

Joan of Arc – the teenage girl who led an army

In the 1420s, during the Hundred Years War, England was on the verge of conquering the whole of France. But that all changed when a 16-year-old peasant girl went to see the French king and persuaded him to let her lead one of his armies! So what on earth made the French put a young girl in charge of an army? What made her such a good leader? And what happened to the greatest heroine in French history?

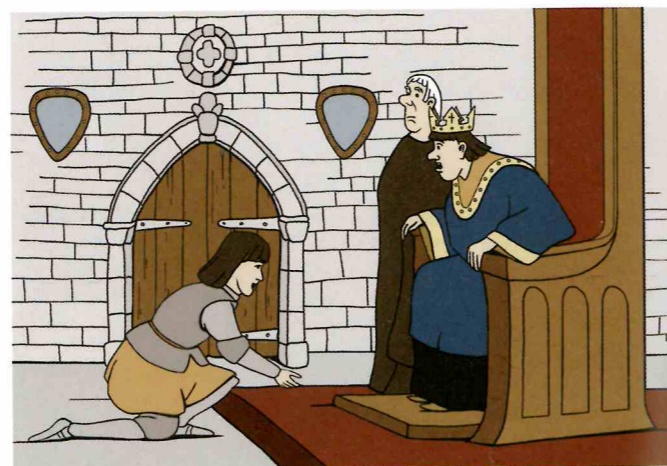
Mission Objectives

- Recall who Joan of Arc was and how she affected the outcome of the Hundred Years War.
- Examine why she is still a national hero in France today.

1 Joan was born in Domrémy around 1412. At the age of 12, she claimed that Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret and Saint Michael 'visited' her and told her to attend church regularly.



2 In 1428, with France on the verge of defeat, Joan claimed that the saints visited her again and told her to go to the king and tell him to let her drive the English from France.



3 Joan saw the desperate French king, who had been praying for a miracle. She told him that she knew he had asked God to save the French people from suffering. The king was amazed! He hadn't told anybody about his prayers – she must have spoken to God!

4 Joan was questioned about her visions by a panel of holy men for three weeks. They told the king that she must be telling the truth and to put her in charge of one of his armies!

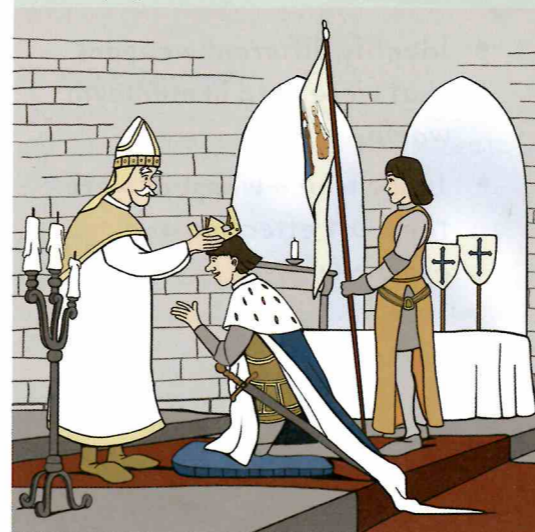


5 Joan believed it was God's wish for her to go to Orléans, which was being attacked by the English. She wore a suit of armour and immediately made the soldiers go to church, give up swearing and stop stealing. People said she was sent by God and men flocked to fight for her.

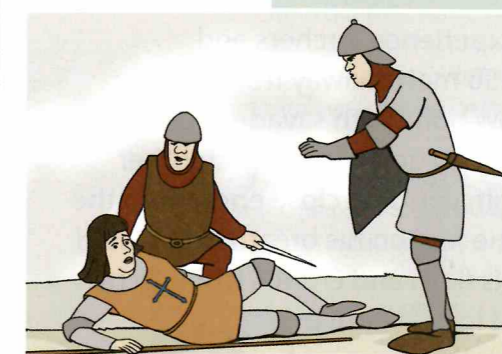
6 Joan led an attack on the English. Despite being injured, she inspired the French to victory! Soon, the English armies were being pushed back by the French. Never again would the English control so much of France.



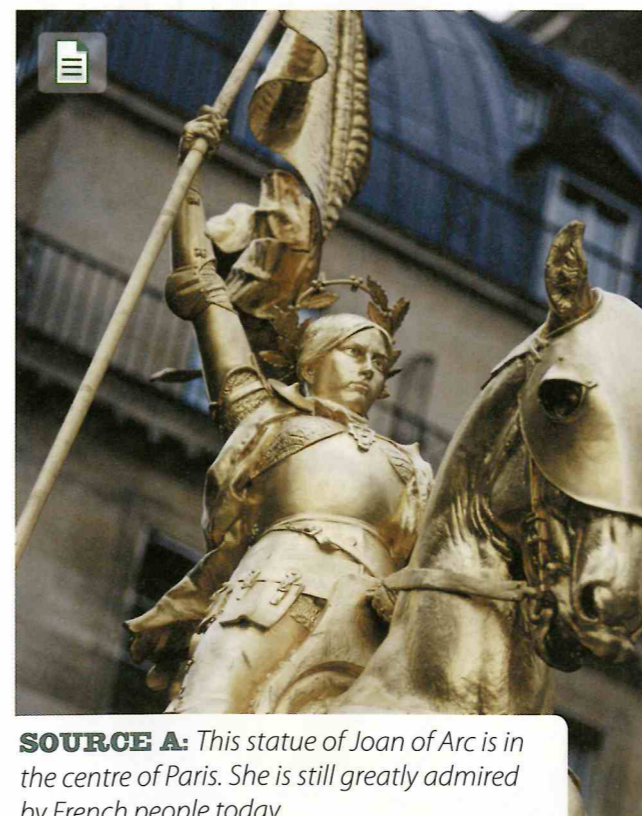
7 Joan continued to lead the French to victory in other battles. When the new French king was crowned, Joan stood next to him, carrying her banner.



9 Joan was put on trial by the Church for being a witch but there was not enough evidence. In the end, they found her guilty of dressing as a man, which was against church law, she was burned at the stake!



8 Joan continued to fight for France but was betrayed. She was captured at the town of Compiègne and sold to the English. The French were devastated; the English were overjoyed!



SOURCE A: This statue of Joan of Arc is in the centre of Paris. She is still greatly admired by French people today.

FACT!

Twenty-five years after her death, the Church said that Joan of Arc should never have been killed and that she was not a witch. In 1920 she was made a saint after French soldiers in World War One reported miracles after praying to her.

Joan of Arc's revenge!

Soon after Joan's execution, people on both sides started to believe it was a mistake. Even while Joan was burning, an English onlooker is said to have cried out, 'We are lost, for we have burned a saint.' The King of England's own secretary hurried back from the execution and said, 'We are all ruined, for a good and holy person was burned.' By 1453, England had lost all of its land in France apart from a tiny area around Calais.

Work

- 1 Describe ways in which Joan of Arc was different from the kind of people who usually led armies in the Middle Ages.
- 2 Why do you think so many people followed Joan into battle?
- 3 Why do you think that Joan of Arc is such a heroine in France today?
- 4 You have been asked to contribute to a children's history book called *Who's Who in French History*. You are to write the entry for Joan of Arc but have been told there's only enough room for five sentences! Write the five sentences for inclusion in the book.