



ALABAMA  
SHAKESPEARE  
FESTIVAL

# SAINT JOAN

## STUDY GUIDE



by George Bernard Shaw

directed by Eric Tucker

ASF.NET 334.271.5353

**Plot, Characters, and Setting** ..... pg 3

**About the Artists** ..... pg 4

**Interview with Bedlam Theatre** ..... pg 5

**Classroom Resources and Activities** ..... pg 6

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS *cont.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.11-12.1-3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RL.11-12.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry); evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist)

## NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

TH.Re7.1 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH.Re8.1 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

TH.Re9.1 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

TH.Cn10.1 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

TH.Cn11.1 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

**ASF wishes to thank the Education department at McCarter Theatre Center,  
who generously shared their teacher resources with us.**

## PLOT

Amidst the Hundred Years War, a young country maid asks Captain Robert de Baudricourt to provide her with soldiers and horses to travel to Charles, the Dauphin, to secure his blessing to lead the troops at Orleans. After she convinces the local soldiers she is blessed by God, Joan is given permission and resources from the captain and sets off for the French court in Chinon. Charles accepts Joan's leadership and, through seemingly miraculous forces, Joan leads the French army to victory over the English at Orleans. She attributes the win to the divine voices she hears in her head. However, the English Earl of Warwick begins to make a case to the Catholic clergy that Joan is using witchcraft. Joan goes on to oversee Charles' coronation at the Rheims Cathedral, but tempers flare when she challenges the new king to let her wage battle over Paris. Joan moves to retake Paris without the protection or blessing of French leadership. Will her heavenly voices prove enough to save her?

## CHARACTERS

### FRENCH

**Captain Robert de Baudricourt:** a military squire in Lorraine, sends Joan to the Dauphin

**Steward:** servant to Captain Baudricourt

**Joan:** the Maid, a young country girl spoken to by the divine

**Poulengy (Polly):** a soldier, accompanies Joan to the Dauphin

**Archbishop of Rheims:** a high-ranking Catholic clergyman, an advisor to the Dauphin

**The Duchess:** Monseigneur de la Trémouille's wife

**Monseigneur de la Trémouille:** the Lord Chamberlin and commander of French Army, an advisor to the Dauphin

**Page:** servant to a high ranking official or nobleman

### ENGLISH

**The Executioner:** carries out Joan's burning at the stake

**The Soldier:** makes a stick cross for Joan at her execution

**John de Stogumber:** a chaplain, conspires to execute Joan

**Richard de Beauchamp:** Earl of Warwick, conspires to execute Joan

## SETTING

*Saint Joan* takes place from 1429-1431 (late Middle Ages) across various locations in France and England. These include the River Meuse, the Loire River, the French Court in Chinon, Reims Cathedral, and a castle in Rouen. During this time period, France and England were embroiled in the Hundred Years War — a series of territorial conflicts between the monarchies lasting on and off from 1337-1453.

### FRENCH *cont.*

**Bluebeard:** Gilles de Rais, soldier and member of the Court

**Captain La Hire:** military captain who witnesses one of Joan's miracles

**Charles:** The Dauphin of France, soon to be king

**Jack Dunois:** commands the forces at Orleans, best friend of Joan

**Monseigneur Cauchon:** Bishop of Beauvais, oversees Joan's trial for heresy

**The Inquisitor:** official who tries Joan for heresy

**D'Estivet:** the Promoter, presents the case against Joan

**Ladvenu:** a young Dominican Monk, a participant in Joan's trial

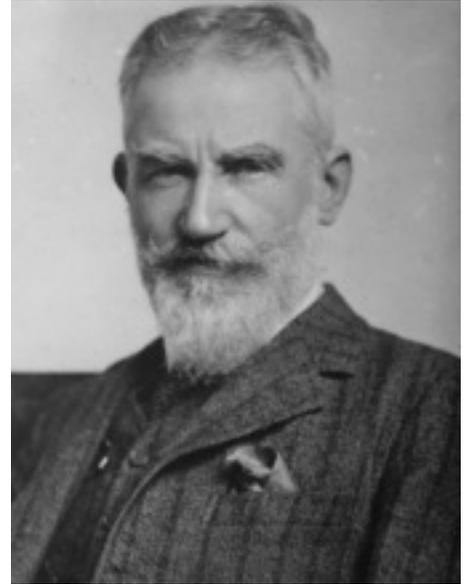


Bedlam's cast of *Saint Joan*

## ABOUT SHAW'S SAINT JOAN

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) is widely regarded as second only to Shakespeare among English-language dramatists. He is the playwright of enduring works such as *Pygmalion* and won the Nobel Prize for Literature two years after *Saint Joan* was published.

*Saint Joan* was first staged in 1923, just three years after the canonization of Joan of Arc. Though Joan was not officially named a saint until that time, she had been widely revered as a religious hero in France for centuries. The role of Joan in Shaw's adaptation is considered particularly difficult to play as the character struggles to balance the dictates of Catholic law with the demands of her divine voices. She is one of the great tragic heroines of the Middle Ages and beyond.



A photograph of George Bernard Shaw

## BEDLAM THEATRE

BEDLAM is a NYC-based not-for-profit theatre company under the leadership of Artistic Director Eric Tucker and Managing Director Kimberly Pau Boston. Founded in 2012, Bedlam received instant recognition for its production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* in which only four actors played over 25 characters. Additional past shows include *Hamlet*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pygmalion*, *Uncle Romeo Vanya Juliet*, *Peter Pan*, *The Seagull*, *Dead Dog Park*, *New York Animals*, and two productions of *Twelfth Night* that ran in rep with each other.

Bedlam's shows have been noted as Ben Brantley's "Critics' Picks" for *The New York Times* six times, noted on *The New York Times* and *New York Magazine*'s "Top Ten Best Show Lists" two times, as well as those of *The Wall Street Journal* and *Time Magazine* respectively. *The Wall Street Journal* also noted Eric Tucker as "Director of the Year" in 2014. Bedlam has won two Irene Awards, two Off Broadway Alliance Awards, and an Obie Grant. Bedlam has also been nominated for two Lucille Lortel awards, a Drama League award, and six Elliot Norton awards, winning for Best Visiting Production and Best Ensemble for Bedlam's *Saint Joan*, Best Visiting Production for Bedlam's *Twelfth Night/What You Will*, and Best Visiting Performer for Vaishnavi Sharma in Bedlam's *Pygmalion*. Bedlam also offers a free Veteran Outreach program and adult education workshops in acting, producing, and directing.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival sat down with Eric Tucker, Artistic Director of Bedlam, to learn more about the company, their artistic process, and the development process for *Saint Joan* by George Bernard Shaw and *Hamlet*, which is playing in repertory with *Saint Joan*.



Joan and Dunois celebrate in Bedlam's *Saint Joan*

### **How and why did Bedlam decide to form a theatre company? What kind of work is your company interested in?**

I have always felt as a director that it's important to have a home base, a place where one can practice their own aesthetic and be solely responsible for the product. We formed Bedlam as a place to examine classic material more deeply and to try to find new ways of presenting those plays in order to bring audiences a fresh perspective on the stories. We are interested in classic material as well as new plays and musicals.

### **Tell me about the adaptation process for *Saint Joan* and *Hamlet*. Why did these scripts interest Bedlam?**

*Saint Joan* has always been one of my favorite plays. It's incredibly funny and moving and the language is brilliant. *Hamlet* is of course one of the greatest plays ever written, and I thought together these two stories were well matched. I thought as a first-time company we needed something incredibly difficult to pull off in order to be noticed. So, four actors performing *Hamlet* and *Saint Joan* in rep seemed to do the trick. We did both plays mostly uncut, so there was little adaptation of the actual scripts. Most of the adaptation involved deciding how to double the roles and in some cases, share the roles.

### **What did you learn about *Saint Joan* and *Hamlet* during the adaptation and performance process?**

I've seen what a powerful play *Saint Joan* is because of its effect on so many different audiences. Audiences from all over the country respond in the same way. They find it hysterically funny and completely moving, and most say it's an unforgettable experience. When we added *Hamlet* into the mix, I learned that the most important and best way to be successful with a production is to stay out of the way of the play. A truly great play will do the work for you if you don't overcomplicate it. We present these two plays simply and with very little in the way of sets, costumes, or props. We let the great writing take center stage.

### **What do you give up when you restrict *Saint Joan* and *Hamlet* to four performers? What do you gain?**

I think the one thing most people feel when they see a large cast reduced to a few actors is that it's easier to follow if they already know the play. This is probably true, though we do strive to make the storytelling as clear as possible. This is our main concern when rehearsing the plays. I think we gain access to better actors because everyone gets a large part of the play to perform, and audiences can't help but hear the plays differently. They see and hear them in a way they may not have experienced before and the plays feel new in a way.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. During the play, characters frequently debate one another on topics such as morality, power, and who does or does not have credibility. What are tactics you use to persuade your peers, family, or teachers during an argument? Are different tactics effective with different people?
2. In the *Bedlam* production, a cast of four replaces a typical cast of dozens. How do you think the actors will handle the challenge of playing multiple characters, sometimes in the same scene?

### POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. How did *Bedlam* accomplish the task of four actors playing a litany of roles? Did the doubling of actors illuminate anything about the relationships in the play that would be lost in traditional casting?
2. Shaw breaks form at the end of the play to bring the characters together in a dream-like epilogue. What do you think he hopes to accomplish with this scene? Did it change your perception of any of the characters?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Identify a modern Joan of Arc figure, either real or fictional. What makes them revolutionary? How are they accepted or rejected by public opinion? Write a monologue from this figure's perspective 20 years in the future. Were they successful in their mission? How has public opinion of them changed? Will they be remembered as a saint or a heretic? You may use *Saint Joan's* epilogue as inspiration for the style of this piece.
2. Throughout the show, many characters use rhetorical arguments to convince others of their point of view. What successful tactics do they use? What tactics are unsuccessful? As a class, split into two groups to debate whether or not Joan was indeed hearing the voice of God and His saints. One group should argue that Joan was genuinely influenced by divine forces, and the other should argue that she was delusional and heretical. Make use of rhetorical devices such as logic, emotional appeal, and establishing credibility (logos, pathos, and ethos) to plead your case.