Joan of Arc
By Sharon Fabian

Joan of Arc was a French girl who grew up on her family's farm in the Meuse River valley. She learned to spin wool, sew, and help with other chores on the farm. She was a very religious child who loved to listen to the daily ringing of the church bells.

While Joan was growing up, a terrible war was raging across France. France and England had been fighting for control of the country, off and on, for nearly one hundred years! At this time, England was winning. It already controlled much of northern France and the city of Paris. Charles, who should have been the king of France, had never been crowned and only ruled a small area in the south of France. He was running out of both troops and money, and his situation was becoming hopeless.

When Joan was a teenager, she said that she had been hearing voices and seeing visions. She claimed to have seen the Catholic saints Catherine and Margaret and the Archangel Michael. She said that the voices of the saints told her to go to Charles and help him become king.

Joan believed that it was her mission to do just that. First, she went to the nearby town of Vancouleurs to see the military commander there. At first the commander laughed at Joan, but eventually she convinced him to take her seriously. The commander escorted Joan to see Charles.

Charles had no options left. Maybe that is why he decided to give Joan a chance. Even though she had no military experience, he gave her troops to command.

Joan led her troops to Orleans, which had been under siege by the English. She led the troops into battle, carrying her white banner with images of angels and the French fleur-de-lis. In ten days, Joan's troops had broken the siege and routed the English. She earned the affectionate title, the Maid of Orleans.

Now she was ready to lead Charles to Reims, the city where French kings were crowned. Along the way, Joan's troops faced more battles, but they reached their destination. There, at the Cathedral of Reims, Charles was crowned King Charles VII in 1429.

Once he was crowned, Charles had little desire to continue the war, but Joan wanted to take back Paris. She began her move towards the city, winning battles along the way. Then in 1430, she was captured just outside of Paris in the town of Compiegne.

Her captors, the Burgundians, were French people who supported the English, and they sold Joan to the English.

Although France tried to pay a ransom to get Joan back, the English refused to give her up. The English, along with a Catholic court, put Joan on trial. She was charged with heresy, which means going against the teachings of the church, and also with wearing men's clothing.

Joan was declared guilty and sent to prison. There, after she allegedly preached heresy and wore men's clothing again, she was sentenced to death.

Joan was tied to a pillar and burned alive. She was 20 years old.

After her death, her family appealed her conviction to clear her name. Joan was found innocent, and declared a martyr, which means someone who died for her religion.

Much later, in 1920, the Catholic Church declared Joan of Arc a saint.

Her campaign had been the turning point in the Hundred Years' War. Her life had been an inspiration to many. She showed that great deeds of bravery can be accomplished by anyone, even a young peasant girl.
Questions

1. Joan of Arc lived during the ______ century.
   A. 14th  
   B. 16th  
   C. 15th  
   D. 13th

2. Joan lived and fought in ______.
   A. neither  
   B. both  
   C. England  
   D. France

3. When Joan led the French army to victory, she was ______.
   A. in her 20s  
   B. ten years old  
   C. Queen of France  
   D. a teenager

4. According to Joan, she was told to lead the French army by ______.
   A. the army commander  
   B. saints  
   C. the queen  
   D. the king

5. Which happened first?
   A. Joan marched to Reims.  
   B. Joan was executed.  
   C. Joan ended the siege of Orleans.  
   D. Joan was escorted to see Charles.

6. Because of Joan's actions, Charles ______.
   A. became King of England  
   B. became King of France  
   C. was removed from the throne of France  
   D. was executed for heresy

7. Which of the following is the best summary of Joan's trials?
   A. Joan was found guilty.  
   B. Joan was first found guilty, but after her death, found innocent.  
   C. Joan was found innocent.  
   D. Joan was first found innocent, but retried and found guilty.

8. Joan is an inspiration to many because of her ______.
   A. bravery  
   B. obedience  
   C. style  
   D. creativity