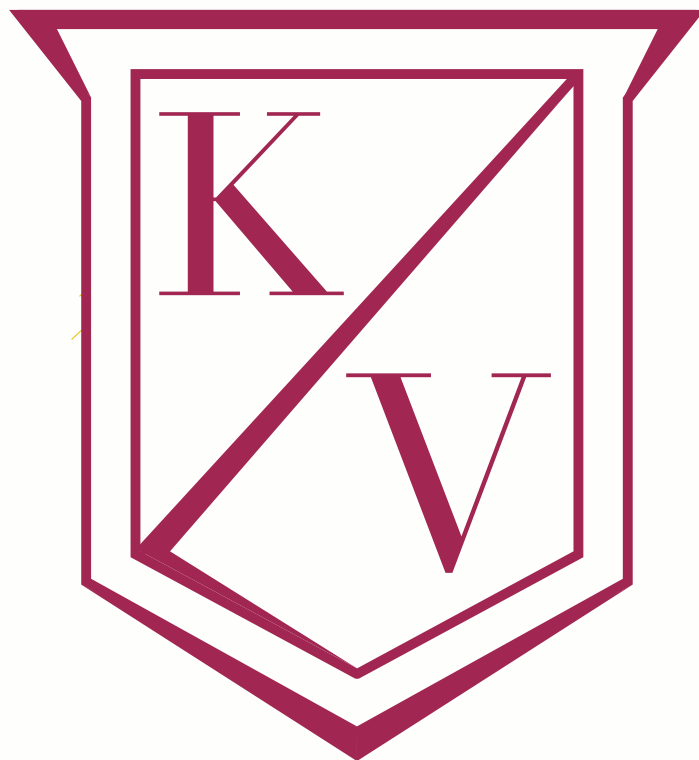


Heroes Who Inspire

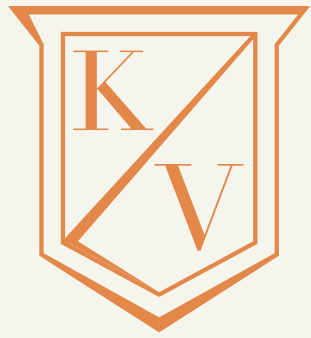
Knightly Virtues



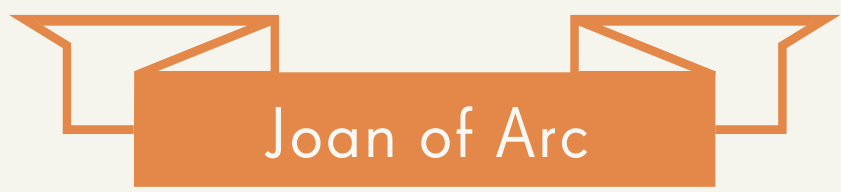
Joan of Arc

Learning About the
Virtues of Service and Courage

Heroes Who Inspire



THE STORY



Story retold by Jon Davison

Joan of Arc — The Story

Prologue

The story I am about to tell you is based upon real events. The story is set in France and France was in a mess. The events happened during the time historians later called The Hundred Years' War. But the historians were wrong. The War lasted for 116 years from 1337 to 1453.

Can you imagine what it is like to live in a country that has been at war in your lifetime as well as in your parents' and grandparents' lifetimes? Well, worse than that, this war would have been going on since your great-great grandparents were children.

Since 1066, parts of France had belonged to the English kings. But over the years, the French wanted all of their country back. France was at war with the English. It was also at war with itself.

The key person in this story is a young peasant girl, who could not read or write. We are not even sure of her actual name. She grew up on a farm close to a small town called Domrémy. As a child she lived a quiet life. She never went to school. At the time women were not treated as equals to men - girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age were expected to get married and look after their own husband and children. Kings, princes and dukes ruled the country mainly through their wealth and their own armies.

However, this uneducated peasant girl grew to be the most powerful person in the whole of France. Some people thought she was mad. Others found Joan to be quiet, calm, well spoken and thoughtful. Some people called her a witch.

Before Joan was 19 years old she was leading tens of thousands of loyal French soldiers. Soldiers thought her a brilliant military leader. English generals feared Joan's power. But Joan had rich and powerful enemies who put her to death at the age of nineteen.

An Investigation

I am a clerk and it is my job to keep a careful record of an important investigation into the life Joan of Arc. The year is 1456, 25 years after Joan died. I will introduce you to the important people and the main events of Joan's short life. We believe that Joan was born around 1412, but we are not sure of the exact date, or even the exact spelling of her name.

One thing we are certain of is that Joan's name was not *Joan*. She said, 'In my town, they called me Jeannette'.

Her name was most likely *Jeanne* or *Jehanne* – the French equivalents of Joan. It was not until she was about eighteen years old that she learned to write her own name. In very shaky letters she wrote *Jehanne*, but in her handwriting it looks like *Johanne*. Perhaps that is why people have called her Joan?

Joan's family name was Arc but she became known throughout our country as 'The Maid'. But I'll just refer to her as Joan of Arc.

The English finally left France in 1453, some 22 years after Joan had been executed. The purpose of our investigation is to show that Joan was a good, honourable French woman who should not have been put to death. We have spent two years interviewing one-hundred-and-fifteen people about Joan's life – friends, family, relatives, soldiers, and noblemen to find the truth about Joan. I have been taking notes – writing, writing and writing, day after day. I am now going to share with you some of what people have told us. I will also tell some of what Joan said about herself at her trial in 1431.

A Childhood

Joan was one of five children. She spent most of her time playing with two brothers, Jean and Pierre. Joan developed a quick mind and stood up for herself in their games. Their home was a very simple stone house with a flattened earth floor. Behind the house, beyond her father's garden, chickens, the pigpen and barn stood the church on the banks of the River Meuse.

The house took lots of work to keep clean and tidy and from a very early age Joan always helped her parents with household chores before going off to play with her brothers and friends. She always put the needs of others before her own.

One of her childhood friends, Hauviette told us, 'Joan was a good, simple and sweet-natured girl. She was like any other girl; she did the housework, spinning and sometimes looked after her father's flocks.' Another friend, Colin, said, 'She was a good girl. She liked to go to church, so we used to tease her. She worked hard, fed her family's animals, and cared for them a lot.'

Joan also showed great care and kindness to her friends. Her friend Simonin lived in the house next door to the d'Arc family, and he told us, 'She was good, simple, pious... caring for the sick and giving alms to the poor; this I saw myself when I was sick and Joan came to comfort me.'

Even though the children enjoyed themselves playing in the woods and picnicking in the meadows, life in

Domrémy was not always one of peace and happiness. From a young age, Joan knew that when the church bells rang an alarm, enemies were near. The English or their allies the Burgundian soldiers could strike at any time, killing young men, stealing money, food or animals, and burning homes.

As well as being a farmer, Joan's father was a 'doyen' of the village – a town council official. Jacques d'Arc was a well-respected community leader. When the alarm sounded, he was responsible for making sure that all the villagers got to the safety of the nearby castle, with as many of their animals as they could manage.

Bright Lights and Voices

In 1422, young Joan heard that the old king of France had died. The poor man had gone mad. In the terrible battle of Agincourt, just 7,000 English soldiers had defeated 20,000 French troops and had captured the Duke of Orléans. He had been a prisoner for five years.

Whatever the cause of his insanity, the old King had been of no use against the English. He was so ill that he had not ruled France properly for years. But the good news was that the King had left a healthy son aged 23, Prince Charles. He was heir to the throne – the *Dauphin*.

The bad news was that the Dauphin had been told it was too dangerous for him to be crowned King. The country was a war zone. He could not travel to the cathedral city of Reims, where all kings of France had their coronation. I also heard from one of his courtiers that the Dauphin enjoyed his comfort too much. That meant Prince Charles was happy to spend his days hidden away behind fortified walls in the city of Chinon. The six-day ride from Chinon to Reims was out of the question.

Without a King, the people of France were very sad and dispirited. The Hundred Years' War had broken the spirit of many of our people. Now we had no King, no leader. French men were fighting each other. Bandits, vagabonds and highwaymen roamed the countryside attacking and robbing people.

We wanted someone to save us: someone to take the lead; someone who would get the Dauphin crowned King. Over time many people I met began to talk about an ancient prophecy that said one day a pure young maiden would save France. We spoke in hope, but doubted it would happen.

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From the time Joan was very young, she enjoyed going to church and hearing stories of the lives of the saints – especially St. Catherine and St. Margaret. The stories of the lives of these brave women inspired the young Joan. She also very much enjoyed the company of her friends Mengette, Hauviette and the ploughboy, Jean Waterin. They would sit in the sunshine, talk, tell stories and play together. Jean Waterin told me, 'Often when we were playing together, Joan would go away from us a little and often spoke with God, it seemed to me.'

On a bright, sunny morning when Joan was about 12, sitting in her father's garden, the moment came that would change not only Joan's life, but also that would change the course of French history forever.

Joan remembered, 'About the hour of noon... I heard a voice on the right-hand side, towards the church... there was a great light... I knew that it was the voice of an angel...'

Joan told nobody about this incident. After all it could have been a daydream, or a trick of the light. But from that day on she heard the voice two or three times a week. Joan said, 'It taught me to conduct myself

Joan believed that she had been called to serve her country and she accepted that was what she must do. Joan did not know quite how she would do it, or even exactly when. Joan knew only that she must.

well... it told me that I should raise the siege laid to the city of Orléans... I should make my way to the fortress of Vaucouleurs... and the Captain of that place would give me people to go with me... I answered that I was a poor girl who knew not how to ride nor lead in war.'

Joan's head teemed with questions. How could she save a city? The city of Orléans was not surrounded by the English. How would she leave home? Her parents would never allow such a thing. When would she learn to ride a horse? How could she – a young girl – lead soldiers? She resolved to say nothing about these voices for now, but to lead a good life and wait until the right moment.

I think if such an event happened to me today, as an old man, I would not know what to do - but as a young person from a tiny village? Impossible! But Joan believed that she had been called to serve her country and she accepted that was what she must do. Joan did not know quite how she would do it, or even exactly when. Joan knew only that she must.

A Journey

For three years, life went on much the same for Joan – helping her mother in the house, working in the garden and fields, going to church and playing with her friends. For three years, the voices told her that she would serve her country. For three years, Joan told nobody.

Then in May 1428, when she was 16, Joan's parents announced that they had arranged a marriage for her. Although Joan had never disobeyed her parents, she knew she could not let this happen. So very calmly and politely, she thanked her parents but said she could not marry as she had decided to devote her life to God.

In those days, it was quite common for at least one son in peasant families to become a priest, or for a daughter to go into a convent. Because of Joan's calm and sincere behaviour, her enjoyment of going to church, her interest in the lives of St Catherine and St Margaret, her parents were not surprised and they agreed that she would not get married.

In October 1428, the city of Orléans was besieged. It was a terrible blow for the loyal people of France.

The voices that Joan heard then told her that the time had come for Joan to help the Dauphin. Again she told no-one. 'I went to my uncle's,' she said, 'and there I stayed for about eight days.' Her uncle agreed to take her the town of Vaucouleurs to meet the Captain of the loyal forces. The captain knew the Dauphin. If Joan could convince him that it was her duty to serve France, perhaps the Captain would help her to go to the Dauphin.

Her uncle took her to the town, but the Captain refused to see the poor, thin peasant girl of 16 in her faded dress. His advisors laughed at Joan's story and sent her away. Joan returned, however, and the Captain saw Joan, but said he needed time to think and sent her away again.

I asked one of the officers, de Metz, who eventually travelled with Joan, 'Why, then, did the captain agree to see her on the third occasion?'

De Metz had asked Joan, 'My dear girl, what are you doing here?'

Joan replied, 'I am here to ask the Captain if he will take or send me to the Dauphin. I must be at the Dauphin's side. For indeed there is nobody in the entire world, neither king nor duke, nor any other who

can recover the kingdom for France... Although I would had rather remained at my mother's side, for it is not my decision, yet I must do this thing, for my Lord wills that I do.'

Joan spoke with such conviction that De Metz took Joan to the Captain again.

When Joan saw the Captain, she spoke in her calm, quiet, but strong way. She told him that the voices she heard had also said that Joan was the only person who could break the siege of Orléans. This time the Captain was totally convinced. He agreed to help and gave Joan a letter of introduction to the Dauphin. De Metz and three other experienced soldiers would travel with her.

De Metz remembered, 'I asked her if she wanted to go in her own clothes. She said that she would rather have men's clothes, so we had men's clothes made for her and shoes and we delivered a horse to her.'

That night she cut her hair short like a boy's. The next morning, dressed as a young man for extra protection, wearing a sword, riding a horse very slowly and very carefully, she left for the town of Chinon.

I must be honest with you; in our day, the idea of a young woman cutting her hair and dressing in a coat and trousers like a soldier was regarded as rather strange and unnatural!

To Chinon

In February 1429, Joan left for Chinon. With so many English troops in the area, the journey would be a very difficult and dangerous one. Her companions were surprised by how well Joan learned to ride.

De Metz said, 'We moved at night and we kept on the road for a period of eleven days... the Maid always told us to have no fear... we took her to Chinon as secretly as we could.'

Even after such a long and demanding journey to Chinon, Joan was so dedicated to serving her country that she gave little thought to herself. Joan recalled, 'I arrived there at about noon and took lodging at an inn. And after a meal I went to the Dauphin, who was in the castle.'

To Joan, the castle seemed massive after the small houses of her hometown. The great hall shimmered in the brilliant light of hundreds of torches. Dazzling tapestries lined the walls. A crowd of at least 300 people thronged the room. There was lively music. Jugglers entertained the people. But the Dauphin's seat of honour on the platform was empty.

Joan slowly and carefully scanned the room looking for the Dauphin. And then she saw a young man dressed all in black mingling with the elegant people of the court. He looked clumsy, skinny and bandy-legged. His nose was big and his chin was small. Not the sort of person you might expect to be the next King of France!

But as soon as Joan's eyes caught sight of this person, even though she had never seen him, nor a picture of him, in the whole of her life, she knew this was Prince Charles. Calmly and smoothly wearing her faded dress she moved through groups of finely dressed courtiers, up to the Dauphin and curtsied perfectly. The court historian later wrote about the conversation between Joan and the Dauphin:

'God give you life, gentle King,' said Joan with great respect.

'Oh! What if I am not the King, Joan?' Charles tested her, 'Look there is the King, over there,' he pointed to a tall, well-dressed, handsome man.

'In God's name, gentle Prince,' Joan urged, 'it is you and no other.' She continued, 'I am Joan the Maid and the King of Heaven has commanded that through me, you are to be anointed and crowned King of France in the city of Reims.'

Charles was looking at her in disbelief. Then Joan drew Charles aside and very quietly whispered to him. Nobody heard what she said and for the rest of her life she refused to reveal what she said. The Dauphin's eye widened. His face paled and his mouth fell open. He was astounded. Charles said later that Joan had revealed to him knowledge of a deep secret that only God would have known.

In an instant he silenced the great hall and announced that from then on, Joan was to live in the castle with him. He appointed to her a page, her special servant to help with anything she needed.

Many courtiers visited her. Noble men and women were enchanted by her humility, thoughtfulness and strong beliefs. However, there were those that doubted this small, skinny peasant girl with spiky hair. They were jealous that she had just walked in from nowhere in her faded dress and become what appeared to be the Dauphin's favourite. They wanted to put her in her place. They tried to catch her out, to test her, but Joan gave as good as she got. She may have been small, quiet and calm most of the time, but when people tried to trick her, or were rude or hurtful, Joan would stand up to them strongly and directly.

Although the Dauphin did not doubt Joan, some of his advisors warned him that she could be a witch, possessed by devils. Perhaps she was a Burgundian spy, a liar or insane? Joan, they said must be completely tested and questioned by priests and professors about her background and the voices she claimed to have heard.

Joan realised that even though the Dauphin was almost ten years older than her, Charles was far less mature than she was. He was totally reliant on his advisors and many of them hated Joan. For three weeks, Joan was questioned, hour after hour, day after day.

With a calm certainty Joan told her interrogators what the voices had foretold:

- 'the city of Orléans will be freed from the English';
- 'first I shall send them an invitation to surrender';
- 'through me the King will be crowned in Reims';
- 'the Duke of Orléans will return from captivity in England'.

No evidence of Joan lying about her life could be found and she could not be shaken from her belief in the truth of her voices. Finally, Prince Charles could accept Joan's help and guidance. He made Joan an official member of the royal army.

Preparations Are Made

Life changed completely for Joan. She was assigned a second page and two heralds to serve her. Joan was provided with five impressive warhorses, and a number of smaller, lighter steeds for use in her coming campaign. Two squires were provided to care for Joan's horses.

Joan spent every day in training with the royal troops. At first the soldiers were doubtful that this slight teenage girl could engage in war games, but Joan was agile and growing in strength. She impressed

The mood of the entire country changed overnight. It seemed that, as foretold in the ancient prophecy, a young maiden had come to save France.

everyone with her quick learning and ability to fight with weapons on horseback, as well as on the ground.

A fine suit of white armour was made just for Joan and it fitted her perfectly. Joan wore the shining armour over a vest and trousers of chain mail. Hopefully, that would stop any arrows, or swords from piercing the leather joints of the armoured suit.

Word of Joan joining the army and her promises to the Dauphin spread throughout France. The mood of the entire country changed overnight. It seemed that, as foretold in the ancient prophecy, a young maiden had come to save France. Loyal French people were filled with new hope and strength. The English and the Burgundians began to doubt their own chances of success.

Day after day, Joan trained and practised her skills harder than anybody. She was keen to get the campaign underway as soon as possible. What nobody knew as they watched Joan working from early morning to late each night, was that she had a secret.

Joan's voices had also said that she had a little over a year to fulfil the promises she had made to the Dauphin. Therefore she worked longer and harder each day, overcoming her blisters, bruises, aches and tiredness.

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Joan needed a fine sword to complete her military outfit. Her voices told her that a sword would be found buried close to the altar of the small church in the town of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois. Two of her heralds were sent to the town.

When the heralds arrived at the church, two churchmen told them that there was no sword: it was simply a legend. The heralds described the sword as Joan had done, 'It is rusted with five crosses engraved on it.' Unconvinced, the churchmen led the two heralds to the altar. They stood to the left of the altar and, with the aid of a mattock and much heaving and hauling, they lifted two large flagstones. Nothing - just dry, compact soil beneath. They dug down several feet and soon hit solid rock.

The sun was setting in the west. The small church was flooded with a fading red glow. Disheartened, but as quickly as they could, the heralds filled the hole and replaced the flagstones. One churchman looked to the other, raised his eyes to the roof and slowly shook his head, 'Looks like the Maid was wrong. What about all the other things she has said?'

Undaunted, one herald lit a torch while the other quickly walked to the right of the altar. In the flickering gloom, they repeated the process. The flagstones were even harder to lift here, but soon the digging began. Within a minute, there was a metallic 'Clank!' that echoed around the stony walls.

The men froze for an instant and then looked at each other. One herald bent down, brushed the soil aside to reveal a rusted sword - just as Joan had described. In his joy, the herald snatched up the rusty sword and waived it in triumph.

He had not realised how close a stone column was behind him. The sword struck the granite and as it did so, it seemed to shatter into a thousand pieces, showering the four men in metallic shards.

Once again the men froze. Had the special sword been found, only to be shattered by a careless herald? However, when the four men looked to see what the herald had been left holding, they saw a perfect shining sword, completely free from rust, engraved with five crosses just as Joan had described.

To Orléans

By April 1429, Joan was prepared. She was the figurehead of the army of the Dauphin. She had with her a shining white banner that included an emblem of the lily flower on it – an ancient symbol of the kings of France. Although she was dressed in her suit of fine armour and carried the legendary sword, she later said, ‘I fought with my banner, not with my sword. I never killed anybody.’

Joan wanted peace with the English. She did not want more people to die, whether they were French or English. The two countries had once been allies, at peace with each other. The royal families of both countries were related to each other by marriage.

So Joan’s first act was to send a letter to the commander of the English troops besieging the city of Orléans. Joan asked her herald to write down her words and afterwards to read them back to her. In the letter she said, ‘Render to the Maid all the keys of the towns you have invaded in France... I am chief-of-war... I am sent to drive you out of France... you archers, companions of war, men-at-arms, and others who are before the town of Orléans, go away to your own country... obey and I will be merciful to you...’

In fact, Joan sent three letters to the English and three times they refused to withdraw their troops surrounding Orléans. The only option was to attack. Wearing her white armour, Joan rode on a large white warhorse at the head of the army. Her white silken banner streamed in the wind. Joan urged everyone to ride faster and harder towards the city.

So pleased were the loyal French soldiers inside the city when Joan arrived, that they charged out of one of the city gates that had been barricaded by the English. They fought with a new furious will and drove away the company of English soldiers. As Joan and the army rode into Orléans, the people were jubilant, crying ‘The Maid will save us’.

For three days the battle raged around the walls of the city. Arrows filled the air, falling like deadly rain. Joan had her shoulder pierced by an arrow. She had it removed at once and immediately returned to rally the troops. City walls rang with shouts, cries and the clash of steel as fierce hand-to-hand combat raged on. Through it all, wherever fighting was at its fiercest, Joan shone out like a white beacon of light shouting ‘Fight for France!’

By Sunday 8th May, both sides were exhausted. The rules of combat in those days demanded that fighting never took place on a Sunday. For two hours that Sunday morning, the armies of France and England faced each other. And then, at a silent command, the English army turned and left! They knew they could not defeat Joan’s sheer force of will. The city was free at last.

On to Reims

Word of the victory reached the Dauphin. He sent a letter to every loyal town celebrating Joan’s triumph. But there was no time for Joan and the army to relax. They had to clear the English from all the towns between Orléans and Reims in the northeast.

As word of Joan’s victory spread, more and more loyal Frenchmen rode to join the army, swelling its numbers every day. Through June and the first half of July, Joan and the army rode through the countryside taking town after town back from the English. Soon Joan and the army were finding that the English were withdrawing from towns before they even arrived. In the end, when Joan arrived at Reims, the English

surrendered without any fighting at all. The coronation could now take place.

A King is Crowned

The air in the ancient cathedral of Reims was heavy with incense. A golden canopy, carried by four knights on horseback, shone like the sun in the light of hundreds of candles and torches as they processed along the aisle. Joan waited in front of the altar, her battle standard held high above her bowed head.

As the procession reached the altar, twelve trumpets rang out as the Dauphin ascended the few stairs to a special platform and knelt before the throne. The echoes of the trumpets faded and monks and priests began chanting. The archbishop recited an ancient prayer, blessing the Dauphin and the crown, sceptre and golden spurs that would be handed to him as King. Prince Charles was then anointed with holy oil and dressed in garments of the finest silk.

The Dauphin swore an oath of loyalty to the kingdom of France for the rest of his life. He was then crowned King Charles VII of France. Carrying her banner proudly, Joan stood next to the King. The trumpets sounded again and the city was filled with cheers from thousands of loyal subjects in the cathedral and the packed square outside.

Joan had accomplished all that her voices said she would. She had served her country and its King faultlessly.

Afterword

King Charles VII gave Joan the title of Lady du Lis – Lady of the Lily. She could now have a coat of arms, raise her own funds and command her own army.

In the light of what she had done, Joan asked the King for a favour, but not for herself. She asked that the people in her hometown of Domrémy be given tax-free status forever. No longer would they pay tax to the King.

Courtly life was not for Joan, so she convinced the King to allow her to continue fighting the English, even though her voices had never asked her to do this. In May 1430, Joan was captured in battle by Burgundian troops.

The Burgundians asked the King to pay a large sum of money for Joan's release. The King's advisors said that he must not pay a ransom. Even after everything she had done for the King and her country, Charles VII refused to pay to rescue Joan. Therefore, the Burgundians asked the English to pay. The English paid the ransom and took Joan to prison.

Joan was tried and executed by the English in May 1431, at the age of 19. The final prediction of Joan's voices had come to pass.

So here we are twenty-five years after Joan's execution. All the accounts that we have heard in our investigation show that Joan was a true and honourable young woman who always put others' needs before her own and who gave her life in the service of her country. She was courageous, brave and showed tremendous fearlessness in the face of danger. I hope you have enjoyed hearing about her life, and can understand how doing things for the benefit of others, even when you might be scared or nervous, can benefit a greater good.

Joan of Arc — Glossary

Characters

Jehanne d'Arc	Joan of Arc – The Maid
Jacques d'Arc	Joan's father
Isabelle d'Arc	Joan's mother
Hauviette, Simonin	Joan's childhood friends
Colin, Mengette and Jean Waterin	
The Dauphin	Prince Charles, heir to the throne crowned King Charles VII of France

The Story

Agincourt	pronounced 'A-zhyan-core'
alms	donations
besieged	surrounded by an enemy army
campaign	a planned series of battles
Chinon	pronounced 'She-non'
courtiers	knights, lords, ladies and servants at the King's court
Dauphin	pronounced 'Doh-fan'
Domrémy	pronounced 'Dom-ray-me'
doyen	a town council official
du Lis	pronounced 'do-Lee' – the lily flower
herald	a servant who would carry messages
jubilant	filled with joy
mattock	an ancient pickaxe
Orléans	pronounced 'Or-lay-on'
page	a servant
pious	virtuous
Reims	pronounced 'Ra-ms'
Sainte-Catherine	
de-Fierbois	pronounced 'Sant Catt-er-reen de Fee-air-bwuh'
shards	metal splinters
siege	the surrounding of a city stop food supplies arriving
squire	young nobleman who is a knight's attendant
steed	small, fast horse
Vaucouleurs	pronounced 'Voh-coo-ler'
warhorse	very large, strong horse like a carthorse