

Spring 5-14-2015

# How Disney is "Kingdom Hearts?" A Comparison Between Disney Films and the Video Game

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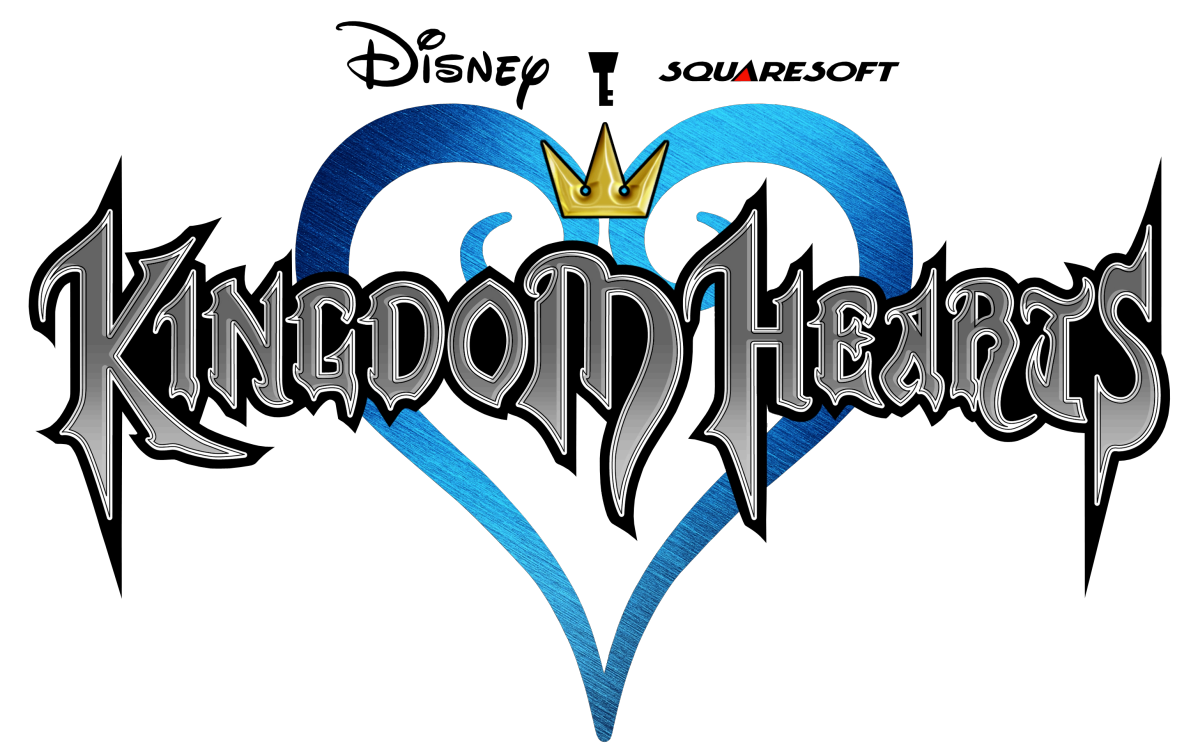
## Recommended Citation

Vo, Andrew and Vo, Kassidy, "How Disney is "Kingdom Hearts?" A Comparison Between Disney Films and the Video Game" (2015). *Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters*. Paper 118.

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# How Disney is Kingdom Hearts ?



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## A Comparison Between Disney Films and the Video Game

### The Video Game

Kingdom Hearts is a Playstation 2 video game released in both Japan and the United States in 2002 produced by two different companies: Disney and Square Enix (formerly SquareSoft at the time of production and release). Players assume the role of Sora, a young boy from a world called Destiny Islands. His world becomes consumed by the darkness, and in the process, he becomes separated from his two best friends, Riku and Kairi. Swept into a new, unfamiliar world, Sora attempts to make it back home with his friends, but in the process, realizes that his world is not the only one in danger and that he may, literally, be the key to saving several worlds from their demise.



Throughout his journey, he has two allies to aid him in battle: Goofy and Donald Duck, who serve for their king, Mickey Mouse. The trio traverses throughout several worlds which are mainly that of Disney films. Disney worlds that are in this game include: Alice in Wonderland, Tarzan, Hercules, Aladdin, The Little Mermaid, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Peter Pan, Winnie the Pooh, and Pinocchio. In each world, Sora must use a weapon called the Keyblade to find and seal a "keyhole" in each world so that the Heartless, the enemies in this video game, can no longer access and wreak havoc to that world.



As Sora travels through the Disney worlds, he encounters situations in each world similar to the respective Disney movie. For example, while Sora attempts to find the Keyhole to the world Wonderland, he meets Alice, who must prove herself innocent to the Queen of Hearts of stealing the Queen's heart. Although these Disney cameos in the video game have an air of similarity to the films, the video game exhibits differences that are more progressive to their respective original.



### Gender

The seven princesses of heart are a core element in the video game. As women who have Hearts untainted by darkness, when gathered, they can summon a keyhole that leads to Kingdom Hearts, a place that can give one the power to rule over all worlds.

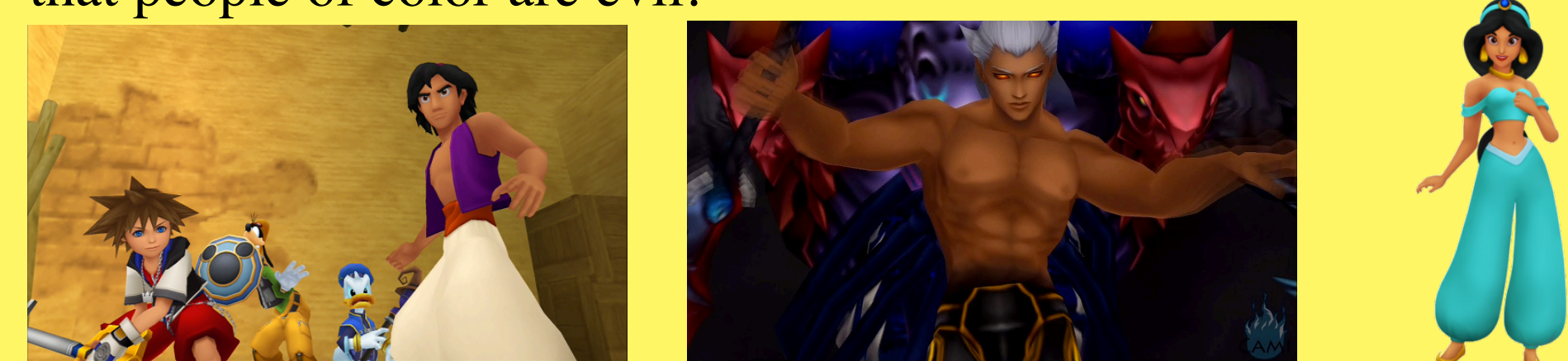


While Disney movies have been known to follow the formula of a helpless princesses who need a prince to get a happy ever after, Kingdom Hearts has deviated slightly from the original movies to present females in a more progressive fashion. In the world Atlantica, where "The Little Mermaid" appears in the game, Prince Eric is not present in the video game, and thus, love is not a reason for Ariel's want for independence. Instead, she dreams of gaining independence from her father King Triton, and imagines what the human world is like. A great departure from the "helpless princess", Ariel is an ally that fights alongside Sora.

In some instances, however, the video game also shows signs of regression. One particular example is Jasmine's role in the world Agrabah. With sparse dialogue, Jasmine is shown to be helpless and in need of being saved at all times. Her last dialogue in the game is simply a startled gasp as she gets kidnapped by the villain. This is in stark contrast to the movie where, even near the beginning of the film, Jasmine exclaims she is not a prize to be won. Towards the end of the film, she also helps aid Aladdin in stealing Genie's lamp by pretending she is under Jafar's spell, effectively using her femininity as a weapon.

### Race and Friendship

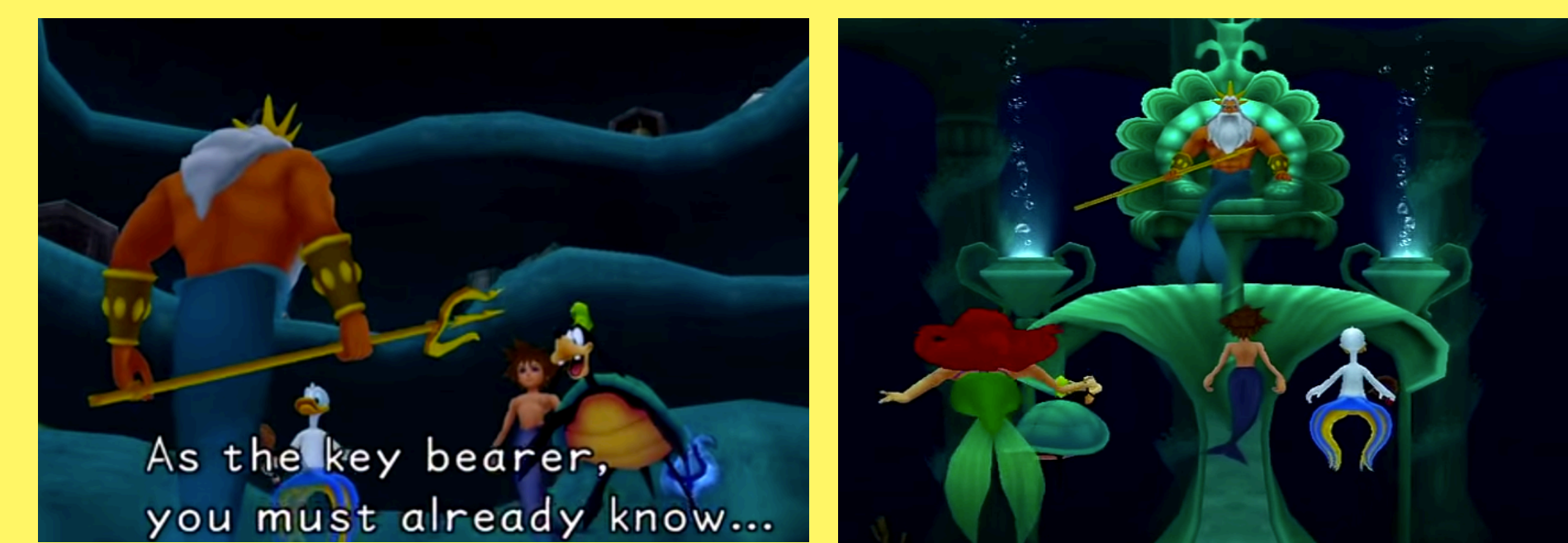
Much like the Disney films, racial diversity is poorly shown in Kingdom Hearts. Almost all of the people of color in the video game is shown in Agrabah, but even then, Jasmine's and Aladdin's skin tones in the video game are only slightly dark. The only other person of color present in the game is Ansem: Seeker of Darkness, the main antagonist in the video game. Yet, having a person of color portrayed as a villain sends the message that people of color are evil.



The protagonist, though has a Japanese name (Sora, which means sky) is a white-skinned person, further promoting the white-dominant culture Disney perpetuates with its movies. At the same time, making a Japanese character white-skinned is an act of cultural appropriation, stripping away Sora's ethnic identity.

The fact that one must travel to different worlds to access different movie settings gives a sign of segregation, and gives a sense of disconnection between the movies. Although that logically makes sense as neither movies have met each other, it also alludes to racism, where neither worlds are allowed to intersect. Therefore, Sora's friends and allies are only accessible to each respective world; you must be in a specific place to be with certain people.

Racism is also an issue presented in the video game in Atlantica, most notably when King Triton confronts Sora, claiming he knows that Sora travels across worlds, and that meddling is not something he condones.



Yet, there is a quote that plays in the menu trailer that comments on intersectionality:

**"There are many worlds, but they share the same sky: one sky, one destiny."**

Implying that people, regardless of race, are all part of one world.

### Religion: Good vs. Evil

Much like the original Disney films, Kingdom Hearts has exhibited symbols to which parallels can be made to Christianity.

Before fighting the Heartless, Sora must undergo The Numinous, or a Deep Dive, where he travels within his heart in order to unlock the Keyblade. An omnipresent voice guides him throughout this inner journey, which is representative of God. Upon completing this experience, the Keyblade is bestowed to Sora, and he is able to defeat the Heartless. If a person gives in to the darkness of their hearts, their hearts become consumed and they become a Heartless. This is equivalent to saying committing sins will cause a person to go to hell. When Sora brings judgment and defeats a Heartless, the heart is released and brought to Kingdom Hearts, which can be interpreted as heaven.



### What is Kingdom Hearts?

Kingdom Hearts represents different interpretations of the afterlife. For the antagonist, Kingdom Hearts is filled with darkness, but Sora believes that it is made of light. When Kingdom Hearts was opened, it was indeed filled with light that led to the antagonist's demise. But upon trying to close Kingdom Hearts, it was discovered that several dark creatures resided inside as well. This lack of black or white situation definition of what Kingdom Hearts is shows that it is up to the player to decide what Kingdom Hearts means to them. Furthermore, the darkness can also be interpreted as the manifestation of the antagonist's greed for wanting to obtain such great power for themselves.



This opens up the idea for children to think outside of the dualistic concept of heaven or hell, and open up to the notions of other religions and concepts of the afterlife.



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