

BY KIDS FOR KIDS

Joan of Arc

The following is a true story about a young girl who is a national hero in France. Her name is Joan of Arc.

She was born in France in a town called Domremy almost 600 years ago, in 1412. Her childhood was rather normal for a child in those days. Her dad, Jacques, was a simple farmer, and her mother, Isabelle, was a deeply religious woman who taught Joan all the wisdom of her faith.

At that time there was a terrible war between England and France called the 100 years war. Actually, even though it was called that it lasted even longer than one hundred years. During this time, sometimes the French were winning, and sometimes the English. It was a terrible time for ordinary people just trying to get on with their lives.



At the time of Joan's childhood, the English were looking very strong, and many people were leaving Joan's village in fear of their lives.

When Joan was 13 years old, she began to have visions. She saw things that nobody else could see. From these visions, she understood that she had a purpose: to lead the French in the battle against the English army! Joan was just a peasant farm girl. How was she going to get an army to defeat the English? She needed to speak with the King of France - King Charles.

A few years went by, and Joan continued to have similar visions. She cut her hair short and began dressing like a man. This might not seem so strange to us. Today, loads of girls wear all kinds of clothes, with all kinds of hairstyles, but in those days, this was very unusual indeed!

People started to hear about Joan's amazing visions. They became convinced that she was destined to save France, so when she was about 16, Joan and a small band of followers set off to meet with Charles, who lived in his palace in Chinon. This was a dangerous journey because there were many enemies about, but they rode like the wind and made it safely to Chinon.

When they arrived the townsfolk were astonished at this group being led by a young girl. Joan's followers were nervous. Perhaps Joan was too, but there was no sign of fear on her face. They tied up their horses and bravely walked up the steps to the great door at the front of the palace. The door was opened by the palace guards, and Joan was escorted into the main hall where she was met by the King himself, who was surrounded by his advisors and generals.





"I am Joan of Arc," she declared, "and I have had a vision. I am to lead the French army to victory against the English!"

Charles and his company were astonished! Who was this strange, short-haired young girl, who made such bold claims?

"And once we have defeated the English," she continued, "my purpose is to ensure that you are crowned the true King of France!"

"What nonsense!" shouted the councillors. "How can she possibly lead an army," cried the generals. But Charles was curious. After all, they'd been at war for a very long time, and nothing seemed to be working. It was a far-fetched idea but it might be worth a try.

"Very well," he said, "you may lead our army to the city of Orleans, which is surrounded by the English."

The councillors and generals were outraged, but there was nothing they could say to change Charles's mind.

In preparation, Joan was trained in fighting, learning how to use weapons and armour. She also quickly learned how to handle a horse, becoming quite an expert rider.

Eventually, when she was ready, she set off, leading the French army to Orleans.

She was wearing white armour, and rode upon a white horse. Before attacking the English, she wrote them a letter, warning them that they were about to be defeated. But the English generals just laughed. So, in March 1429, Joan led the attack. It was a furious battle. Joan fought hard and inspired

the French army to do the same. During the battle, she was hit by an arrow in the *shoulder*! But that didn't stop her.



She fought even harder until eventually, the English army realized they were losing, and ran away as fast as they could. The French army cheered! They had won the battle!

After such a miraculous victory, Joan's reputation spread far and wide among French people. She and her followers escorted Charles across enemy territory to the city of Reims, where he received his crown as the King of France.

But, the war was not over. There was a city called Compeigne that was under attack. Joan fearlessly gathered the army, and they once again set off for battle. This time the fighting was hard. Joan fought bravely, but things were not going well for the French. The army retreated into the city, but Joan had fallen from her horse! The people in the city needed to raise the drawbridge for their defence. Joan was locked outside! There was nothing she or the French army could do! She was captured and taken to the English commander.

They accused her of all sorts of things. They called her a witch! They shouted that she deserved to die, for dressing like a man!!! There was nothing Joan could do. She received a terrible punishment - and died at the age of 19. But she has not been forgotten. She was a hero that led her people to victory, and she is still treated as a hero by the people of France.

The End

