

PinkMonkey® Literature Notes on . . .

Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only excerpts of the booknote sections and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This sample will give you an idea of the layout and overall content of the full summary.

Saint Joan

by

George Bernard Shaw



MonkeyNotes Edited by Diane Sauder

PinkMonkey.com, Inc. Copyright © 1997, All Rights Reserved.
Distribution without the written consent of PinkMonkey.com, Inc. is strictly prohibited.

KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

In the play, which takes from 1429 to 1456, there are several disparate settings, all in France. The first is in a chamber in the castle of Vaucouleurs. The second set, resplendent with all the beauty and pomp.....

CHARACTERS

Major Characters

Joan of Arc or Saint Joan (often referred to as The Maid) - She is a country girl whose age is between seventeen and eighteen years. An actual historical character, she is the central character and protagonist of the play. Although she is not a classical beauty, Joan of Arc has an admirable sense of purpose and determination; she is also simple, wise and courageous. Her soldier's clothes, her short hair, and her military tactics reveal her sense of duty. Even when she is captured and put on trial, her basic honesty, her great religious faith, and her practical, common sense make the judges look ridiculous.

Charles VII or The Dauphin - He is a young man of about twenty-six who lacks self-confidence. He is somewhat ugly, thin, and wiry, with almost no physique and a sheepish expression. He is not greatly bothered about matters relating to the court or the country, being more concerned about his own poor health and lack of money. As a result, his power-hungry nobles run the country and force him to remain an uncrowned king. He is intelligent and recognizes that Joan is more noble and trustworthy than his own courtiers, who constantly bully him. With Joan's help, he is finally crowned king. He is the man in the epilogue who dreams about Joan 25 years later, revealing what happens to her after her death.

Dunois - He is the responsible and courageous young commander of Joan's army. He is good-looking and very good-natured. Like Joan, he has a sense of purpose and a sense of duty. He is also(Many other characters listed).....

Minor Characters

Robert De Baudricourt - He is a typical professional military captain, handsome and filled with energy. It is because of his backing that Joan gets the first opportunity to show her military skills.

The Archbishop of Rheims - He is a well-fed political ecclesiastic of about 50 years of age. He is initially in favor of Joan, for he considers her to be an innocent religious girl; however, he goes against her when she crowns the Dauphin as the king.

Monseigneur de la Tremouille - He is the Lord Chamberlain and the commander-in-chief of the.....
.....(Many other characters listed).....

CONFLICT

Protagonist - The protagonist of the play is Joan of Arc. She believes that she has been chosen by God to save her country from confusion and destruction. Her faith is the result of the purity of her conscience and her firm belief in her Maker and his purpose for her.. She does not give up her pursuit even.....

Antagonist - The antagonists in this play are both the church and the state. The wily and treacherous triumvirate of cowardly conspirators -- the Earl of Warwick (Richard De Beauchamp), the Bishop of.....

Climax - The climax of the play occurs when Joan, victorious in battle, is tricked and

Outcome - There are two outcomes to this play. The more immediate outcome is Joan's being condemned and burned at the stake in 1429. This is a tragic end because it shows that the conspirators.....

PLOT (Synopsis)

The play relates how Joan, a simple and faithful French country girl, sees visions and hears voices that she believes come directly from God. Accepting the visions and voices as God's direction for her life, Joan successfully drives the English from Orleans and crowns the Dauphin as the King of France. She is burned at the stake for her efforts.

Throughout the play, Joan must endure difficulties. She is mocked for dressing up like a man, judged as incapable of defeating the English, and is considered mad for believing that God speaks directly to her. In spite of the criticism she receives, she remains true to the direction of the visions and faithful to her God, whom she puts above the Church and the State.

Through her efforts and persuasiveness, she convinces the Dauphin to give her a horse, armor, and soldiers so she can lead a siege against the English in Orleans. She is successful in her campaign against the enemy, freeing Orleans and winning the admiration of her soldiers and the common people. Encouraged by them and her faith, she plans to march onward to Paris and reclaim the city from the English. Joan is given courage by her belief that God wants her to restore order to France.

The nobility is fearful of Joan, for she is a threat to the power that they hold in the Church and the State. The Earl of Warwick is particularly afraid of her influence and offers a reward for her.....

THEMES

Major Theme

The main theme of *Saint Joan* is the difference between true religious faith and the hypocrisy of organized religion. Joan is a true believer, one who strives to do God's will in everything she does. In contrast to her, Shaw pictures organized religion, represented by the Roman Catholic Church of the fifteenth century, as manipulative and hypocritical. The Church leaders seem much more concerned about

Minor Theme

Saint Joan also portrays the wickedness of political schemes and treacheries. Joan, who believed in the truth of God, is victimized by self-serving and corrupt men who fear her influence. To protect their

MOOD

The general mood of *Saint Joan* is somber, but there are also instances of melodrama and

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

George Bernard Shaw was born on July 26, 1856, in Dublin, Ireland. Considerably younger than her husband, Shaw's mother, Lucinda Elizabeth, was the daughter of an Irish landowner. Shaw's father, George Carr Shaw, was the son of a failed Dublin stockbroker; he was also a weak and ineffectual man, given to drowning his sorrow in alcohol. Before the author was born, his own father had retired from his work as a civil servant and had become a corn merchant, which proved an unsuccessful venture. As a result, much of Shaw's childhood was plagued by his family's financial concerns.

Although they lived in Ireland, the Shaws were Protestants, and George Bernard was baptized in the Church of England; however, the boy was never very religious and did not enjoy attending church. He also did not

enjoy his formal education, even though he attended several different schools. He started at the Wesleyan Connexional School and ended his fifteenth year at the Dublin English Scientific and Commercial Day School.

For the most part, Shaw's childhood was unhappy. By the time he was fifteen, his parents' marriage had broken up. His mother deserted her husband and went off to England to live with her

LITERARY INFORMATION

Shaw read the works of many writers who had written about Joan of Arc, including those of Shakespeare, Voltaire, Schiller, Tom Taylor, Percy Mackaye, Anatole France, Mark Twain, and others; these writings included a political drama, a melodrama, a mock-heroic poem, four historical studies, a novel, three more plays, and two critical biographies. Some of the works praise the young French maiden, and some.....

SCENE SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

SCENE I

Summary

The opening scene is set on a spring morning in 1429 in the Castle of Vaucouleurs. A panic-stricken steward comes rushing up to Robert de Baudricourt, the lord of the castle. He reports that the hens have ceased to lay eggs. He believes that this is a punishment from God since Robert de Baudricourt has refused to see Joan, the peasant girl from Domremy, who has been waiting at the castle for two days. Although Robert de Baudricourt is furious with the steward's accusation and his hint that Joan has bewitched everyone in the castle, the lord sends for Joan of Arc. They meet in the chambers of the castle.

Joan presents herself as a self-assured and direct country girl. She bravely demands a horse, armor, and soldiers. She tells Baudricourt that she wants to go to see the Dauphin and help raise the siege of Orleans. She claims that God has appeared to her in visions and commanded her to help with the attack on the English. She also informs him that she has already convinced some men to join her, including Bertrand de Poulengry, a solid and practical squire. De Poulengry convinces Baudricourt to do as Joan bids, for he feels that her steadfast faith will give strength to the soldiers. Baudricourt gives Joan everything that she has asked for and lets her leave. As soon as she departs, the hens start laying eggs once again. De Baudricourt is astonished and says, "She did come from God."

Notes

In the opening scene of the play, Joan, the protagonist, is introduced as a girl of sixteen or seventeen. She is devoid of any feminine guiles and is referred to as a brave, confident girl filled with valor and faith. Her short hair and soldier like clothes bear testimony to the seriousness of her purpose. She has come to Vaucouleurs Castle to ask for a horse, armor, and soldiers, for she plans to help crown the Dauphin as King of France and to aid in the attack in Orleans against the British, who now occupy France. She is convinced that the English are violating God's will by being in her country, and she is determined to drive them back to England. She will fight to the death to accomplish her purpose.

In this scene, Joan proves that she is a very confident young woman who is strong-willed and persuasive. Before the play opens, she has already succeeded in convincing several men of the truth of her visions and engaging them to go with her on her mission to Orleans; one of her followers is the practical Bertrand de Poulengry. He claims that Joan, through her strong faith, has the power to inspire the soldiers during battle; in response to her, the soldiers will fight with renewed vigor and fervor. With such help from Poulengry, Joan

easily manages to dominate and impress Sir Robert de Baudricourt. At the end of the scene, he promises to fill all of her requests.

In the fifteenth century, many people were given to beliefs in the mystical and the supernatural. The steward is one such person; early in the play, he rushes onto the stage in a panic. He is certain that the reason that the hens are not laying eggs is because Baudricourt has refused to see Joan of Arc. It is obvious, therefore, that Joan's reputation is already known. The common people seem to believe that she truly is a chosen one, a messenger of God. By the end of the chapter, de Baudricourt thinks the same thing, for as soon as Joan departs the hens again start laying eggs.

SCENE II

Summary

This scene is set in the antechamber of the throne room of the castle at Chinoin, in Lorraine, where Charles, the Dauphin or Ruler of France, is holding court. The courtiers, including the Archbishop of Rheims, are discussing the Dauphin who, in spite of having borrowed huge amounts of money from them, is on the verge of poverty; he also lacks power and respect. At this moment Gilles de Rais enters, saying that Joan has had a great influence on the common soldiers. The rest of the courtiers are skeptical about Joan, even though Charles supports her and insists upon seeing her. He is bullied by the Archbishop into testing Joan's powers.

Gilles de Rais, known as Bluebeard, comes up with the idea to test Joan. The test is that before Joan enters, Charles would hide himself and Bluebeard would take his place. Joan would have to identify whether the man before her is really Charles by using her powers. As they leave to prepare for this test, the Chamberlain and the Archbishop discuss their views on miracles.

Upon entering, Joan's short hair, soldier-like clothes, and unfeminine looks cause a lot of laughter among the ladies. Joan, however, pays little attention to the snide comments and immediately denounces de Rais as the Dauphin. She finds Charles among the courtiers and kneels in front of him, stating that she has been sent to free France and crown him as the king. When Joan requests a private audience with the Dauphin, the Archbishop orders Charles and Joan to be left alone.

Charles, a shy and somewhat despairing young man, tells Joan that he wants to lead a peaceful and quiet life. However, Joan gives him encouragement. Despite heavy opposition from his courtiers, Charles grants Joan permission to command the army and raise the siege at Orleans. When she addresses the courtiers and calls for their help, all of them, except for the former commander of Charles' army are impressed with Joan's courage and enthusiasm.

Notes

As Joan enters, the women laugh at her clothes, which will play a very important part in her ultimate condemnation at the trial. The courtiers are all skeptical of her abilities. Joan's miraculous powers are highlighted, however, as she does not fall for the trick presented to her and immediately identifies Charles, the Dauphin, even though she has never before seen him. The doubting Archbishop claims that the Blue Beard of De Rais has invalidated the test. Hints of the Archbishop's underlying hatred for Joan are suggested here. Though he is ashamed by the reverence and respect that Joan shows to him, the Archbishop is.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTERS

Joan of Arc - Saint Joan - Joan, later canonized as Saint Joan, was a simple country girl, approximately seventeen years of age. She was the daughter of a farmer from the village of Domremy, France. Highly

religious and pure, she sees visions and hears voices that direct her life. She believes that the visions and voices come straight to her from God. As a result, she lives as God directs her, following his commands over those of the Church and humbly claiming nothing for herself.

Joan believes that God has called her to crown the Dauphin as King and save France from the invading English. Determined and persuasive, she is successful in convincing others of her cause. They join her forces as she marches against the English to deliver her country from confusion. She proves that she is a capable and courageous leader, defeating the French in battle after battle and

Charles, The Dauphin - At the first of the play, Charles VII, later crowned the King of France, is a thin and wiry young man who is unsure of himself. Because of his lack of self-confidence, he constantly wears a sheepish expression and is led around by his powerful nobles. He is often mocked by his courtiers and made to do things he does not want to do. In fact, the powerful Bishop has made the Dauphin a mere puppet in his hand. Though Charles believes in.....

The Conspirators - The triumvirate of conspirators consists of the Earl of Warwick (Richard De Beauchamp), the Bishop of Beauvais (Peter Cauchon), and Chaplain de Stogumber. The Earl of Warwick and the Chaplain are English, and the Bishop of Beauvais is French. Each of them has his reason for

The Inquisitor - Although the Inquisitor is a mild-mannered, elderly Dominican monk, he displays a great reserve of authority and firmness. Highly skilled in rhetoric and

PLOT (STRUCTURE)

From the opening scene, Shaw's Saint Joan has a sense of purpose; it is not ribald like Voltaire's tale or idealized like the tales of the 19th century Romantics. Instead, the plot of Shaw's play centers on a poor, plain peasant girl from France who has a great faith and a willing soul. The play concentrates on the fact that Joan has visions that it is God's will that she become a military leader to conduct the siege of Orleans and save France from the English.

The plot of the play is developed in a classical manner. In the first scene, the protagonist (Joan of Arc), the conflict, the theme, and the setting are all introduced. Before the end of the first scene, the rising action has begun, as Joan works to raise an army. She demands an audience with the Lord of Vaucouleurs Castle and then the Dauphin himself, successfully demanding a horse, armor, and soldiers for.....

THEMES

Saint Joan is a religious play that contrasts two sides of faith. Joan represents the true believer, one who accepts God as the master of life and who is willing to completely follow His will without question or

STYLE

Saint Joan is a historical drama, filled with facts about the life of a peasant girl from France. Shaw creates added interest in the play by giving his own colors to the character of his.....

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the basic characteristics of Joan of Arc.
2. How is Shaw's portrait of Joan of Arc different from other writers?.....

End of Sample MonkeyNotes for Saint Joan