the place by the Master . He reveals that he wants to move forward to see the end of the upcoming Keyblade war after discovering what happens in the " Lost Page " in the Book of Prophesies , also revealing that he is the one turning the unions against one another .

= = Development = =

Kingdom Hearts ? was co @-@ directed by Tetsuya Nomura , one of the series ' creators , and Tatsuya Kando , who had previous directed Nintendo DS game The World Ends with You . The game 's music was composed by Yoko Shimomura , a regular contributor to the series ' music . The game was co @-@ developed by Square Enix and Japanese studio Success Corporation . Square Enix originally handled the planning and design itself , but due to their developers inexperience with creating browser games , development was transferred to the Success Corporation , who were familiar with the process . Despite multiplayer elements being included , the game was " fundamentally single @-@ player " , as with most other entries in the series . Chirithy , the player characters ' companion , was designed around the concept of a supportive yet unobtrusive guide . Nomura based the characters design on the Scottish Fold domestic cat .

Due to difficulties that arose adapting the core Kingdom Hearts experience into a browser game , the presentation was designed in a fairy tale @-@ style instead of the locations encountered previously by series protagonists Sora and Riku . And because the game was to be played with a mouse instead of a game controller , the gameplay focus became simple controls and " flashy " battles . In an interview , Nomura stated that the work on developing Kingdom Hearts ? was paused for a time so developers could work on Kingdom Hearts III . He also stated that at the time they were exploring ways to allow more fans of the series to experience the game . The stories of Kingdom Hearts ? and Kingdom Hearts III were both written at the same time , and thus share a strong connection . Despite this strong link , it was described by Tetsuya Nomura as a title where story was

not the focus , and that its content was completely separate from the main series , making it accessible for newcomers . The game 's title refers to the ? @-@ blade (chi @-@ blade) , the original Keyblade and a weapon central to the Kingdom Hearts storyline .

= = Release = =

The game was first announced at the Tokyo Game Show on September 20 , 2012 alongside Kingdom Hearts HD 1 @.@ 5 Remix under the tentative title Kingdom Hearts for PC Browsers . Its official title was announced in February the following year . To promote the game , codes for special items and in @-@ game currency were included with first @-@ print copies of Kingdom Hearts HD 1 @.@ 5 Remix . A closed beta for the title began on March 22 , 2013 , with Beta recruitment beginning on March 13 . The test was available for users who had a Yahoo Japan ID , and included in @-@ game items and currency as a starting gift . An open beta test began on July 9 , 2013 , and the game 's official service began on July 18 of the same year . Since the original release , the game received constant updates to its story missions , providing additional content to players . In April 2016 , Square Enix announced that the browser game would be discontinued in September 2016 .

= = Reception = =

By September 2013 , 200 @,@ 000 users were announced to have enrolled for the game . During the 2013 WebMoney Awards , Kingdom Hearts ? was among the games voted into the " Best Rookie of the Year Good Games " category , with most voters praising the game for being accessible to series newcomers , and fun to play . Richard Eisenbeis of Kotaku was generally positive , saying that despite it being similar to other Japanese browser games and using a micro @-@ transaction system , it was " an enjoyable little time waster . "

= = Kingdom Hearts Unchained ? = =

A updated version of the game was released for mobile devices under the title Kingdom Hearts Unchained ? . It shares multiple gameplay features with its browser counterpart : the main exception is that this version is tailored for a touch screen . The ability to travel freely between different Disney worlds is also replaced with a stage system . These stages , called quests , are confined to specific areas of specific worlds . Instead of spending AP on individual actions , AP is paid to start a quest , and the player can attack as many enemies , collect as many materials , and open as many chests as he or she can find before defeating a target Heartless . If the player 's HP is fully depleted , a choice is offered between forfeiting all progress in the quest or continuing to fight by spending Jewels , a new general @-@ purpose in @-@ game currency . Lux is considered another name for character @-@ leveling experience points . Clothing , hair , and accessories are obtained through Avatar Boards , which each contain an array of nodes on branching pathways . These nodes are unlocked , in set sequences , with Avatar Coins , and may also yield such benefits as increased limits for AP and HP . Cards from the browser version are here replaced by Medals , which are no longer drawn randomly in battle . Instead , each equipped Medal is presented one at a time , and the player is given the choice of attacking one enemy , attacking all enemies (dealing less damage) , or using the special attack granted by the Medal (provided the Keyblade 's special attack gauges are sufficiently filled) . Medals can be combined with matching Medals to improve their special attacks .

The creation of a mobile version of the game was decided upon while the browser version was still being developed . Nomura initially planned to release both titles simultaneously , with each being updated individually . However , as development went on , the teams efforts became focused on finishing Kingdom Hearts ? , and development on Unchained was halted . The original plan was to make the game a simpler version of its browser counterpart , but with the increasing specs of mobile devices , the workload increased , contributing to the halt to development . As mobile devices employ a different control set @-@ up to web browsers , Unchained could not work simply as a port

of Kingdom Hearts ? . Its title " Unchained " signified the gameplay and story of Kingdom Hearts ? being released into a mobile format . One of the changes instituted during the games mobile remake was to make the gameplay more " casual " than Kingdom Hearts ? , with battles being shorter and potentially easier .

Disney Interactive was forced to delay a western localization of the game when the game 's publisher Playdom , a social game network owned by Disney , was shut down . Despite this , planning continued for a western release with playtesting taking place to improve upon the game before launch . The western localization was revealed to the public with the title Kingdom Hearts Unchained X at the 2015 Electronic Entertainment Expo . Unchained ? was released in Japan on September 3 , 2015 , in North America on April 7 , 2016 , and in Europe on June 16 , 2016 .

= = = Reception = = =

Kingdom Hearts ? Unchained received mixed reviews . It received an aggregated score of 73 @.@ 33 % on GameRankings and 70 / 100 on Metacritic . AV Club praised the game for being a true Kingdom Hearts title despite its free to play format . Touch Arcade gave the game three out of five stars , praising the music and graphics while calling the gameplay shallow with an overcomplicated user interface . Gamezebo called the title " better than expected " , citing the games fun but simple combat and extensive character customization but critiquing the games dialogue for being cheesy and the story for being weaker than the console Kingdom Hearts titles . In the month after it was released , the mobile version was downloaded over two million times .

= = HD 2 @.@ 8 Final Chapter Prologue = =

In September 2015 , Square Enix announced a new game entitled Kingdom Hearts HD 2 @.@ 8 Final Chapter Prologue . The collection features Kingdom Hearts ? Back Cover , which will tell the tale of the Foretellers and reveal new parts of the series ' history in the form of a one hour cinematic video . It will be released worldwide in December 2016 .