



Joan of Arc
(c. 1412 – 1431)
“The Maid of Orléans”

Joan of Arc

(French: Jeanne d'Arc)



- Joan is considered a heroine of France for her leading swift and successful military campaigns during the Lancastrian phase of the Hundred Years' War.
- Born into a peasant family in 1412, she stated that she received visions of Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Margaret the Great Martyr and Saint Catherine of Alexandria instructing her to recover France from English domination and support the future king, Charles VII.
- On May 23, 1430, She was captured by a group of French nobles loyal to England, tried and after a year, burned at the stake, dying at about the age of 19.
- In 1456, Pope Callixtus III held an inquisition court to examine her trial, debunked the charges against her, pronounced her innocent, and declared her a martyr. In the 16th century she became a symbol of the Catholic League of France, and in 1803 was declared a national symbol by Napoleon Bonaparte.
- Joan of Arc was canonized in 1920 and is one of the nine secondary patron saints of France.
- Joan of Arc has remained a popular figure in literature, painting, sculpture, and other cultural works since the time of her death, and many famous writers, playwrights, filmmakers, artists, and composers have created, and continue to create cultural depictions of her.

Early Life



Born in Domrémy, a border village in eastern France, Joan had her first vision at the age of 13. She reported seeing Saint Michael surrounded by angels appearing to her in her father's garden. Throughout her life, she continued to have visions of Saint Michael, as well as Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret. By early 1428, around the same time the English began the campaign resulting in the Siege of Orléans, Joan's visions told her she must leave Domrémy and fight for France's liberation.

Around May 1428, Joan petitioned the garrison commander for an armed escort to take her to the French Royal Court at Chinon, with no success. She returned the following January, requested an audience and was once more refused. But in the meantime, she gained support from two soldiers: Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy.

That February the two soldiers were able to get Joan a third interview with the garrison commander. Their enthusiastic support for her convinced him to give her permission to travel with a small escort of six soldiers. Before heading out, Metz asked her if she was going to travel through hostile Burgundian territory in her dress. She agreed to switch to a soldier's outfit, which her escort viewed as a necessary expedient. Her escorts provided her with the clothing.

This choice would later be used to support charges of "cross-dressing" against her. ("Joan of Arc," Wikipedia, last modified January 19, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_of_Arc.)

Rise



Joan's first meeting with Charles VII took place when she was 17 and he 26. Joan told him that she had come to raise the siege of Orléans and to lead him to Reims for his coronation. He sent her to be examined by a council of theologians to verify her morality and ensure her orthodoxy. The council declared her a good Catholic and a good person. Afterwards, she was physically examined by women directed by Charles' mother-in-law Yolande of Aragon, who verified her virginity. After her examinations, plate armor was commissioned for her, she received a banner of her own design, and had a sword brought for her from underneath the altar in the church at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois

Joan effectively turned the longstanding Anglo-French conflict into a religious war. For example, Joan had dictated a letter to the Duke of Bedford that warned him that she was sent by God to drive him out of France. Even before she joined the army, her presence created devotion and the hope of divine assistance, and even news of her coming may have encouraged the people of Orléans to continue their resistance.

When Joan set off to Orléans, she was initially treated as a figurehead to raise morale. Throughout her military career Joan would fulfill this role. She said she carried her banner on the battlefield rather than fighting and had never killed anyone. Some of the commanders said that she had an uncanny ability for performing tasks such as assembling the army and arranging the disposition of troops and artillery.

Fall



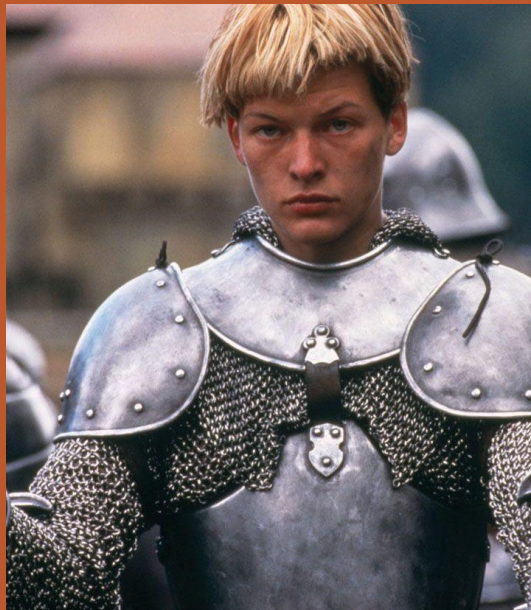
On May 23, 1430, Joan accompanied a force that was defeated, and Joan was captured. The English negotiated with her captors and had her transferred to their custody.

Joan was put on trial for heresy on January 9, 1431. She testified that her visions had instructed her to defeat the English and crown Charles VII, and her success was argued to be evidence Joan was acting on behalf of God. If unchallenged, her testimony would invalidate the English claim to the rule of France and undermine the University of Paris's support for dual Anglo-France monarchy. Her guilt could also be used to compromise Charles's claims to legitimacy by showing that he had been consecrated by the act of a heretic.

The verdict was a foregone conclusion. On May 23, 1431, Joan was given the twelve articles of accusation that summarized the court's allegation that she was guilty of heresy. The next day, Joan was taken out to the churchyard of the abbey for public condemnation. Joan signed the abjuration document she was given, which she was not able to understand as she was illiterate and most of it was written in Latin.

On May 30, 1431, Joan was executed at the age of about nineteen years old. She was tied to a tall plastered pillar for execution by burning. She was given a cross fashioned from a stick by an English soldier, which she kissed and placed next to her chest. After she died, the English raked back the coals to expose her charred body so that no one could claim she had escaped alive. They then cast her remains into the Seine River.

Legacy



A retrial began on November 7, 1455, at Notre Dame Cathedral. Joan's mother opened the trial by publicly delivering a formal request for her daughter's rehabilitation. The retrial came to an end on July 7, 1456, at Rouen Cathedral. The court declared that the original trial was unjust, malicious, slanderous, fraudulent and deceitful; Joan's trial, abjuration, execution and their consequences were declared nullified. The stain on Joan's name was ceremoniously erased when one of the copies of the Articles of Accusation was formally torn up. It was also decreed that a cross should be erected on the site of where Joan was burned.

Joan is a virgin saint in the Roman Catholic Church. She was canonized on May 16, 1920 by Pope Benedict XV. Her feast day is May 30, the anniversary of her execution.

Joan's legacy as a religious figure extends beyond the Catholic Church. She is remembered as a visionary in the Church of England with a commemoration on her feast day.

Rankin, Daniel; Quintal, Claire, eds. (c. 1500). The First Biography of Joan of Arc with the Chronicle Record of a Contemporary Account (PDF). OCLC 1153286979. Archived from the original (PDF) on 9 July 2011.

The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc. Translated by Barrett, Wilfred Philips. Gotham house. 1932.

Wikipedia. "Joan of Arc." January 19, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_of_Arc

Additional Readings:

- [Joan of Arc Archive](#) – Online collection of Joan of Arc-related materials, including biographies and translations.
- [Joan of Arc Museum](#) – Website for a museum in Rouen, France located near the place she was executed.
- [Locations in Joan of Arc's campaigns and life](#) – Google Maps feature showing locations from her birth until her death.
- [The Real Joan of Arc: Who Was She?](#) – Long analysis of various issues and controversies, from 1000 Questions.
- [International Jeanne d'Arc Centre](#) (in French, English, and German)
- "Jeanne d'Arc" in the [Ecumenical Lexicon of Saints](#)
- [Historical Association for Joan of Arc Studies](#) – Research work and study reports (in English and German)
- [Protocol of the 1431st process](#) and the [Rehabilitation process](#)
- [Films about Jeanne d'Arc, International Joan of Arc Society \(with film clips\)](#)
- [Centre Jeanne d'Arc](#) at the Orleans Municipal Library (French)
- "[The Siege of Orleans](#)", BBC Radio 4 discussion with Anne Curry, Malcolm Vale & Matthew Bennett ([In Our Time](#), 24 May 2007)
- [Finding aid to the Acton Griscom collection of Jeanne d'Arc manuscripts at Columbia University. Rare Book & Manuscript Library.](#)

Bibliography