

= The Legend of Zelda : Oracle of Seasons and Oracle of Ages =

The Legend of Zelda : Oracle of Seasons and The Legend of Zelda : Oracle of Ages are two action @-@ adventure games in the Legend of Zelda series , developed by Flagship (a subsidiary of Capcom) . They were released on February 27 , 2001 in Japan , May 14 , 2001 in North America , and October 5 , 2001 in Europe for Nintendo 's Game Boy Color handheld console . Both games were re @-@ released on the Virtual Console for the Nintendo 3DS in Japan on February 27 , 2013 and in North America and Europe on May 30 , 2013 . The games feature a brighter color palette when played on a Nintendo Game Boy Advance in order to make up for the darkness of the screen , and a special shop is also made available . After experimenting with porting the original The Legend of Zelda to the Game Boy Color , the Flagship team , supervised by Yoshiaki Okamoto , began developing three interconnected Zelda games that could be played in any order . The complexity of this system led the team to cancel one game .

The player controls Link from an overhead perspective , with the same control scheme from The Legend of Zelda : Link 's Awakening for the Game Boy . In Seasons , the Triforce transports Link to the land of Holodrum , where he sees Onox kidnap Din , the Oracle of Seasons . In Ages , the Triforce transports Link to Labrynna , where Veran possesses Nayru . The main plot is revealed once the player finishes both games . Link is armed with a sword and shield as well as a variety of secondary weapons and items for battling enemies and solving puzzles . The central items are the Rod of Seasons , which controls the seasons in Holodrum , and the Harp of Ages , which lets Link travel through time in Labrynna . Before he can infiltrate Onox 's castle and Veran 's tower , Link must collect the eight Essences of Nature and the eight Essences of Time , which are hidden in dungeons and guarded by bosses .

Taking roughly three years to develop , the game was a critical and commercial success , with the two games together selling eight million units . Critics complimented the gameplay , colorful designs and graphic quality , but criticized the inconsistent sound quality .

= = Plot = =

= = = Oracle of Seasons = = =

Seasons begins as the Triforce calls out to Link from within Hyrule Castle . Link approaches it , and is transported to a dark forest where he encounters a traveling group led by a dancer named Din . After Din welcomes Link to Holodrum , the sky becomes covered in black clouds . A voice from the clouds calls Din the Oracle of Seasons and refers to himself as Onox , General of Darkness . A funnel cloud drops from the sky , taking Din into its dark heights . As the tornado dissipates , the seasons of Holodrum fall into disarray and change rapidly .

Din 's attendant , Impa , tells Link that they were headed for Hyrule ; she instructs him to see the Maku Tree in Horon Village , the capital of Holodrum . Link finds a sword in a cave and makes his way to the tree . The Maku Tree tells Link he will need the eight Essences of Nature and gives him the Gnarled Key , which unlocks the dungeon holding the first Essence . Link retrieves the eight Essences , hidden in eight dungeons throughout Holodrum and Subrosia , and brings them to the Maku Tree . The Maku Tree uses them to create a Huge Maku Seed , a sacred seed that cleanses evil , which allows Link to enter Onox 's castle . Link enters the castle , defeats Onox , and rescues Din , who tells him that he is now a true hero and must face a new trial soon . Twinrova , watching the scene remotely , states that the Flame of Destruction has been powered by the havoc Onox has wrought .

= = = Oracle of Ages = = =

As with Seasons , the Triforce calls out to Link . Link is transported to a forest in the land of Labrynna , where he hears screaming . In a clearing , Link finds a woman encircled by monsters .

When the monsters see Link , they scatter in all directions . The woman is Princess Zelda 's nurse , Impa , who asks Link to help her find a singer in the forest . Continuing through the forest , the two find Nayru , a young woman with blue hair singing on a tree stump , surrounded by forest creatures . A shadow emerges from Impa and reveals itself as Veran , Sorceress of Shadows . Veran soars into Nayru 's body and possesses her . Nayru was the Oracle of Ages ; her abduction causes a disruption in the time flow of Labrynnna .

Link receives a sword from Impa and makes his way to the Maku Tree in Lynna City , the capital of Labrynnna . The Maku Tree is killed in the past on Veran 's orders ; Link uses a time portal to travel to the past to prevent this . The Maku Tree tells Link he will need the eight Essences of Time to defeat Veran . Link sets out to retrieve the eight Essences , hidden in eight dungeons throughout Labrynnna 's past and present . After getting the sixth Essence , Link is told he has the opportunity to save Nayru . He invades Queen Ambi 's castle and removes Veran 's spirit from Nayru , but Veran then possesses Queen Ambi . Link gathers the remaining Essences and brings them to the Maku Tree , who uses them to create a Huge Maku Seed that allows Link to enter Veran 's Black Tower . Link ascends the tower and defeats Veran . He rescues Queen Ambi , and Nayru tells him that all has returned to normal . Twinrova , watching the scene remotely , states that Veran has lit the Flame of Sorrow .

= = = Linked ending = = =

If one game is played as a sequel to the other by a linked password , Twinrova captures Princess Zelda , lighting the Flame of Despair . Link enters a warp point by the Maku Tree and faces Twinrova , who is attempting to use the three Flames to revive Ganon , the primary antagonist in the Zelda series . Link defeats both Twinrova and a mindless , poorly resurrected Ganon . He frees Zelda , whose sacrifice would have been the full resurrection of Ganon ; together , they exit the crumbling castle . After the credits , Link is seen waving to a crowd from a sailboat off the shore of a land with a castle in the background .

= = Gameplay = =

The gameplay of Oracle of Seasons and Ages is similar to that of The Legend of Zelda : Link 's Awakening , copying basic controls , graphics , and sounds from the Game Boy title . Like most The Legend of Zelda titles , exploration and combat take place from an overhead perspective . Link uses a sword for his primary attack , complemented by secondary weapons and items . Basic items , such as bombs and a boomerang , are common to both games . Some new items are exclusive to one game , usually with a counterpart in the other , with similar uses (e.g. the slingshot in Seasons and the seed shooter in Ages both shoot seeds , while the magnetic gloves in Seasons and the switch hook in Ages are used to access otherwise unreachable areas via special targets) . Unlike most Zelda titles , a sword and shield is not always equipped when the player possesses them ; they can be assigned like any other item into either of two available slots . Most of each of the games is spent finding the eight Essences (Essences of Nature in Seasons and Essences of Time in Ages) , each hidden in a dungeon ? a large , usually underground , area containing enemies and puzzles . Each dungeon culminates with a boss that guards the Essence .

When not in a dungeon , Link explores the overworld . In Seasons , the overworld consists of Holodrum and the subterranean world of Subrosia . The two worlds are linked by several portals . In Ages , Link travels between present @-@ day Labrynnna and the past , connected by Time Holes . In either game , some areas of one world are accessible only from portals from the other and vice versa . Holodrum , Subrosia , and Labrynnna contain optional side quests and upgrades for Link and his equipment . One such side quest is ring collection ; rings provide Link with various bonuses and abilities , such as improved defense . Some rings do not have any practical uses , e.g. rings that weaken Link 's attack or defense , or transform Link into an enemy creature , or are awarded when certain criteria are met but do not have any effect . Another side quest is the optional trading game , in which Link receives and delivers special items to certain people throughout the land . Once

completed , Link receives an upgraded sword .

In both games , there are many circumstances when a previous item can be upgraded into a more useful form . The latter three dungeons in both games will hold a more powerful version of an item received earlier in the game . Both the sword 's offensive power and the shield 's defensive abilities can be upgraded twice , once through passwords and again through side quests . If Link swings an enhanced sword at full health , a sword @-@ shaped beam will escape from the sword as a ranged attack . The number of bombs and Mystical Seeds that can be held can also be increased through the same ways as the shield and sword . Roc 's Feather and the Power Bracelet are special cases , as , while the two are in both games , the former can only be upgraded in Oracle of Seasons while the latter only in Oracle of Ages .

The central item of Oracle of Seasons is the Rod of Seasons . By standing on a stump and swinging the rod , Link can change the season and affect his surroundings . For example , to cross a body of water , Link can change the season to winter and walk on the ice . Changing the season to summer causes vines to flourish , which Link can use to scale cliffs . When Link obtains the rod , he initially cannot use it . In the course of the game , Link visits four towers that house the four spirits of the seasons ; each tower Link visits allows him to switch to an additional season .

In Oracle of Ages , the central item is the Harp of Ages , which Link uses to manipulate time and travel between the past and the present . In the course of the game , Link learns three tunes to play on the harp . The Tune of Echoes activates Time Portals at fixed locations ; the Tune of Currents enables Link to travel from the past to the present without a Time Portal ; the Tune of Ages allows Link to switch between the two time periods at almost any location on the map .

= = = Interaction = = =

Although the two are built on the same game engine , Oracle of Ages concentrates on puzzles , while Oracle of Seasons focuses on action . Each is a complete game capable of interacting with the other , via passwords or a Game Link Cable .

Upon completing either game , players receive a password that can be used to play an alternative version of the other . In this version , some characters mention passwords that can be given to characters in the first game in exchange for an item or upgrade . Then , by taking a new password back into the linked game , the item or upgrade can be transferred . Rings can be traded by this password system or randomly created by connecting two games with a Game Link Cable .

In the alternative version , plot points are changed or expanded upon to allow the game to serve as a sequel . It also features an extended ending in which Twinrova kidnaps Zelda , and lights the third Flame of Despair to revive Ganon . The player can then enter Twinrova 's lair and battle Twinrova and Ganon . Upon completing the alternative game , another password is shown that gives the player the Victory Ring , which commemorates the defeat of Ganon .

= = Development = =

In early 1999 , Yoshiaki Okamoto , then head of Capcom 's screenwriter subsidiary Flagship , proposed his idea of remaking the original The Legend of Zelda for the Game Boy Color to Shigeru Miyamoto , the game designer at Nintendo who created the series . Okamoto was eventually asked to develop six Zelda games for the Game Boy Color : two based on earlier installments and four original entries into the series . Okamoto wanted to release them in quick succession of four to five months , and held on to his concept of bringing the first game to the handheld console to make young children experience the merits of the original Zelda , but also as a test for the development team to move on to a more ambitious sequel if it turned out to be successful .

Contrary to Miyamoto 's design mentality of creating the gameplay system first , development started out with the scenario writing , which Flagship was in charge of . Some of the staff members , the team led by director and designer Hidemaro Fujibayashi that was responsible for tasks other than the storyline , wanted to skip the remake and create an original Zelda title right away . As the first installment in the series was deemed too difficult for the new generation of players , more and

more changes were applied to the point where it had an entirely different world map . As a result , the team ran into problems because the scenario and the maps had to be reworked constantly to make all the modifications match . The Game Boy Color 's screen presented an additional hurdle when attempting to rework the earlier Zelda title as it is narrower than that of a television ; players could not view an entire room without scrolling which made it easy to overlook stairways or clues on walls .

Dismayed by the rate at which the team had been spending money for a year without results , Okamoto asked Miyamoto for help , who then came up with the idea of a whole trilogy of games , each with a different focus on gameplay elements . This trilogy was referred to as the " Triforce Series " , named after a fictional holy relic known as the Triforce that plays a major role in many Zelda titles . The Triforce is composed of three parts : the Triforces of Power , Wisdom , and Courage ; each game in the trilogy was to be associated with a piece of the Triforce , one of the titles being the conversion of the original The Legend of Zelda . The first game of the three was demonstrated at Nintendo 's SpaceWorld trade show in 1999 , under the working title *Zelda no Densetsu : Fushigi no Kinomi ? Chikara no Sh?* (?????? ?????? ? ??? ?) . This action @-@ oriented game concerned Ganon 's theft of Princess Zelda and the " Rod of the Seasons " , which threw the seasons of Hyrule into chaos ? a precursor to the plot of Oracle of Seasons . In the playable demonstration , Link solved puzzles by using the Rod of the Seasons to manipulate the environment and change the current season . *Chie no Sh?* , which focused on color @-@ based puzzles , and *Y?ki no Sh?* , which used the times of day to solve puzzles in a mechanic similar to the use of seasons , were not shown . In the US , the games became *The Legend of Zelda : Mystical Seed of Power* , *Mystical Seed of Wisdom* , and *Mystical Seed of Courage* .

The games interacted with each other : players could begin with any of the three titles and have the actions of the first game affect the story of the other two , a concept conceived by Okamoto . More than ten of Flagship 's scenarists , among them Resident Evil writer Junichi Miyashita , worked simultaneously on the three stories . The developers considered using a cell phone adapter to transfer data , but later decided on a password system . The limitations of this system and the difficulty of coordinating three games proved too complicated , so the team scaled back to two titles at Miyamoto 's suggestion . Condensing the games into a single cartridge was never considered , as the prospect of multiple endings and the added replay value afforded by the ability to play the titles in either order was very attractive . Oracle of Seasons was adapted from *Mystical Seed of Power* , Oracle of Ages was adapted from *Mystical Seed of Wisdom* , and *Mystical Seed of Courage* was canceled .

These sweeping design changes pushed the release dates closer to the upcoming release of the Game Boy Advance (GBA) , the next system in the Game Boy line that is backward compatible with Game Boy Color games . The team considered adding special functionality to the game triggered only when played on a GBA , but was afraid that the additional development time required for the addition would cause the games to be released after the GBA . When the release date of the GBA was postponed , the team was able to incorporate GBA functionality and still release the games approximately a month before the GBA was released . Staggered releases were abandoned in favor of releasing the two games simultaneously . This made it easier for the team to test the interaction between the games and keep the style consistent . Each title was shipped on an 8 @-@ megabit (16 @-@ megabit in Europe) cartridge . The music for the games was composed by two employees of the Japanese music and sound effect production company Pure Sound , credited under the pseudonyms " M @-@ Adachi " and " Kyopi " . Nintendo artist and series regular Yusuke Nakano designed the characters for the two titles , and incorporated previous creations from Ocarina of Time into Oracle of Seasons and characters from Majora 's Mask into Oracle of Ages .

= = Reception = =

Oracle of Seasons and Ages were critical and commercial successes , selling nearly 4 million copies each . Reviews were strongly positive : Chris Carle of IGN said that Seasons and Ages were " the best games ever made for the Game Boy Color " , and Craig Majaski of Gaming Age called

them " the two best games ever to grace a handheld system " . It was rated the 34th (Seasons) and 39th (Ages) best games made on a Nintendo System in Nintendo Power 's Top 200 Games list . In August 2008 , Nintendo Power listed Oracle of Seasons and Ages as the fourth and fifth best Game Boy / Game Boy Color video games respectively . The games placed joint 57th in Official Nintendo Magazine 's 100 greatest Nintendo games of all time . Game Informer 's Ben Reeves called them the 10th best Game Boy games collectively . The interconnection was seen as one of the highlight features of the titles . The ability to play the games in reverse order after completion increases the replay value , as does trading passwords between the two . GamesRadar listed The Legend of Zelda : Oracle of Seasons / Ages as one of the titles they want in the 3DS Virtual Console , both Oracle of Ages and Oracle of Seasons were later released on the platform May 30 , 2013 .

Critics enjoyed the graphics ; GamePro called Seasons " bright and colorful " with " surprisingly expressive and well @-@ designed " animations , and Gaming Target said Ages is " beautiful and creative " , with " meticulous attention to detail " . Gaming Age called both games " the pinnacle of good graphics on the Game Boy Color system " . Although the two share graphics to a large extent , Seasons is distinguished by swapping the color palette to reflect the current season . IGN felt that the expressive colors used for the changing seasons made Seasons the more graphically impressive of the two .

Reviews of the audio were mixed . Reviewers noted that the sound was hampered by the poor quality of the Game Boy Color 's speakers , although it fared favorably compared with other games for the system . The selection of songs was praised for complementing familiar Zelda songs and sounds with new music . The Zelda theme and the traditional sound effect played upon solving a puzzle were considered welcome additions , but other sound effects were criticized as simplistic " beeps " .

= = Gamebooks = =

Two game books were released based on the games as part of the Nintendo You Decide on the Adventure series by Scholastic . Both were written by Craig Wessel and based on the events in the games with few minor differences . The first one , based on Oracle of Seasons , was published in October 2001 . The second , based on Oracle of Ages , was published in January 2002 .