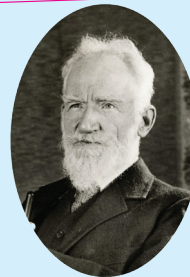


Joan of Arc

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an Irish playwright and critic. He wrote more than sixty plays during his lifetime including major works such as **Man and Superman** (1902), **Pygmalion** (1912) and **Saint Joan** (1923). He was the leading dramatist of his time. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925.



(The war fought between England and France from 1337 to 1453 has come to be known as the Hundred Years War. Joan was a peasant girl born in eastern France, who led the French army to several victories during this war.)

This play begins at the time when all of northern France and some parts of the south-west were under foreign control. The English controlled some parts and the Burgundians controlled the others. The city of New Orleans, one of the few remaining French cities was held by the English. The year is 1429. Captain Robert de Baudricourt, a military officer is seated at the table. His steward stands facing him).

Robert : I told you to throw the girl out. You have fifty armed soldiers and dozens of strong servants to carry out my orders. Are they afraid of her?

Steward : No sir, we are afraid of you, but she puts courage in us. She really doesn't seem to be afraid of anything. Perhaps you could frighten her, sir.

Robert : (*grimly*) Perhaps, where is she now?

Steward : Down in the courtyard, sir.

(Robert goes to the window and asks the soldiers to send the girl up.)

(The girl enters. She is a well-built, strong country girl of 17 to 18 years. The squire's glare neither frightens her nor stops her. She speaks confidently.)

Joan : Good morning, Captain **Squire**. You are to give me a horse and **armour** and some soldiers, and send me to the Dauphin.

● **grimly** : seriously

● **squire** : a person of high rank

● **armour** : protective clothing of metal or leather worn in battles by soldiers in former times

- **blockhead** : a stupid person

♦ *Why had Joan wanted to meet Captain squire?*

- **assuming** : taking for granted

- **Dauphin** : the oldest son of the King of France, the one who would become the king after his father

- **Monsieur** : French word for Mr.

♦ *Name the persons who Joan needed to free Orleans.*

Robert : This girl is mad. Why didn't you tell me so, you **blockhead**?

Steward : Sir, do not anger her. Give her what she wants.

Robert : I shall send you back to your father with orders to put you under lock and key.

Joan : You think you will, squire. But it won't happen that way. You said you would not see me. But here I am.

Robert : So, you are **assuming** that I'll give you what you want.

Joan : Yes, squire. (*Continues busily*) A horse will cost sixteen francs. It is a big amount of money. But I can save it on the armour. I don't need beautiful armour made to my measure. I can find a soldier's armour that will fit me well enough. I shall not want many soldiers. The **Dauphin** will give me, all I need, to free Orleans.

Robert : (*Shocked*) To free Orleans!

Joan : (*Simply*) Yes, squire. Three men will be enough for you to send with me. Polly and Jack have promised to come with me.

Robert : You mean **Monsieur** de Poulengy?

Joan : Yes, Squire Jack will come willingly. He is a very kind gentleman, and gives me money to give to the poor. I think John Godsave will come, and Dick the Archer, and their servants, John of Honecourt and Julian. There will be no trouble for you, squire. I have arranged it all. You have only to give the order.

Robert : (*To the steward*) Is this true about Monsieur de Poulengy?

Steward : (*Eagerly*) Yes, sir, and about Monsieur de Metz too. They both want to go with her.

Robert : (*Goes to the window, and shouts into the court-yard.*) Send Monseieur de Poulengy to me, will you? (*He turns*

to Joan) Get out and wait in the yard.

Joan : (Smiling brightly at him) Right, squire. (She goes out).

Robert : (To the steward) Go with her. Stay within call and keep your eye on her. I shall have her up here again.

(The steward **retreats hastily**. Bertrand de Poulengey, a French guard, enters, salutes and stands waiting.)

Robert : She says you, Jack and Dick have offered to go with her. What for? Do you take her crazy idea of going to the Dauphin seriously?

Poulengey : (Slowly) There is something about her. It may be worth trying.

Robert : Oh, come on Polly! You must be out of your mind!

Poulengey : (Unmoved) What is wrong with it? The Dauphin is in **Chinon**, like a rat in a corner, except that he won't fight. The English will take Orleans. He'll not be able to stop them.

Robert : He beat the English the year before last at Montargis. I was with him.

Poulengey : But his men are **cowed** and now he can't work miracles. And I tell you that nothing can save our side now but a miracle.

Robert : Miracles are alright, Polly. The only difficulty about them is that they don't happen nowadays.

Poulengey : I used to think so. I'm not so sure now. There is something about her. I think the girl herself is a bit of a miracle. Anyhow, this is our last chance. Let's see what she can do.

Robert : (Wavering) You really think that?

Poulengey : (Turning) Is there anything else left for us to think? Let's take a chance. Her words **have put fire into me**.

Robert : (Giving up) Whew! You're as mad as she is.

● **retreats hastily** : moves away in a hurry

◆ *Was the Dauphin fit to be a Prince and heir?*

● **Chinon** : one of the cities in France where Royal family resided. During the Hundred Years War, the Dauphin took refuge in Chinon.

● **cowed** : frightened

◆ *What was the squire's opinion about miracles?*

● **wavering** : hesitating

● **have put fire into me** : have inspired or motivated

- **obstinately** : in a stubborn and firm manner
- ✦ *What did Robert accuse Poulengey of?*

- **gravely** : seriously

- ✦ *What shows Joan is a person of immense faith?*

- **raising a siege** : surround from all sides and attack removing the forces surrounding a place

- **plundering** : looting
- ✦ *Why were the French soldiers always beaten?*

- **to save their skins** : to save their lives

Poulengey : (*Obstinately*) We want a few mad people now. See where the same ones have landed us!

Robert : I feel like a fool. Still, if you feel sure...?

Poulengey : I feel sure enough to take her to Chinon unless you stop me.

Robert : Do you think I ought to have another talk with her?

Poulengey : (*Going to the window*) Yes! Joan, come up.
(*Joan enters*)

Poulengey : (*Gravely*) Be seated, Joan.

Robert : What is your name?

Joan : They always called me Jenny in Lorraine. Here in France, I am Joan. The soldiers call me the Maid.

Robert : How old are you?

Joan : Seventeen, so they tell me. It might be nineteen. I don't remember.

Robert : I suppose you think **raising a siege** is as easy as chasing a cow out of a meadow. You think soldiering is anybody's job?

Joan : I don't think it can be very difficult if God is on your side.

Robert : (*Grimly*) Have you ever seen English soldiers fighting? Have you ever seen them **plundering**, burning, turning the countryside into a desert? Have you heard no tales of their prince who is the devil himself, or of the English king's father?

Joan : You do not understand, squire. Our soldiers are always beaten because they are fighting only **to save their skins** and the shortest way to save your skin is to run away. But I will teach them all to fight for France. Then, they will drive the soldiers before them like sheep. You and Polly will live to see the day when there will not be a single

- English soldier on the soil of France.
- Robert** : (*To Poulengey*) This may all be nonsense, Polly. But the troops might just be inspired by it though nothing that we say seems to put any fire into them. Even the Dauphin might believe it. And if she can put some fight into him, she can put it into anybody.
- Robert** : (*Turning to Joan*) Now you, listen to me and don't cut in before I have time to think. Your orders are that you are to go to Chinon under the escort of this gentleman and three of his friends.
- Joan** : (*Radiant, clasping her hands*) Oh, thank you, squire!
- Poulengey** : How is she to get into the royal presence?
- Robert** : I don't know. How did she get into my presence? I will send her to Chinon and she can say I sent her. Then, **let come what may**. I can do no more.
- Joan** : And the dress? I may have a soldier's dress, squire?
- Robert** : Take what you please. I **wash my hands off it**.
- Joan** : (*Wildly excited by her success*) Come, Polly. (*She dashes out.*)
- Robert** : (*Shaking Poulengey's hand*) Goodbye, old man, I am taking a big chance. Few other men would have done it. But as you say, there is something about her.
- Poulengey** : Yes, there is something about her. Goodbye.

– George Bernard Shaw



- **let come what may** : let anything happen
- ◆ *What dress did Joan want?*
- **wash one's hands off it** : not take any responsibility for it
- ◆ *What made Robert finally agree to the plan?*