Educators’ Study Guide

JOAN THE GIRL OF ARC

by Darrah Cloud

Support for Joan the Girl of Arc is provided by:

The Robert and Adele Schiff Family Foundation
Ruth J. and Robert A. Conway Foundation
KeyBank
The Sutphin Family Foundation
The Hearst Foundations
Scripps Howard Foundation
Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America, Inc.

The Playhouse is supported by
ArtsWave, Ohio Arts Council & The Shubert Foundation
Live theatre is an extraordinary way to experience our common humanity. Although *Joan the Girl of Arc* is about a young woman who lived hundreds of years ago, it is written and produced to bring us directly into her experiences and ultimately into her heart.

Watching a play is not passive; it's not like watching TV or a movie. Everyone in the room is alive, focused and contributing to one central activity. The actors contribute their performance; the audience contributes its attention, laughter, and imagination. The play demands our understanding and empathy; in return we share the characters' emotions and journeys. At their best, their stories take us down pathways we hadn't considered or believed possible. A theologian once told me that theatre “helped her imagine the infinite possibilities.”

*Joan the Girl of Arc* is such a story. This Joan is a teenager dealing with an awkward boyfriend, a pesky sister, uncomprehending parents. Not so unusual. Suddenly she is called upon to define herself, to articulate her beliefs, and ultimately to act on them. She must transcend adolescence to discover who she really is.

Every moment we spend with Joan is enhanced by the choices made by dozens of artists — the playwright, the director, the other actors, the scenic, costume, and sound designers. At every moment, they have asked themselves, “How can we help tell this story?” Every moment is 100 saturated moments. Our hour with Joan contains hundreds of hours. We are exhilarated and enriched by the experience of walking in countless shoes at once.

I hope your students enjoy the play and afterwards are able to discuss not only the story and its characters, but the many theatrical aspects that brought it into existence. Please take a moment with your students to prepare them for the theatre by reminding them:

◊ **Don’t disrupt the performance by talking or making other noise.** Turn off your cell phones. Talk or text later. Theatre is about words. Listen! There's no rewind. Theatre is deep. Let it take you in and the payoff is huge. ◊ **Respect the actors.** They see and hear you. They want you react, laugh, respond. Give them your focus and they will reward you with their best performance.

We offer free pre- and post-show workshops for students seeing this show. We can also provide you with an advance copy of the script. Please call our office for more information. Thanks for bringing live theatre to your school. Thank you for helping your students to imagine the infinite possibilities.

Best,

Mark Lutwak
Education Director
Joan the Girl of Arc
by Darrah Cloud

Director  KJ Sanchez

Set Designer  Christopher Boone
Costume Designer  Gordon DeVinney
Sound Designer/Composer  Jeremy J. Lee
Stage Manager  Tracy Hoida

cast
Joan—Chelsea Harrison
Daniel—Jon Kovach
Denise—Shayna Schmidt
Joan's father, Captain Baudricort, High Priest—Rico Reid
Dauphin, Father Moreau—Justin Weaks
SYNOPSIS

Time: 1428 — The Late Middle Ages.

Place: France. Domremy, a pastoral village; Vaucouleurs, a battle ground; Paris.

Joan, a diligent daughter of a farming family, begins to feel the strain of the approaching English. Believing that there is little role for her in this war, she is surprised when the voices of three saints urge her into battle. Her sister pleads with her to stay. Her father and the local priest demand that she confess that the voices are lies. Joan cannot heed her family's advice. Instead she grows confident in what the saints are telling her. Dressed in men's clothing, Joan sneaks away from her family to find the nearest army camp.

The voices of Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret guide her on her journey to join the troops. She encounters a Captain who quickly discovers her femininity and dismisses her. To prove the validity of her claims, the voices tell her where a special sword can be found. The Captain is at her will. She continues on to find the Dauphin, the weak and cowardly boy king who lacks leadership. She identifies the Dauphin disguised as a beggar. She gives him courage and helps him rally the French troops against the English.

With Joan's inspirational leadership, the French succeed. However, Joan is captured by the English and sentenced as a heretic. She asks the saints to help her; yet they are silent. In their silence Joan is convicted of her crimes. We are left with history's end to Joan's courageous story.

CHARACTERS

Joan—age 17. The heroine of the story.

Daniel—also 17. He grew up with Joan and wants to marry her.

Denise—Joan's sister.

Joan's Father

Father Moreau—the village priest.

Captain Robert De Baudricort—the French captain at Vaucouleurs.

The Dauphin—The cowardly boy king who will grow up to become King Charles VII the Victorious.

High Priest—the ruling priest of Paris.
SAINTLY GUIDANCE
Both in history and in our play, Joan claims to hear three distinct voices. Many religions around the world faithfully believe in the direct communication of saints and angels. However, some historians theorize that Joan hallucinated due to a mental illness caused by contaminated milk. Whatever your personal beliefs may be, here is some background on the three saints who spoke to Joan and helped lead a nation to victory.

**Saint Michael**
Michael the Archangel was the leader of the army of God during the Lucifer uprising. This event took place before the age of man according to Christian beliefs. There are writings about St. Michael in three major religions: Muslim, Jewish, and Christian. Michael the Archangel is celebrated on September 29th. He is the patron saint of many countries, occupations, and dioceses around the world.

**Saint Catherine**
Born to nobility in Alexandria, Egypt, and well educated, Catherine converted to Christianity after seeing a divine vision. When she was just 18, she debated against pagan philosophers. Her arguments converted many of her opponents so the Emperor Maximinus had Catherine imprisoned. Many officials came to see her in prison including the empress and the leader of the army. They too were converted and martyred. Maximinus ordered her to be broken on the wheel, but when she touched it, it broke apart. Catherine was finally beheaded. She is the patron saint of lawyers.

**Saint Margaret**
Margaret lived around 300A.D. in Asia Minor, (modern Turkey). She was the daughter of a pagan priest. When she refused the advances of a Roman provost, he accused her of being a Christian—a very serious crime. She was sent to prison. It was there legend says she was swallowed by the devil in the form of a dragon. The cross around her neck irritated the dragon so much she was thrown out of his body. After much torture Margaret was sentenced to be burned at the stake, but her bonds broke. Next, they set her in a boiling cauldron and again she was saved through prayer. Finally, Margaret was beheaded. Many of those who watched her ordeal converted. St. Margaret is the patron saint of childbirth.
The Hundred Years War 1337-1453
(Actually...it’s 116 years!)

The English
Edward III 1327-1377
Richard II 1377-1399
Henry IV 1399-1413
Henry V 1413-1422

The French
Philip VI the Fortunate 1328-1350
John II the Good 1350-1364
Charles V the Wise 1364-1380
Charles VI the Well beloved (or the Mad) 1380-1422

Fast Facts

◊ The Hundred Years War was fought over the right to the French throne.
◊ All battles were fought on French land.
◊ England won 18 of the first 23 battles. Once Joan of Arc came on the scene the French rallied and won the next 7 battles, ending the war.
◊ This war lead to new weapon technology including the long-bow and cannon. This long-range weaponry ended the reign of the mounted knight and impacted the knight’s status in the nobility.

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Like all holy figures whose earthly existence separates them from the broad mass of humanity, a saint is a story, and Joan of Arc’s is like no other.

The self-proclaimed agent of God’s will, she wasn’t immortalized so much as she entered the collective imagination as a living myth. Centuries after death, she has been embraced by Christians, feminists, French nationalists, Mexican revolutionaries and even hairdressers. (Her crude cut inspired the bob flappers wore as a symbol of independence from patriarchal strictures.) Her voices have been diagnosed retroactively as symptoms of schizophrenia, epilepsy, even tuberculosis. It seems Joan of Arc will never be laid to rest. Is this because stories we understand are stories we forget?

Joan frustrates efforts to reduce her to mortal proportions. What can explain what her voices told her, whether directing her movements in battle or scripting answers to her inquisitors. And what about her reputed clairvoyance, accounts that her touch raised a child from the dead, her ability to direct the wind to fill her stalled boats’ sails?

We don’t need narratives that rationalize human experience so much as those that enlarge it with the breath of mystery. For as long as we look to heroes for inspiration, to leaders whose vision lifts them above our limited perspective, who cherish their values above their earthly lives, the story of Joan of Arc will remain one we remember, and celebrate.

Kathryn Harrison is writing a biography of Joan of Arc.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Use these as either discussion or writing prompts after students have seen the play.

- What did you think of *Joan the Girl of Arc*? What would you tell your friends or family?
- Who would you recommend should see this play? Why or why not?
- What is something that you remember from the performance? What did you see? What did you feel during the show? What did you hear? What did you smell?
- What do you think you will remember about this play a year from now?
- What do you remember about the set? What did the set tell you about the world of the play?
- What do you remember about the costumes? What did they tell you about the characters?
- What do you remember about the sound (including music)? How did they help tell the story? How did they help set a mood?
- Create a timeline of Joan's journey. What were the obstacles that stood in her way? How did she overcome each one?
- What would you have done if you were in Joan’s shoes? Would you have reacted to the voices in the same way or would you have ignored them? How do you think you would handle hiding your identity and leading an army against a major power? What advice would you give to Joan, or other characters in the play?
- Who is your favorite character in *Joan the Girl of Arc*? Why? Be specific for your choice.
- *Joan the Girl of Arc* is set in the Middle Ages, a world with distinct social classes and gender roles. How do the different characters fit into these structures of society? How are these distinctions different today?
- Did this play have an underlying meaning or moral? If yes, what was it? How did you know that this was the moral? Do you think the story supported this moral?
- Did all of the elements of the production (story, actors, setting, costumes, and sound) work together? Why or why not? Did it all add up? Did it all help tell the story?
CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

VOCABULARY

Siege — (n.) the act or process of attacking and surrounding a fortified place in order to isolate it from help and supplies with the goal of weakening it to the point of capture.

Pastoral — (adj.) rural; pertaining to the country, or life in the country.

Burden — (n.) something that is carried with difficulty; an obligation.

Primitive — (adj.) characteristic of an early state of human development.

Dauphin — (n.) the eldest son of a king of France, next in line to the throne.

Heresy — (n.) willful rejection of the accepted beliefs of a religion.

Penance — (n.) punishment for sins committed. After completing a penance, the sinner is forgiven.

Baguette — (n.) a long, narrow, crusty loaf of bread.

Altar — (n.) an elevated place or structure, usually a table, on which religious rites are performed.

Alms — (n.) money, food, or other donations given to the poor or needy.

Standard — (n.) a flag raised on a pole with icons representing an important figure, monarch, or nation.

RESOURCES

http://faculty.smu.edu/bwheeler/Joan_of_Arc/map10.html
◊ This site details each leg of Joan’s tour of France.

http://www.lordsandladies.org/hundred-years-war.htm
◊ This site has easy-to-read information about The Hundred Years War.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

◊ The real Joan of Arc’s fate was sealed at the stake, but what if you could rewrite history. Would you change the ending? Would you want Joan to say that she lied about the voices? What effect would this have on the French? Would we still consider Joan a hero?

◊ Joan is a major female historical figure. Though it was rare in the Middle Ages for a woman to rise to such fame, times have definitely changed. If you could interview one important woman in our history who would it be? Write 5 questions you would ask and answer them from her point of view.

◊ Are you like Joan? Have you ever stood up for something or someone you believe in? Compare and contrast your life experience with Joan’s? Use a Venn diagram to help sort out your thoughts.