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# JOAN OF ARC



A Re-creation of Her 1431 Trial for Treason





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## PURPOSE

# Joan of Arc

The story is well known: A peasant girl named Joan claimed to hear the voices of saints who implored her to lead the French army against the forces of England and Burgundy. Eventually, Joan was captured, tried for heresy, burned at the stake, and later canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps less well known are the reasons behind the accusations. The trial of Joan of Arc was closely linked to the decline of feudalism and the rise of European nation-states. Further, Joan's ordeal was a result of the struggle for succession to the French and English thrones which had been closely linked since 1066. Looming above the events of the trial was a larger question: Who is the real king of France?

The purpose of this simulation is to re-enact the trial of Joan of Arc and enable students to consider the following questions:

- *Upon what basis can a government claim to be legitimate?*
- *What role did strong monarchies have in the development of Western Europe?*
- *What are the positive and negative effects of nationalism?*
- *Was Joan a patriot? a traitor? a revolutionary?*

As your students participate in the activity, they should experience the following:

### **Knowledge**

1. Understanding of the importance of the rise of nation states to European civilization
2. Understanding of the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to European monarchies

### **Attitudes**

1. Appreciation of the difficulty of establishing a government's legitimacy
2. Realization that nationalism can have both positive and negative results

### **Skills**

1. Speaking clearly and forcefully before a group
2. Evaluating evidence to reach conclusions



## OVERVIEW

The trial of Joan of Arc re-creates the famous events of 1431 in which Joan, a country girl from Domremy, was accused of heresy. The prosecution will attempt to prove that Joan was a traitor who made false claims of divine inspiration in order to oppose the legitimate government of France. The defense will cast Joan as a patriot who forged an inept French army into a powerful fighting force in order to restore Charles VII to his rightful place on the French throne. Although in real life Joan was charged in 12 articles, the author has chosen to simplify and reduce the charges to two:

1. that she committed treason against the legitimate government of France; and
2. that she falsely claimed divine inspiration in order to persuade others to perform acts of violence.



*The statue of  
Joan of Arc  
in Reims,  
France*

The real trial of Joan of Arc was actually a prolonged inquisition in which Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais, presided. The bishop had sold his services to the English and made no attempt to conduct fair judicial proceedings. Joan was charged with heresy because she was a prisoner of war and was protected by numerous conventions between the belligerents. If Joan was to be put to death and prevented from rallying the French army in the future, a trial was necessary. A church trial was chosen as the best means of keeping criticism to a minimum.



## HISTORICAL ACCURACY

This simulation will address the larger questions of the legitimacy of the government of France rather than focusing on trumped-up heresy charges. The following changes were made to adapt the historical trial to a modern classroom:

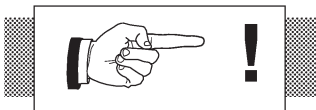
1. In the real trial 117 persons were at court. They included priests, theologians, and doctors who were present at the examination.
2. Although the simulation's defense lawyer and witnesses were real historical characters who showed friendship or compassion for Joan, none of them spoke on her behalf during the actual trial. Neither did the prosecution's witnesses take the stand against Joan, although they all played a role in her conviction.
3. Joan did not take the witness stand in the historical trial. She stood before her examiners and responded to their questions. In the simulation she is represented by defense counsel so that both sides of the controversy can be explored and so that a maximum number of students can be involved.



*Be certain that you cover the three points above briefly before the trial—and more thoroughly during debriefing.*



## SETUP DIRECTIONS - 1



1. Role selection is very important to this activity. Pick your most highly motivated students to be **Joan** and the attorneys.
2. Either select a strong student to be **Pierre Cauchon, bishop of Beauvais**, or play the role yourself. This individual functions as the head of the court and must be able to keep the activity running smoothly. *If you have any doubts about one of your students being strong or tough enough to play this crucial role, play it yourself.*
3. Chief prosecutor **Jean d'Estivet** will be assisted by two attorneys:
  - **Pierre Morice** In the actual trial he was a doctor of theology who read the 12 articles of accusation to Joan.
  - **Jean Beaupere** In the actual trial he was a pro-English priest who examined Joan.
4. Joan's chief defense lawyer will be **Jean de la Fontaine**. He will be assisted by two people:
  - **Ysambard de la Pierre** and **Jean Duval** In the historical trial both were Dominican monks who showed kindness toward Joan. The former attempted to give Joan a fair trial by transferring the case to the Church Council in Switzerland. He was unsuccessful in that endeavor.
5. Select or allow students to volunteer for witness roles. Witnesses for the prosecution are **Jean de Luxembourg, the duke of Bedford, the duke of Burgundy, and Nicolas Loiseleur**. Witnesses for the defense include **Robert de Baudricourt, the archbishop of Reims, the duke d'Alencon**, and the defendant, **Joan of Arc**.
6. **Jean Le Maitre** will perform the role of bailiff by swearing in witnesses and keeping order. (In the historical trial Le Maitre was the representative of the Inquisition, the body that was responsible for seeking out and punishing heretics. He attended Joan's trial unwillingly; his responsibility was to be certain that proceedings were conducted in accordance with Church law.)
7. The recording clerk is **Manchon**, who performed that role in the actual trial and resisted Cauchon's attempts to alter the testimony.
8. The remaining students will be **jurors** who will render a verdict. As in the actual trial, Joan will be found guilty unless proven innocent.
9. Encourage all students to supplement the information you give them by doing more research on their own. You may wish to award grades based on the following factors: preparation, role-playing, and testing.



## SETUP DIRECTIONS - 2



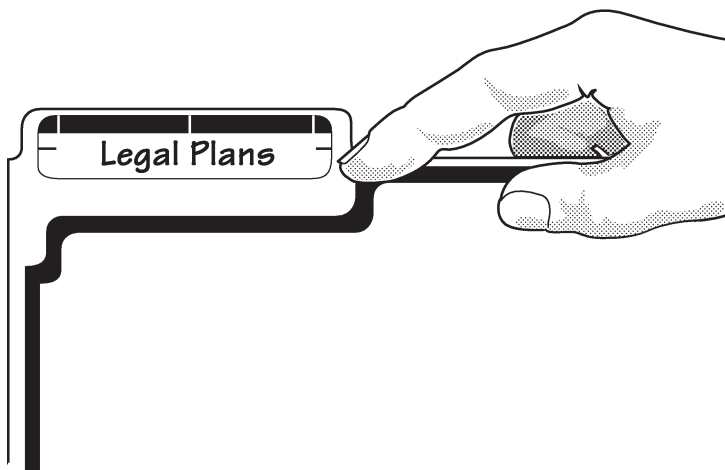
### **Important:**

*Take these eight handouts and staple a set together—one for each student. Call this cluster a Student Guide. Make one for each student.*

10. About a week before the trial, duplicate the following materials—in the number found in parentheses after the capitalized handout.

- STUDENT SURVEY (1 for each student)
- TEST (1 for each student)
- PURPOSE, OVERVIEW, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY, BRIEF SUMMARY OF MAJOR ROLES, ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES, and COURT PROCEDURES (1 for each student)
- INDIVIDUAL WITNESS HANDOUTS (1 per role)
- JUROR HANDOUTS (1 per juror)
- LEGAL PLAN FOR PROSECUTION (4; one for each attorney and one for Pierre Cauchon)
- LEGAL PLAN FOR DEFENSE (4; one for each attorney and one for Cauchon)

*You will likely wish to organize handouts into separate folders.*





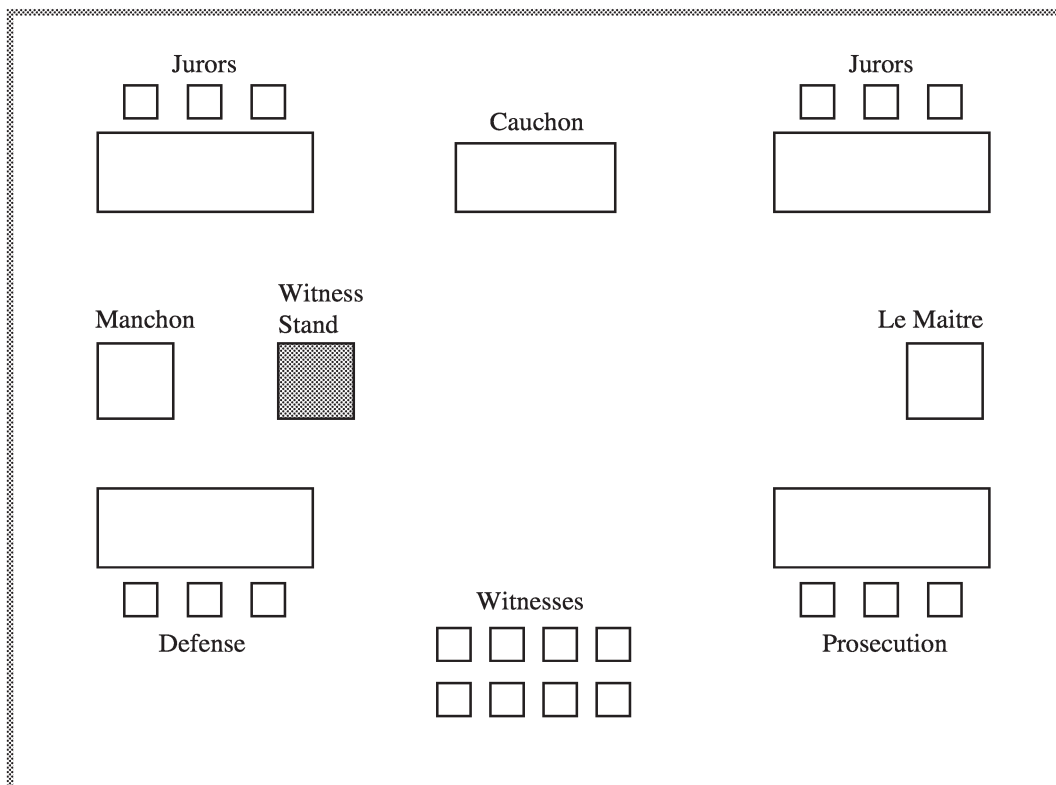
# TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 1

## Three days before trial: Introduction

1. Briefly explain to students why they are going to study this trial. Then pass out Student Guides and have students read the PURPOSE, OVERVIEW, and BRIEF SUMMARY OF MAJOR ROLES.
2. Assign roles and give students copies of their individual ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES.
3. Have everyone read the HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY, and discuss the concluding questions with the class.

## Day 1: Background and preparation

1. Give class the PRE-TRIAL SURVEY.
2. Arrange students in cooperative learning groups to discuss their responses.
3. Allow time for individual role preparation.
4. Decide how you will physically arrange the room for the trial. Here is a possible arrangement:





## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS - 2

### Days 2-3: The Trial

1. The actual number of periods devoted to the trial will vary according to the length of testimony, amount of questioning, extent of research, level of student interest, and your judgment.
2. Make sure all participants are positioned in their proper places. If someone is absent, replace the student immediately and give the stand-in the correct background sheet. (**Note:** For added interest, Joan may want to dress in male attire, and have short, cropped hair; the clergy may don robes.)
3. Before beginning the trial, ask if there are any questions. Remind the jury that, contrary to our legal system, Joan is presumed guilty until proven innocent.
4. Send Pierre Cauchon out of the room. Instruct Le Maitre to open the door for the bishop and announce that the court is in session. At this point the trial is turned over to Cauchon, who will follow the COURT PROCEDURE.
5. When the trial has concluded, immediately ask jury members the reasons for their verdict. Then ask witnesses how they would have voted had they been on the jury.

### Day 3: Debriefing and Testing

1. The following questions should serve as a discussion guide following the conclusion of the trial:



*Take time to draw out students' knowledge and reactions to the re-creation.*

#### **Debriefing Questions**

- a. Could England and France have been united as one nation? Why or why not?
  - b. Why was heresy considered a serious crime during the time of Joan of Arc?
  - c. Did the English accomplish their objective in bringing Joan to trial? Why or why not?
  - d. Was nationalism a positive or negative force during Joan's life?
  - e. Could strong nations have developed without the rise of strong kings? Explain.
2. Conclude the activity by giving the UNIT TEST.  
Here is the key to the answers:  
1. d, 2. b, 3. a, 4. d, 5. c, 6. c, 7. b, 8. c, 9. c, 10. a



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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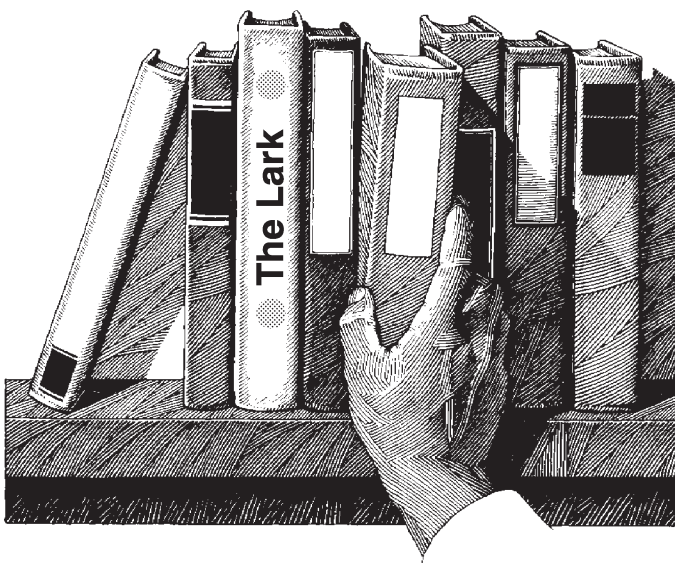
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\* Books which are appropriate for younger readers.



Contact your friendly school librarian in advance of your beginning the unit. Ask that a **Reserve shelf: JOAN OF ARC** be set up for your students a week or so in advance.