

Joan of Arc

Maiden of France

“Hauviette!”

I turned to see my friend Joan calling to me as she came around our barn and into the meadow. I laughed as we began to race to the fairy tree. Joan was older than I was by a few years, but this time I was the faster runner. Barefooted, the two of us waded into the cool waters of the River Meuse. We lived in the village of Domremy in northeast France during the time of the Hundred Years' War.

Joan was always more serious than my other friends, but today she seemed particularly solemn as she spoke. “Father heard that the English raided another village last night,” she sighed. “Hauviette, I just do not understand why the English want our land. It does not belong to them, it belongs to God, and He has given it to us to care for. They have their own land, and I have heard tales of its beauty.”

I was never quite sure how to answer Joan. She seemed much wiser than anyone else that I knew. We chatted for a while longer and then gave each other a hug as we parted for our own homes.

The Shadow of War

That evening was no different from most evenings. My family sat down to dinner, and then we did our evening chores and went to bed. Around midnight, the village alarm bells clanged, and I sprang out of bed. I grabbed a bag of provisions we kept stored for such emergencies and hurried outside to help gather our livestock. I knew other families were doing the same, and I prayed that all would get out of the village safely.

Joan's father and another townsman had rented an abandoned castle on an island in the Meuse. It was our secret hiding place in case the village ever came under attack. Finally, we reached the castle, and although we left a few animals behind, all the families arrived safely.



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A few days later, we returned to Domremy and to the mess left behind by the band of brigands and thieves that had raided the village.

During those summer days of 1425, it seemed that no one felt like dancing or playing. I could see Joan in the distance helping in her father's garden. The village church was just to the right of the garden. I knew Joan loved to go to the church and to pray to God. We sometimes teased her because she would go there of her own free will. As the church bells began to ring, Joan knelt down

Discussion or Essay Questions

Joan's standard was made of white satin with an image of a dove holding the legend *Du par le Roy du Ciel* (On behalf of the King of Heaven). As well, her personal standard bore the words, "Jesus, Maria," and had a picture of Jesus surrounded by kneeling angels presenting gold fleur-de-lis. These banners represented things that were meaningful to Joan. Design a banner that would represent you and what is important in your life.

Go to the link below and read the translation of the poem, "Song of Joan of Arc." It was the only popular piece written about Joan in her lifetime and was composed by Christine de Pisan, who was the official writer and historian in the Court of Charles VI.
<http://www.indiana.edu/~sotl/portfolios/shopkow/joan.htm>

Compose a poem of your own telling of Joan's valor and courage.

Research information about Joan of Arc's beatification, the steps taken to declare her a saint of the Catholic Church.



Want to Read More?

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Joan of Arc by Josephine Poole and Angela Barrett
Joan of Arc (F) by Diane Stanley
Joan of Arc: The Teenager Who Saved Her Nation
by Philip Wilkinson

HIGH SCHOOL

Joan of Arc by Kathleen V. Kudlinski
Beyond the Myth: The Story of Joan of Arc by Polly Schoyer Brooks
Joan of Arc: Warrior Saint by Jay Williams



in the garden to pray. She knelt there for longer than usual, and from that moment on, there was something different about Joan.

She said nothing to her family or to her friends, but many years later, we discovered that on that particular day in the garden, Joan heard voices and saw a dazzling light.

The Call to Arms

The voices came when Joan was in her thirteenth year. Over the next three years, she believed that God wanted her to help the dauphin (the king's eldest living son), Charles VII. Back in 1420, under pressure from Queen Isabella, a weak and insane King Charles VI had signed the Treaty of Troys. This treaty eventually led to the dauphin being disinherited and unable to be crowned king when his father died.



Ruins of Charles and Joan's Meeting Place

In May 1428, Joan knew the time had come to go to the dauphin's aid. Her voices told her that she was to "raise the siege laid to the city of Orleans." They instructed her to go to Robert de Baudricourt in the fortress of Vaucouleurs. When Joan explained to Baudricourt that God had sent her to lead an army against the English and to help crown Charles VII, he laughed at her and sent her home.

An Audience with the Dauphin

Joan never gave up, and in early 1429, she finally convinced Baudricourt to take her seriously. Escorted by six armed men, Joan moved through enemy territory to meet with Charles VII in Chinon. To test Joan, Charles had another man dress in prince's clothing, while he pretended to be an ordinary nobleman. Although Joan had never seen the dauphin, her voices guided her directly to him.

Joan spoke to him in private, and those who were there that night, said that when Charles came back from talking to her, "the king appeared radiant." No one ever found out what Joan told Charles, other than it was something only Charles could have known.

Into Battle

Charles had armor made for Joan, and in 1429, a seventeen-year-old Joan, with an army of about four thousand men, banners blazing, rode northward toward the besieged city of Orleans. She approached Orleans on April 29, 1429, and slipped into the city through an unguarded gate. The people of Orleans were elated.

Over the next nine days, Joan led one devastating attack after another. During one battle, an arrow penetrated her armor, but she remained on the field shouting orders and encouragement to her men. Such a display of courage convinced everyone that she was indeed an instrument of God. By May 8, the English had departed in frustration and confusion, and the siege on Orleans was lifted.

News of Orleans's delivery quickly spread across France, and the people took great heart. The French army, led by Joan, continued its march towards the ultimate goal, the coronation city of Reims. Enemy soldiers fled from one garrison after another, and on July 16, 1429, Joan and Charles VII made a triumphant

entry into Reims. Joan knelt solemnly beside Charles as he was officially crowned Charles VII, king of France.

Captured!

In March of 1430, Joan returned to battle marshalling a force to fight the duke of Burgundy northeast of Paris. In this battle, Joan was captured and taken prisoner. Her captors handed her over to the Burgundian captain, John of Luxembourg, who eventually sold her to the English for ten thousand gold francs. In December 1430, she was taken to Rouen, the capital city of Normandy.

The English hated Joan. Since they could not charge her for humiliating them on the battlefield, they arranged to have her tried on religious charges. Pierre Cauchon, the trial judge, was the bishop of Beauvais and on the side of the English. He set out to prove that she was a witch and a heretic, and he was prepared to do this by whatever means necessary. The trial lasted five months, during which Joan was held illegally in a secular prison guarded by men. To avoid molestation, she refused to change out of the men's clothing she was wearing. Through trickery, Cauchon used this against her to charge her as a witch and a heretic.

Consumed by Fire

On May 30, 1431, at the age of nineteen, a barefooted Joan of Arc was led to a tall scaffold for execution. As she was tied to the stake, she burst into tears and asked for a cross. An English soldier grabbed two sticks and held them in the shape of a cross in front of her. As the bundles of wood were set ablaze, those watching heard her calling out the name of Jesus. Finally, her head dropped to her chest and the flames consumed her body. Joan's ashes were gathered and thrown into the Seine River.

Innocent of All Charges

Those of us who grew up with Joan knew that the trial had been a sham. Her family, with the help of King Charles VII, petitioned Pope Callistus III to reconsider the charges against Joan. In 1456, the Pope granted a retrial. I, Hauviette, and many of her close friends were called to testify at this second trial. Witnesses from the initial inquisition were there to speak about the corruption and fraud of the first trial.

Primary Sources

Joan of Arc trial documents

http://archive.joan-of-arc.org/joanofarc_trial_issues.html



What to Watch

Joan of Arc (1999) Unrated – Lion's Gate



Tower Where Joan was Imprisoned

Finally, on July 7, 1456, the trial of condemnation was condemned by the pope's own court, and Joan was declared innocent of all charges. In a solemn event, the residing bishop tore a copy of the original trial documents to shreds.

Sometimes as I drift off to sleep, I think about the days when Joan and I would race to the fairy tree and wade into the River Meuse. I see Joan kneeling in her father's garden, and I wonder what it must have been like for her to hear the voice of God calling her to help deliver France from the hands of the enemy. They may have burned Joan's body, but her spirit has risen like a star. 🌟

About the author

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