

= Sora ( Kingdom Hearts ) =

Sora ( Japanese : ?? ) is a fictional character and the protagonist of Square Enix 's Kingdom Hearts video game series . Introduced in the first Kingdom Hearts game in 2002 , Sora is portrayed as a cheerful teenager who lives in the Destiny Islands and has been best friends with Riku and Kairi since childhood . When they plan to go on a journey to see other worlds , they are separated by creatures known as the Heartless . While fighting against them , Sora obtains a weapon called the Keyblade . Donald Duck and Goofy then recruit him in their journey across various worlds to aid King Mickey while Sora searches for his friends . Along the way , the trio protects the worlds they visit from various villains . In Kingdom Hearts II , Sora searches for Riku and fights against Organization XIII who , like Ansem the Wise from the original game , are attempting to seize Kingdom Hearts for their own . Sora has also made supporting appearances in other games from the series , and reprised his role in manga and light novel adaptations of the games .

Sora was originally designed by Kingdom Hearts series director and character designer Tetsuya Nomura during a discussion between Disney and Square about who should be the protagonist of the series . Wanting an original character , Nomura made various sketches of Sora until the design met the approval of Disney . Nomura came to regard Sora as his favorite character that he had designed , and pushed for the character to have a leading role in the Kingdom Hearts story in spite of the character 's youth . Throughout the series , Sora has been voiced by Haley Joel Osment in the English version and Miyu Irino in the Japanese version . As a child , Sora was voiced by Takuto Yoshinaga and Luke Manriquez in Japanese and English , respectively . Sora 's character has received generally positive critical response due to his warm personality and adventurous spirit . His personal and martial growth in the series also received praise , especially in his appearance in Kingdom Hearts II . Additionally , Sora has ranked high on various video game character popularity polls .

= = Characteristics = =

Sora appears as a child with spiky brown @-@ hair who , when first introduced , wears a red shirt , red pants , and a white and blue jacket covered by keychains . Upon traveling to certain worlds , Sora 's appearance is altered by Donald Duck 's magic to adapt to different environments ; for example , he turns into a merman in underwater environments . After undergoing significant growth in Kingdom Hearts II , Sora is given a new outfit given by Flora , Fauna , and Merryweather similar to the previous one but mostly black . When battling , Sora 's outfit can change into other designs depending on the player 's choices . Sora 's Keyblade 's primary form is the Kingdom Key ( ????????? , Kingudamu Ch?n , Kingdom Chain ) , resembling a classic skeleton key approximately 3 @. @ 5 feet ( 1 @. @ 1 m ) long , with a long , silver keychain extending from the hilt and a Mickey Mouse token on the end of the keychain . However , through the use of game items known as Keychains , the Kingdom Key can assume a variety of unique forms . During Kingdom Hearts II , Sora dual @-@ wields Keyblades , but their forms depend on the player 's use of Keychains .

Across the series , Sora is depicted as a cheerful teenager who cherishes his friendships and relies on them for his strength . As a result , several of Sora 's enemies use his friends as bait to use the Keyblade for their purposes . Although Sora was not chosen by the Keyblade to be its owner and the protector of worlds , his actions throughout the series cause the Keyblade to choose him over its original choice , Riku .

= = Appearances = =

At the beginning of Kingdom Hearts , Sora and his two best friends , Riku and Kairi , plan to leave their hometown , the Destiny Islands , to explore new worlds . However , they are separated when their world is attacked by a group of dark beings known as the Heartless with Sora drifting to a town known as Traverse Town where he learns the Keyblade chose him to eliminate the Heartless . Soon after , Sora meets Donald Duck and Goofy , who join forces in search of his friends while Sora helps

Donald and Goofy look for King Mickey . They travel across worlds in their Gummi Ship , sealing the Keyholes of worlds along the way to protect them from being consumed by the darkness of the Heartless . They are opposed by an alliance of Disney villains led by Maleficent who seeks out the seven Princesses of Heart to unlock the Keyhole that leads to " Kingdom Hearts " , a repository of knowledge and power and the source of all hearts . To this end , Maleficent convinces Riku that Sora has betrayed him , and that while Riku searched for Sora , he replaced Riku with new friends . This causes Riku to fight with Sora on several occasions . The group travels to Maleficent 's headquarters in the Hollow Bastion and defeat her , but Sora then discovers that Riku is possessed by the spirit of Ansem , who reveals that Kairi 's heart has been hiding within Sora 's body . In order to return Kairi 's heart , Sora impales himself with Ansem 's Keyblade , briefly transforming him into a Heartless until Kairi brings him back to his human form . After taking Kairi to safety , Sora and company confront and defeat Ansem at the now open door to Kingdom Hearts . Beyond the doorway are Mickey and the now recovered Riku ; to seal it so that the darkness cannot take possession of Kingdom Hearts , Mickey and Sora use their Keyblades to lock the door . Despite being again separated , Sora , Donald , and Goofy continue their quest to reunite with Riku and Mickey .

In Kingdom Hearts : Chain of Memories , Sora 's group stumbles onto a fortress known as Castle Oblivion , believing they will find Mickey and Riku inside . Upon entering , Sora 's memories are manipulated by a girl named Naminé who is being held captive by the group Organization XIII and forced to replace memories of Kairi with herself . However , as Sora travels upwards in the castle , he meets Naminé and learns the truth from her . Sora still wishes to protect Naminé and stop the Organization members in the castle . After the Organization members opposing him are defeated , Naminé helps him , Donald , and Goofy to restore their memories to their state prior to entering Castle Oblivion at the cost of losing their memories of the events in the castle . This requires them to sleep in the castle for the restoration of memories to be completed .

In Kingdom Hearts II , roughly one year after Chain of Memories , Sora reawakens along with Donald and Goofy in Twilight Town once his Nobody , Roxas , merges within him . They visit the King 's master , Yen Sid , from whom they learn about the existence of the Nobodies and Organization XIII . Sora sets out with Donald and Goofy to find Riku and King Mickey , traversing new and unfamiliar worlds where they encounter the remaining members of the Organization . Sora later encounters their leader , Xemnas , learning that the Organization now has Kairi captive to force Sora to gather more hearts for them . Eventually , with Mickey joining them , Sora 's group finds a way to the Organization 's main base in The World That Never Was . The group soon reunites with Kairi as well as Riku , and continue fighting the Organization . Sora and Riku are separated from Mickey , Goofy , Kairi and Donald as they finish Xemnas and find a way back to Destiny Islands where they reunite with all their friends .

In Kingdom Hearts 358 / 2 Days , Sora is mostly in a state of sleep as his memories are being restored by Naminé , but is also playable in the game 's multiplayer mode . In Kingdom Hearts Coded Sora himself does not appear until the game 's final scene , in which he receives King Mickey 's letter and reads it with Riku and Kairi . A computer program created from Sora 's data serves as the primary protagonist of the game , finding out the truth behind a mysterious message found inside Jiminy 's journal . A young Sora and Riku briefly appear in Destiny Islands in the prequel to Kingdom Hearts , Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep . After Ventus , one of the protagonists , has his heart damaged following a confrontation with his dark side , Vanitas , his heart finds its way into Sora , entering the boy 's body . In the game 's secret ending , set after the events of Kingdom Hearts II Ansem the Wise tells Aqua about Sora 's adventures , and how he may help all the people connected to him . In the final scene , Sora decides to save them after reading Mickey 's letter .

In Kingdom Hearts 3D : Dream Drop Distance , Sora is summoned with Riku to Yen Sid to undergo a Mark of Mastery exam in response to Xehanort 's coming return . The two are sent to the Dreaming Realm to awaken several worlds submerged in sleep following the defeat of Ansem , but once the task is complete , Sora 's heart is damaged by Xemnas whose companions plan to turn him into the last of Xehanort 's thirteen vessels . Riku and his comrades manage to rescue Sora from his fate and brings him back to Yen Sid 's tower , where he dives into Sora 's body and repairs

his heart , awakening him from his coma . Once Sora wakes up , Yen Sid only names Riku as a Keyblade Master for gaining the power used to awaken Sora . Undaunted , Sora congratulates him and departs to continue his training elsewhere .

Sora is stated to return as a fully @-@ fledged Keyblade Master in Kingdom Hearts III , and will have his final showdown with Master Xehanort . A 2D cartoonish avatar version of Sora wearing his original outfit in Kingdom Hearts is also present in the online community @-@ based social gaming networking service , Kingdom Hearts Mobile . Sora also appears in the Shiro Amano 's manga and Tomoko Kanemaki 's novels in which he reprises his role in the video games .

= = Concept and creation = =

Sora was designed by Tetsuya Nomura as the protagonist of Kingdom Hearts . However , he was not originally slated to be the protagonist as Disney wanted Donald Duck to be the protagonist of the game while Square wanted to have Mickey Mouse as the protagonist . Nomura wanted neither as the protagonist of the game and went on to design his own protagonist with the concepts of the Disney characters in mind which resulted in the creation of Sora . Sora originally wielded a weapon resembling a chainsaw ; however , the weapon was not well received by Disney which led Nomura to redesign the weapon into a Keyblade . Sora 's original outfit in Kingdom Hearts was also designed with Mickey Mouse in mind with Mickey Mouse 's trademark white gloves , red shorts and giant yellow shoes due to Square 's original preference to have Mickey as the main character of the game . The tail was removed as the staff found his design to be similar to the one of the Final Fantasy IX protagonist Zidane Tribal who also had a tail . After a talk with the Disney staff , the design was further reworked , and Nomura finished it after a night 's work .

One of the main concepts of Sora 's character in the series is that , according to Nomura , he is a normal boy instead of a supernatural being even though he is deeply connected with other characters from the series . With Sora , Nomura wants to give players the message that even though they are not " important people " , they have the opportunity to accomplish great things . This was emphasized in Birth by Sleep 's secret ending , which Nomura hoped players would find because it showed Sora 's potential to influence everyone 's lives . In early versions of development of Birth by Sleep , Nomura thought that Ventus would actually be Sora before being reborn , but due to negative feedback from overseas , that plot line was discarded . Nomura has stated that Sora 's name can be interpreted as " sky " since the Japanese word sora ( ? ) , means sky . This name was also chosen to symbolize Sora 's role and his personality . It was also chosen to show Sora 's close relationship with Riku and Kairi , making their three names together " Sky , Land , and Sea . " He was also described by Nomura as having an outgoing personality , which allows him to make friends throughout the series . Of all of the characters Nomura has designed , Sora is his favorite , calling him " special " after having worked to develop the character over many games .

Following the first Kingdom Hearts , Nomura was worried that players would be unhappy that Sora would start Kingdom Hearts II as a weak character with few powers who once again had to be leveled up like the first title . Therefore , Nomura developed the plot of Chain of Memories to explain how Sora loses his abilities in Castle Oblivion and then started anew . Additionally , with Chain of Memories a new mystery regarding Sora 's memories from Twilight Town was added and while Sora did not have any memories from such town , this fact would be explained in Kingdom Hearts II . The team in charge of Kingdom Hearts II expressed difficulties in animating Sora 's Drive Valor Form for having a completely different motion except in the part that Sora walks which is shared with his regular motion . After finishing Kingdom Hearts II , Nomura wanted to give Sora a rest from the series in order to focus the following games on other characters from the series . Moreover , the events from the endings of Kingdom Hearts coded and Birth by Sleep hinted a new mystery regarding Sora 's character which will be revealed in Kingdom Hearts III . Although Nomura stated in March 2010 that Sora will once again be the focus of the next Kingdom Hearts , he will share it with another character with a big importance . In response to rumors saying that Sora 's story would end in Kingdom Hearts III , Nomura answered that Sora is the protagonist of the series and that his role will end once the series ends . For this game , Nomura was interested in giving Sora a new costume

, but was worried about doing so because of the popularity of the characters Kingdom Hearts II outfit . In the end he decided to create a new one as Kingdom Hearts III was a new numbered title .

= = Reception = =

Various types of merchandising have been released based on Sora 's character . There are several types of action figures which show Sora with a different appearance such as his original form , the Kingdom Hearts II design and others variants . Other accessories include plush , necklaces and phone charm straps .

In January 2010 , Famitsu featured Sora as its reader 's fifth most popular character of all time . They also featured him on its issue # 1105 cover , giving him a tribute , showing his many appearances through the years . UGO Networks placed Sora nineteenth on their list of " Top 25 Japanese RPG Characters " calling him a " charismatic and visually interesting " character . Although he did not make to the top ten of Electronic Gaming Monthly 's " Top Ten : List of Videogame Characters " , Sora was nevertheless noted for his growing popularity . In an ASCII Media Works poll in which fans voted selected whose video game or manga character would like to name their children after , Sora 's name was second in the male category . In a Famitsu poll from 2011 , Sora was voted as the most popular Kingdom Hearts character with his fight against Roxas from Kingdom Hearts II also being listed as the best scene from the series . He was also 15th in the Game Informer poll of best characters from the 2000s .

Overall , critics and fans have generally praised the character of Sora . When Sora 's character was first revealed in 2002 , GameSpot 's Giancarlo Varanini regarded him as " an appropriate amalgamation of the Square and Disney universes . " He also comically noted he " doesn 't look like much , but you know how it goes . " A 1UP.com writer called Sora " one of my all @-@ time favorite Square characters " , praising his cheerful personality . Gamasutra commented on Sora 's journey along the series in their feature " The Birth of Collecting : The Osiris Archetype In Games " by Jason Johnson ; while comparing Sora with Isis , Johnson found Sora 's adventure appealing . IGN praised Sora 's resilient character noting how such an ordinary " youngster " could face up to his challenges during his adventures for the sake of friendship , while RPGFan 's Nicole Monet Kirk labelled him as an " extremely likable hero " . Furthermore , in the book " Interactive Storytelling for Video Games : A Player @-@ Centered Approach to Creating Memorable Characters and Stories " it is noted that while Sora follows a " standard hero archetype " , his character becomes more believable and strong when worrying about his friends ' fates . Haley Joel Osment , Sora 's English voice actor , has also been praised by Gaming Target 's Matt Swidder who mentioned Osment " makes a perfect fit for Sora " . While remarking Osment 's work , Louis Bedigian from GameZone mentioned that " Sora had something rarely found in video @-@ game characters : depth " also praising his role in Kingdom Hearts . Game Informer 's Bryan Vore found that in Kingdom Hearts II , Osment has improved in voicing the character , praising his work . In their Super Smash Bros Brawl list , IGN described Sora as " ... the most active and evolved hero on this week 's list . " IGN listed him as a possible character in Super Smash Bros. Brawl ; though he was not chosen as the " reader 's choice " .

Sora 's transformations in the various Disney worlds in Kingdom Hearts II were commented to be entertaining by Julia Reges from AllGame due to how varied they are . Also reviewing Kingdom Hearts II , Greg Bemis from G4TV praised Sora 's development in the game , including his growth and the fact each of his attacks from the title are entertaining . Although Computer and Video Games also found an improvement in Sora 's movements due to sequences made with the Reaction Commands , they found them " fairly straightforward . " RPGamer 's Courtney Stone stated that Sora now moved " like an acrobatic honed fighter " in contrast to his " adolescent awkwardness " seen in the first Kingdom Hearts and remarked Sora 's transformation into a lion seen in the sequel as enjoyable . His new outfit was also well received by GameSpy who found an improvement from the original one that looked like " wardrobe from Mickey Mouse 's closet " . GamesRadar had similar opinions and particularly focused on Sora 's transformation and his new abilities . Game Informer viewed Sora 's Drive Forms as well as his combined techniques with other characters as one of the

best additions to the gameplay . Although IGN also praised Sora 's growth in Kingdom Hearts II in their article " Kingdom Hearts III : The IGN Concept " , they stated that in order to make his role in a future sequel more entertaining , he would need more development making him " be confident , collected and committed to the tasks at hand " . Also commenting on his role in a future sequel , GamesRadar stated that having Sora 's character older would be necessary to make the story more mature .

On the other hand , Sora also received negative comments regarding his characterization . He was third in 1UP.com 's " Top 5 Most Irritating RPG Protagonists " with writer Bob Mackey commenting he is " a human version of Mickey Mouse " , criticizing his original outfit and relationship with Riku and Kairi , and finding him to be less popular than the Disney characters featured in the series . In January 2007 , Sora was listed the fourth " biggest dork " of 2006 by Game Informer , citing the Atlantica singing portions of the game .