



**St. Joan of Arc**  
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1412–1431 • France

The sun glinted off the young maid's sword, held high before the walled city of Rheims. If her army took this city then the French king would be officially crowned, and the long Hundred Years' War—the war that had cost numberless French and English lives—would soon be ended. The army waited for her signal and then surged forward with great cries and the clash of armor. The maid rushed into the fight with her army, though she never took a life.

The young maid's name was Joan of Arc, and she changed the course of history. She led a broken-down army that no one else could lead, fought battles that no one else would fight, and won a war that no one else could win.

Joan was born in the tiny village of Domrémy and was known for her gentleness and goodness. At thirteen, she heard the voices of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret, telling her to lead the French army to victory. At first Joan was frightened, but she trusted God. She understood that God had chosen a young and defenseless girl to win victory for France because He chooses the weak to humble the proud. God would save France, not Joan—she was only his humble servant.

Joan went to the French court to meet the king. To test her, the king disguised himself and hid in the crowd. Immediately, Joan identified him even though she had never seen him before. She told him that God wanted her to lead his army. The king realized that Joan had been sent by God and did as she wished. And that is how Joan led the French army and pushed the English out of France.

Even though victory would soon be France's, there were still small battles to fight. In one of these battles, Joan was captured and put on trial by Church officials who worked for the English, not the pope. Joan declared that the voices she heard were from God and that she had been doing His will. It was a corrupt and unfair trial, and the judge condemned Joan as a witch, sentencing her to burn at the stake. At her execution, Joan's lips kissed the crucifix, and her eyes never left it as she called out the name of Jesus. The pyre was set on fire, and Joan knew that soon she would be with God and the saints in heaven. St. Joan of Arc, help me to do what God asks me to do!