

# Joan of Arc

A sixteen-year-old peasant girl has been hearing voices. The voices, she claims, are of angels and they are giving her a very specific instruction. She is to lead French soldiers to victory over the English. This girl is Joan of Arc.

England and France have been at war for many years. Presently, two men claim to be the king of France. One is Henry VI who is also the King of England. Henry has allies in northern France and wants all of France to be under his control. The other is Charles VII, the son of the previous French king who has recently died. Although he is the rightful king, he has few allies and little power.

Joan believes that France can never defeat England unless Charles can fight his way to the city of Reims so that he may be crowned king. This becomes Joan's mission and she journeys to meet with Charles.

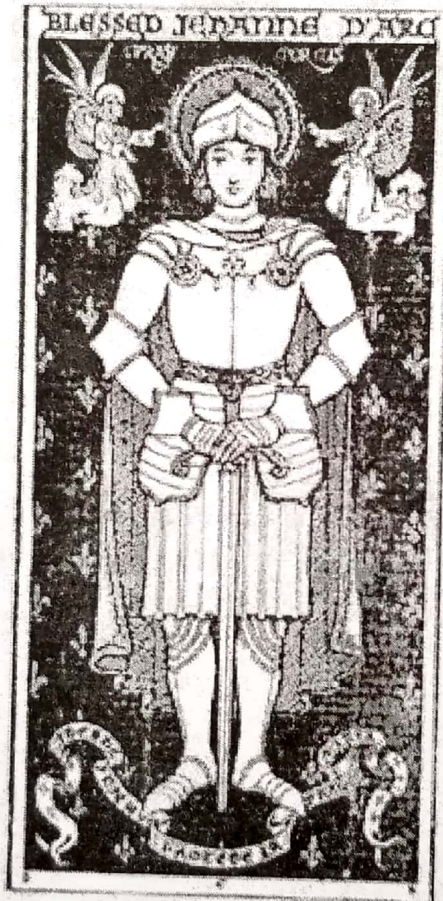
While some people believe what Joan is saying, others believe that she is a mad woman. They ask, "why would god speak to a poor peasant woman?" Even Charles has heard of Joan's reputation. Charles decides to test Joan. He asks one of his nobles to sit on the throne and he stands with the rest of his court. When Joan enters she walks straight for Charles even though she has never seen him before. This convinces Charles that Joan was speaking the truth.

Joan is given command of a French army. She becomes a knight with a squire and a page. She has armor and a sword, miraculously found, behind the altar of a church where she sends men to seek it. Joan leads her army against the English soldiers who are occupying the city of Orleans. The sight of Joan armed like a man and fighting at least as bravely as a man (along with her reputation for having special powers) motivates the French. The English soldiers are demoralized and begin to retreat. Joan's army escorts Charles VII all the way to Reims. Along the way she wins several other major battles. Even though Reims is in territory controlled by England, the city opens its doors to Charles and he is made the King of France.

For the next ten months Joan of Arc continues to win victories for France. Then, in a battle, she falls from her horse and is captured by the English. The English put her on trial for the crime of heresy. Heresy is spreading religious beliefs which are different than the official church teachings. They claim that Joan made up the stories of angels. If she is found guilty she could be executed.

The English want show that Joan is a heretic to convince people that Charles is not the true king. They tell her that if she confesses then she can live. However, she stubbornly refuses. On May 30th, 1431, she is burned at the stake.

Although Joan of Arc is killed, she has begun to turn the tide. The English are soon pushed out of France. King Charles VII is a wise and powerful king for thirty years after her death. Today Joan of Arc is a Catholic Saint.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Joan of Arc Assignment

**Task:** Read the passage entitled "Joan of Arc" on the back of this page. Then use that information to answer the following questions. This assignment is worth 10 points.

1. What do the voices that Joan hears urge her to do?
2. How does Charles "test" Joan?
3. Joan is said to have "special powers". Name TWO events that brought people to that conclusion:
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4. Define **heresy**.
5. *Think Question* - Why do you think Joan of Arc refuses to save her own life by confessing to heresy?