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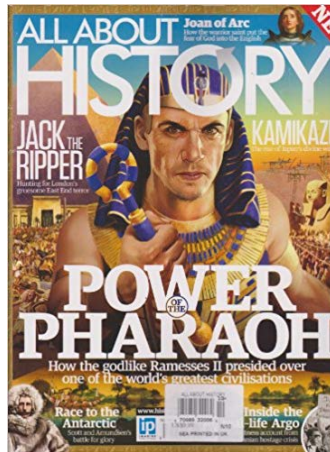
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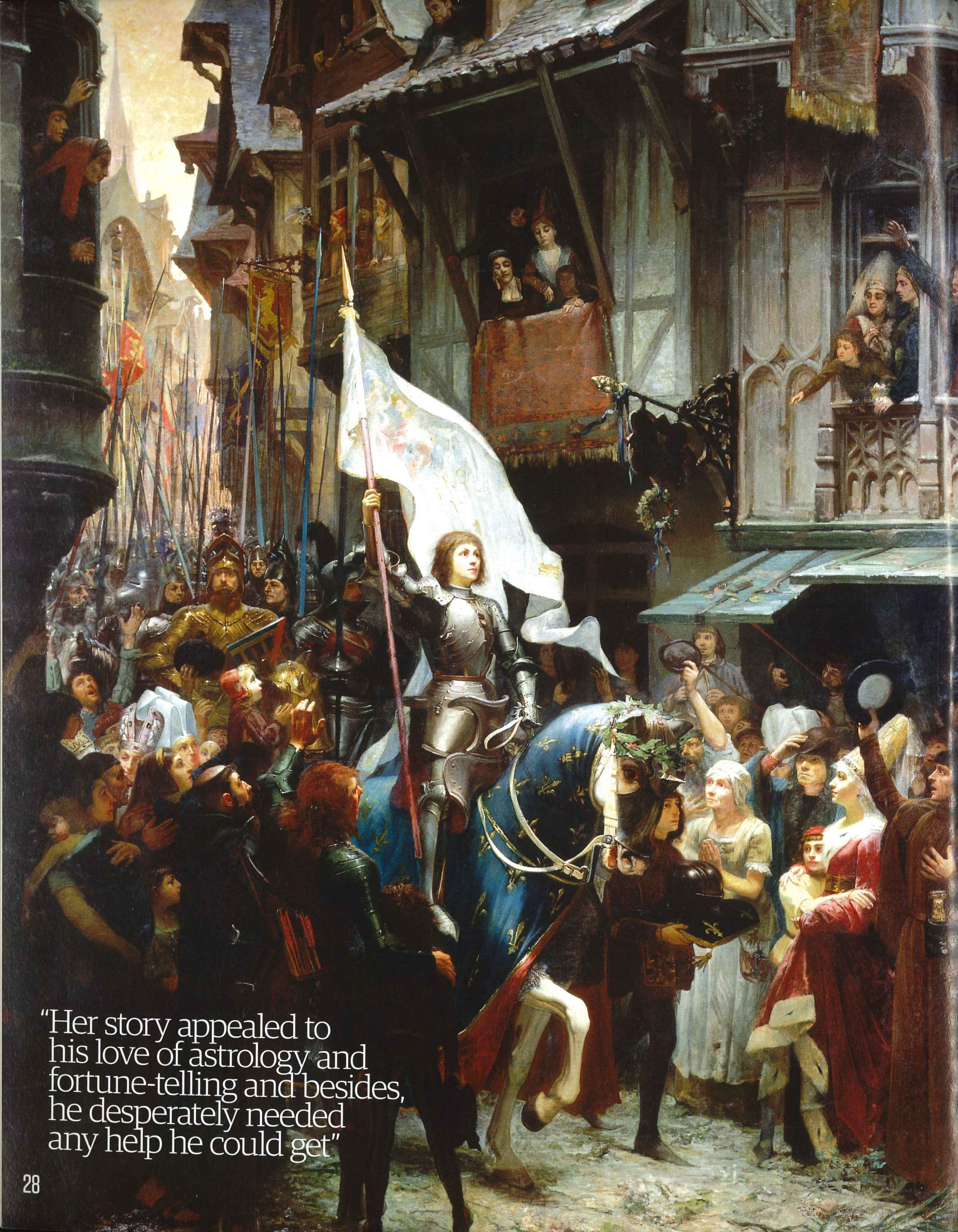
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"Her story appealed to his love of astrology and fortune-telling and besides, he desperately needed any help he could get"

Heroes & Villains

Joan of Arc

The teenage martyr who led the French army and put the fear of God into the English

Written by Jonathan Hatfull

A young woman whose faith led her to challenge kings and inspire armies, Joan of Arc's devout belief that God had appointed her to lead the French to victory against the British drove her from the village of her birth and onto the battlefield. In her brief time she became a national figurehead; a symbol. It was an image she cultivated and encouraged and one that would ultimately lead to her death.

Flames secured Joan's martyrdom, just as they provoked her fierce patriotism. Jehanne D'Arc, or la Pucelle (the Maid) as she came to be known, was born in 1412 in the village of Domrémy, located across the river from Burgundy territory. The Burgundians, allies of the British, regularly attacked French territory. In July 1428, Joan's family fled a raid and returned to find the enemy had burned their town, fields and church. Joan had heard angelic voices since the age of 12 or 13, urging her to remain pious, but now they gave her a specific mission. The voices of Archangel Michael, St Catherine and St Margaret directed her to go into France and find her king, the Dauphin Charles.

The alliance between Britain and Burgundy had kept Charles from claiming the French crown. His enemies not only occupied Paris, but also held the city of Reims, where coronations took place. The crown would have to wait, however, as the French city of Orléans was currently in the grip of a protracted siege. Orléans needed help and Joan believed she was the one to deliver it. On 13 May 1428, the sixteen-year-old arrived in Vaucouleurs and begged Robert de Baudricourt, the captain of the garrison, to give her a

military escort to Charles' court at Chinon. Baudricourt replied that she should be taken home and beaten. However, Joan would not be deterred and returned in January the next year.

She claimed she was the subject of a prophecy from 1398, about a maid who would "deliver the kingdom of France from the enemy." Baudricourt turned her down again, but her efforts were gaining traction. She gained favour with local nobility, particularly the

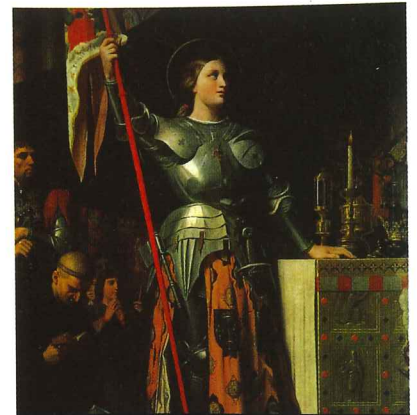
Duke of Lorraine. Although Joan refused to attempt to cure his gout, the Duke agreed to give her a small escort and in February she travelled in men's clothes to Chinon, where she was presented to the court.

Charles was cautious but curious. Taking advice from a mad heretic could be devastating to his campaign, but her story appealed to his love of astrology and fortune-telling and besides, he desperately needed any help he could get. Joan immediately picked him out from

the crowd and pledged her allegiance: "Most illustrious Lord Dauphin, I come and am sent from God to give assistance to you and the kingdom." He was impressed, but ordered she be tested before giving any official credence to her claims. One of the key figures in these trials was Yolande of Aragon, one of the true powers behind Charles and an intelligent strategist. After Joan's maidenhood was proved, she faced questions from clergy and theologians and passed with flying colours. Whether or not they truly believed in her voices was irrelevant. Charles now had a messenger of God, and Yolande raised a convoy for this messenger to lead.

In April 1429, Joan rode out, holding her white standard and wearing a suit of armour commissioned

She claimed to have her first vision at the age of 12, when St Catherine, St Michael and St Margaret appeared to her in a field



Joan of Arc at the Coronation of Charles VII

Life in the time of Joan of Arc

The Black Death

From 1348 to 1350, the Black Death ravaged England, claiming the lives of some 1.5 million people. Carried by fleas, in turn carried by the rats infesting London, the bubonic plague spread through overpopulated towns and cities. England's economy and resources would feel its effects for decades to come.

Emissaries from God

Joan of Arc was not the first woman to claim the heavenly host had spoken to her. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) railed against corruption in the clergy, St Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) claimed to be able to hear and see Mass on the wall of her room when she was too ill to move, and Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) travelled Italy urging states to make peace with Rome.

From bows to cannons

As the Hundred Years' War raged on through the decades, the technology of warfare began to change. The English longbows at Agincourt in 1415 were the difference between victory and defeat, but as open battles were often replaced by lengthy sieges, cannon fire became a deciding factor. By the siege of Orléans both sides deployed cannons.

Heresy trials

The definition of heresy covers a great deal of sins, but the term boils down to denying any established Christian dogma. In the Middle Ages, heresy trials became more common and the Catholic Church aggressively pursued any enemies. This continued into the 16th century, with Copernican scholars accused of heresy.

The Bavarian Hussites

Czech religious reformer Jan Huss was burned at the stake in 1415 for heresy. After his death, the Hussite movement was born, separating itself from Rome. The Hussites declared that communion should be given with bread and wine, they believed in poverty of the priesthood, punishment of sinners and freedom of preaching. The Pope announced a crusade against them in 1420.

Edward III, one of the instigators of The Hundred Years' War, crosses the Somme



The Hundred Years' War, 1337-1453

After William the Conqueror defeated Harold at Hastings in 1066 and claimed the English throne, English and Norman territories were combined. It was inevitably difficult to keep control of the taken land. By the reign of English King Edward III in 1327, only Gascony and Pontieu remained. When the French King Charles IV died heirless, Edward believed his mother and Charles' sister Isabella was the next in line, meaning the crown should be his. The French disagreed and chose Charles' cousin Philip. A furious Edward refused to pay homage and when the Philip confiscated his lands in Aquitaine in retaliation, Edward declared war.

The Edwardian era of the Hundred Years' War lasted until 1360. The English captured Philip's successor, King John II, but a compromise wasn't reached until the Treaty of Brétigny, in which Edward agreed to abandon his claim in exchange for Aquitaine and Calais. War resumed in 1369 when Charles V of France responded to Edward the Black Prince refusing his summons by declaring war. Charles successfully reclaimed many of the territories his predecessor lost, and the Black Prince's son Richard II would make peace with Charles VI in 1389. After the truce had been repeatedly extended, war resumed in 1415 when Henry V invaded, leading to decades of conflict during which the English would take Paris and claim kingship. They would not be driven out until the Battle of Castillon in 1453, the official end of the Hundred Years' War.

Timeline

1412

● **Birth of a warrior**

Joan is born to a farming family in the town of Domrémy. She never receives formal education or how to read and write, instead learning about religion from her mother Isabelle.

1412



● **Domrémy burns**

The territory across the river from Domrémy is Burgundian, and a raid into French territory proves a defining moment for Joan. Her family flees to Neufchateau and returns to find the enemy having burnt their town.

1428

● **Journey to Vaucouleurs**

In 1428 Joan's voices tell her to travel to France and talk to the dauphin Charles. She travels to Vaucouleurs to demand an escort, beginning a series of attempts ending in success after convincing nobles that she is the fulfilment of a prophecy.

May 1428

● **Audience with the king**

Joan is granted a meeting with the Dauphin Charles, who sees value in her for his military campaign to free Orléans. Joan immediately identifies him in a room full of people and impresses him with her fervour.

6 March 1429

● **The sword is found**

After convincing the clergy and theologians of her maidenhood and her gift, Joan is allowed to lead a force to Orléans. She announces that her sword can be found in the church of Saint Catherine-de-Fierbois, which it is.

April 1429

by Charles. She announced that her sword would be found in the church of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois, hidden behind the altar. It was an old gift to the church from the crusades, and the discovery was treated as a miracle. Her pious conduct became renowned; she forced her soldiers to stop taking the Lord's name in vain and expelled prostitutes from their camps. She dictated letters to the British, instructing them to leave France or face the wrath of God. A canny propagandist, the Dauphin ensured these letters were copied and widely distributed.

However, Joan was still an untested military leader. She arrived at Orléans eager for battle but had not understood that her forces were there as support, nothing more. Although frustrated, she managed to get her men into the city, past the English troops and was rewarded with the adulation of the citizens. They may have been pleased to see her but her impatience to attack was at odds with her fellow commanders' strategy. In her frustration she hurled insults at the English from the battlements.

When an attack was decided upon on 4 May 1428, Joan was not even told by the commanders and woke up as the fight was in progress. She arrived just in time to rally her troops and inspire them to capture their

Joan sent many letters to British and Burgundian troops but she was illiterate and had to dictate them

target: the small fortress of Saint-Loup. It was their first victory and Joan's confidence grew. She dictated a fearsome final letter to the English, ordering them to leave, and on 6 May another attack was mounted. Joan led the attack herself, routing the enemy. She advanced again the next day, claiming to be the first to storm the ramparts at Les Tourelles, where she took an arrow to the shoulder but stayed in the fight. The French commanders credited her for inspiring the troops to victory. Orléans hadn't just been relieved; the English had been routed.

With Orléans free, Joan wanted Charles to proceed immediately to Reims but the Dauphin was more cautious. He wanted to clear the Loire valley and began raising money for the campaign. It would be a month before Joan would see combat again. Technically, the young Duke of Alençon led the army but he was a firm believer in the young female warrior and frequently deferred to her. They swept quickly through the English resistance and laid siege to Beaugency. The English surrendered without realising a relief force was on its way, a force the French promptly set off after. They met at Patay on 18 June, where the ill-prepared English were decimated, with over 2,000 dead and all but one senior officer captured. Joan played little part in it but by this point that mattered not, as her legend only grew stronger.

"She dictated a fearsome final letter to the English, ordering them to leave, and on 6 May another attack was mounted. Joan led the attack herself, routing the enemy"

Defining moment

First vision 1424

At just 12 or 13 years old, she first claims to hear the voices of angels speaking to her. At first, the voices tell her to 'govern' her conduct. If she feels she had not behaved properly, the voices would admonish her. They also tell her to reject the marriage her family had arranged for her. Joan soon identifies the main voice as Michael, the archangel who led the battle against Satan in the Book of Revelation. As Joan grows older, Michael's messages continue to advise her toward piety, but gradually grow more political. Finally, Michael and the other voices, those of St Catherine and St Margaret, tell her to travel to France and begin her mission.



By now, Charles was ready to head for Reims and the coronation. He led a grand procession, entered the city on 16 July and was crowned the next day as Joan looked on proudly. She was desperate for the king to attack Paris but he chose to leave Reims instead, only to be barred from crossing the Seine by English troops. Joan was ecstatic as she saw the only possible answer was an attack on Paris.

Joan dressed in men's clothes, claiming the spirits told her to. She also wore her hair short, but this is often not depicted in portraits

After skirmishes throughout August and a truce with Burgundy, on 8 September Joan finally led the Paris attack she has been itching for. She stood on the moat, demanding surrender, but the only reply she received was an English arrow through her leg. After hours of constant bombardment, her men reached her under the cover of darkness, but she was determined to continue the fight the next day. However, once Charles saw the number of French casualties he ordered her to return to his side.

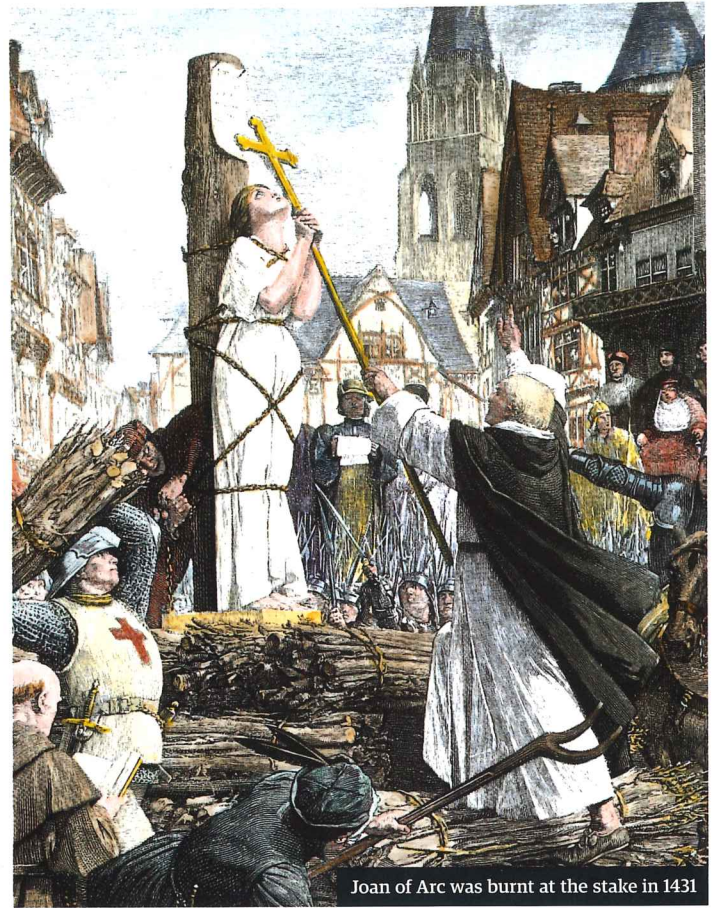
The attack had failed and Joan's usefulness was now suddenly cast into doubt. She needed a victory to restore her reputation but in November 1429 failed to take the castle of La Charité after a long siege. On return to court, Charles gave her hereditary nobility but made sure she stayed with him, which frustrated Joan. It was her duty to be on the battlefield expelling the enemy from her home soil, not rotting in court.

By 1430, the English were preparing a full-scale invasion of France to reclaim their recently lost territory. When the city of Compiègne refused to surrender, Joan rode to support them without Charles' authorisation. On 23 May she led an attack from the city, but the English reinforcements cut her off at the rear and she could not retreat. She was pulled from her horse and forced to surrender to the Burgundians. She testified that constant sexual harassment was the

reason she remained in men's clothing, while the voices in her head told her not to escape. Defying them, she leapt from the tower but was injured in the fall and promptly recaptured.

The English needed to make an example of Joan and the Parisian theologians wanted to try her for heresy, idolatry and witchcraft. She needed to answer for the way in which she had circumvented the church by claiming to receive her instructions from her 'voices' while her ability to inspire followers had to be stopped. If she were convicted by a foreign power the damage to Charles' reputation would be severe, so the French court paid the Duke of Burgundy £10,000 for her.

Six rounds of questioning took place between 21 February and 3 March 1431, with nine more between 10 and 17 March, conducted in her cell. Joan never changed her story. On 24 May, she was taken to the scaffold and told that if she did not abjure, she would be given to the secular authorities that would carry out her death sentence. Joan wavered as the sentence began to be read out. In front of the crowd, she recanted and was sentenced to life imprisonment and to wear women's clothes.



Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake in 1431

Two days later Joan changed her mind. Demanding she be allowed to attend mass, Joan was found in men's clothes, claiming the voices had told her that her abjuration was treason. Now the only possible outcome was her execution. On 30 May she was allowed to make her confession and take communion before she was taken to the Old Market in Rouen and tied to the stake. She was given a small crucifix and a Dominican priest held a parish cross high so she could see it even as the flames began to lick around her. The young warrior who had led her country to such great victories over the English cried out, "Jesus!" repeatedly before leaving this world. The king she had helped crown, Charles VII, not once tried to help Joan throughout her ordeal. She was merely a tool that had stopped being useful. However, the legend of Jehanne la Pucelle only grew stronger with time. In 1456, after a lengthy investigation, the sentence was annulled and in 1920, Joan of Arc was canonised by Pope Benedict XV. She is now a saint.

Defining moment

Siege of Orléans 29 April-8 May 1429

Joan arrives at Orléans amid great fanfare from the citizens of the city but is met with indifference by her fellow commanders. She is determined to mount an attack as soon as possible but is told they would wait for a relief effort. She is so poorly regarded by the other generals that when a sortie takes place, she's not told beforehand. Instead, she races out and joins the attack just in time to rally the flagging troops, ultimately claiming a fortress. This will be the first in a series of victories that would liberate Orléans and confirm her status for many as a heaven-sent hero.



Charles is crowned

After swiftly clearing the Loire region of English resistance, Charles finally travels to Reims where he is crowned King Charles VII of France. The coronation fulfils another part of the prophecy of Joan's voices.
17 July 1429

A failed siege

Following Charles' coronation, Joan is convinced that Paris will fall. However, the siege fails as 1,500 men fall to the English bombardment, with Joan herself wounded, having to be pulled from the battlefield under nightfall.
8 September 1429

Capture

While leading an unsanctioned relief effort of Compiègne, Joan decides to attack the Burgundian troops surrounding the city. She is cut off by the English and pulled from her horse while trying to escape.
23 March 1430

Trial

Needing to regain superiority, the church interrogates Joan, telling her she can abjure or face a secular court that will execute her. She retracts her statement, only to change her mind days later, stating she'd rather die than deny what she knows to be true.
9 January-24 May 1431

Burned to death

Having recanted her abjuration, Joan is sentenced to be burned at the stake. A Dominican priest holds a cross up high enough for her to see from the flames. She calls out "Jesus!" several times as she burns to death.
30 May 1431

Late justice

Charles orders that Joan's trial be investigated, a proceeding taking roughly six years to complete. Finally, in 1456, the original verdict is annulled, deciding the process had been unjust.
1456

1456