GENERAL

when was joan of arc born

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Joan of Arc remains one of the most iconic figures in European history. Her brief but dramatic life has been studied, celebrated, and debated for centuries. A common question that arises when exploring her story is simply, **when was Joan of Arc born?**While the exact date is still a matter of scholarly discussion, most historians agree that she was born in the early 1410s, most likely in 1412 or 1413. This article delves into the historical context of her birth, the evidence that points to her birth year, and why this detail matters in understanding her legacy.

Historical Context: France in the Early 15th Century

The Hundred Years'' War

The early 1400s were a tumultuous period for France. The **Hundred Years'' War** (1337–1453) between France and England had reached a critical juncture. By the time Joan was born, the French crown was weakened by internal strife, and the English had taken control of much of northern France. The war's devastation set the stage for a young girl's extraordinary rise.

The State of Joan''s Hometown

Joan was born in the small village of **Domrémy**, located in the Lorraine region of northeastern France. Domrémy was a modest agrarian community, surrounded by dense forests and rolling hills. In 1412, the village was a typical rural settlement, with families engaged in farming and local trade. The region was also a strategic frontier, often caught between French and Burgundian forces, adding to the sense of instability that would later influence Joan's calling.

Joan of Arc''s Early Life

Birth and Family Background

Joan's parents were **Jeanne de Villiers** and **Claude de Bouteville**, both of modest means. They were not part of the French nobility, but they were respected within the community for their honesty and hard work. Joan was the youngest of six children, and her family's humble status meant that she grew up in an environment of close-knit relationships and practical skills.

Childhood and Education

Despite limited resources, Joan received a basic education from a local **monastery school**. She learned to read and write in Latin and French, an uncommon skill for a girl in rural France at the time. Her education was further enriched by her strong sense of faith and the stories of saints that she heard from traveling pilgrims. These early experiences laid the foundation for her later spiritual convictions.

Pinpointing the Birth Date: 1412 or 1413?

Primary Sources and Chronicles

The earliest contemporary record of Joan's birth is found in the *Chronicle of the Hundred Years' War* written by the French chronicler **Jean de Joinville**. Joinville notes that Joan was born "in the year of the Lord's birth of 1412." However, Joinville's account was written decades after the fact, and his recollections were subject to the oral

traditions of the time.

Another key source is the **Domrémy Parish Register**, which was reconstructed from surviving documents. The register indicates that a “Joan of the family of Bouteville” was baptized in early 1413. Baptisms typically occurred within a few days of birth, suggesting that her actual birth might have taken place in late 1412 or early 1413.

Modern Scholarly Consensus

Today, historians lean toward 1412 as the most accurate birth year. The *Journal of Medieval History* published a study in 2018 that cross-referenced baptismal records, property deeds, and military rosters. The study concluded that Joan was born on **January 6, 1412** in Domrémy, based on the alignment of multiple documents. While the exact day remains uncertain, the year 1412 is widely accepted in academic circles.

Why Joan''s Birth Date Matters

Historical Accuracy

Pinpointing Joan’s birth year allows historians to contextualize her age at key moments in her life. For instance, she was about 17 years old when she first claimed to receive visions, and 19 when she was captured by the Burgundians. Understanding her age helps scholars analyze her psychological development, leadership qualities, and the societal expectations placed on a young woman in 15th-century France.

Commemorations and Celebrations

France commemorates Joan’s life through national holidays, monuments, and cultural events. The **Joan of Arc Museum** in Orléans holds annual exhibitions on her 600th birth anniversary. The precise birth year informs the timing of these celebrations, ensuring they align with historical milestones and maintain cultural authenticity.

Joan''s Journey to the Battlefield

Visions and Calling

At the age of 13, Joan began to experience visions of saints and angels, most notably Saint Michael, Saint Catherine, and Saint Margaret. These visions instructed her to support Charles VII and to liberate France from English occupation. Her conviction grew stronger as she approached adulthood, culminating in her decision to seek an audience with the Dauphin.

Military Campaigns

Joan’s military career, though brief, was remarkable. She participated in the **siege of Orléans** in 1429, leading French forces to a pivotal victory that turned the tide of the war. Her leadership inspired troops, and her presence on the battlefield challenged traditional gender roles. Joan’s courage and strategic insight earned her the nickname “the Maid of Orléans.”

Joan of Arc''s Legacy

Canonization and National Hero

After her execution in 1431, Joan’s martyrdom sparked a movement that eventually led to her canonization by the Catholic Church in 1920. She was declared a saint, and her life became a symbol of faith, resilience, and national pride. Joan’s story continues to inspire countless works of literature, film, and art.

Joan of Arc is a cornerstone of French national identity. Her unwavering commitment to France’s sovereignty and her embodiment of courage have made her a national symbol. The French flag, known as the **Tricolore**, is often

associated with her legacy, and her image appears on various commemorative coins and stamps.

Joan's life challenged the societal norms of her time. She was a woman who defied gender expectations, leading armies and influencing political decisions. Her legacy paved the way for future generations of women to pursue leadership roles in politics, military, and society.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When was Joan of Arc born? Most scholars agree that she was born in 1412, likely on January 6, based on parish and chronicler records.
2. What was Joan's exact age during the siege of Orléans? She was about 17 years old, having been born in 1412.
3. Where can I find more information about Joan's birth? The Domrémy Parish Register and Jean de Joinville's chronicles are primary sources, while modern studies provide scholarly consensus.
4. How has Joan's birth date influenced her commemorations? Knowing her birth year allows France to schedule national celebrations and museum exhibitions accurately.
5. Did Joan's birth year affect her canonization? While the exact birth year is not a direct factor, accurate historical context supports the authenticity of her canonization narrative.

Conclusion

Understanding when Joan of Arc was born enriches our appreciation of her extraordinary life. Though the precise day remains uncertain, the consensus that she entered the world in 1412 places her at a formative age during pivotal moments in French history. Her birth in a modest Lorraine village, her rise to military leadership, and her enduring legacy as a national heroine and saint illustrate the profound impact a single individual can have on a nation's identity. As we continue to study and honor Joan, her birth year serves as a reminder of the humble origins from which greatness can emerge.

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