SOFTWARE & TECH

When Was Joan Of Arc Born

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The Burning Question: Uncovering the Exact Date of Joan of Arc's Birth

The story of Joan of Arc is one of the most extraordinary in human history. A teenage peasant girl who, guided by divine visions, led the French army to pivotal victories during the Hundred Years' War, only to be captured, tried, and burned at the stake at the age of nineteen. Her life was tragically short, yet her impact was monumental. For historians, students, and the curious alike, a simple question often serves as the starting point for exploring her incredible journey: **When was Joan of Arc born?**

While her death on May 30, 1431, is undisputed, the exact date of her birth remains one of history's intriguing puzzles. The precise day is not recorded in any surviving document, forcing us to rely on her own testimony during her trial and a few other indirect clues to estimate her arrival into the world. This article delves deep into the evidence, the historical context, and the enduring mystery surrounding the birth of France's beloved patron saint.

The Best Answer: A Precise Year, an Unknown Day

The most honest answer to the question "When was Joan of Arc born?" is that we do not know the exact date. However, we can pinpoint the year with a high degree of certainty. Through careful analysis of historical records, most scholars agree that **Joan of Arc was born in the year 1412**.

The key piece of evidence comes from Joan herself. During her famous Trial of Condemnation in Rouen in 1431, she was asked her age. She replied, "I am about nineteen years old." The word "about" is crucial. By working backward from her trial in early 1431, subtracting nineteen years places her birth solidly in 1412. If she was exactly nineteen, she would have been born in 1412. If she was nearly twenty, she could have been born in late 1411. The consensus, however, firmly points to 1412 as the accepted year of her birth.

As for the specific date, many historians and biographers speculate that she was born on **January 6**, which is the Feast of the Epiphany. This date is mentioned in some later chronicles and letters, but it is not considered definitive proof. When asked about this specific date, the question "When was Joan of Arc born?" becomes less about a calendar date and more about the historical methods used to reconstruct her life.

Why the Exact Day Remains a Mystery

In the 15th century, especially in a small village like Domrémy, the birth of a peasant girl was not a major state event. Parish records of births, baptisms, and marriages were not kept with the rigorous detail we expect today. Many local churches kept such records on loose pieces of paper or in registers that have since been lost to fire, flood, or simple decay over the past six centuries. The baptism of Joan, a fundamental Christian sacrament, would have been recorded, but that document has not survived. This is the primary reason why the precise date of her birth is unknown.

The Village of Domrémy: Where Her Story Begins

While the exact date is debated, the location of her birth is not. To understand the question "When was Joan of Arc born?" we must also understand the place that shaped her. She was born in the village of **Domrémy**, a small, rural community in the region of Lorraine in northeastern France. Now known as Domrémy-la-Pucelle ("Domrémy the Maiden") in her honor, it was a village of about 150 people living in simple, thatched-roof houses.

Life in 15th-Century Domrémy

Understanding Joan's early environment helps contextualize her life. Life in Domrémy was harsh and deeply tied to the seasons and the land. Her father, Jacques d'Arc, was a farmer who also served as a local village official, collecting taxes and organizing the village watch. Her mother, Isabelle Romée, was a deeply religious woman who taught Joan her prayers and the basic tenets of the Catholic faith.

Key aspects of her childhood included:

- Hard Work: Joan grew up helping with the family farm. She learned to spin wool, tend the livestock, and work in the fields.
- Religious Devotion: The village church was the center of community life. Joan was known for her piety and her regular attendance at Mass and confession.
- War and Strife: The Hundred Years' War was a constant backdrop. Domrémy, though loyal to the French crown, was located near territory controlled by the Burgundians, who were allied with the English. Her family was once forced to flee their village due to a raid by Burgundian forces.

This environment of faith, hardship, and political turmoil were the ingredients that shaped the young girl who would later claim to hear the voices of saints.

The Voices: The Divine Calling

The most significant event in Joan of Arc's life, and the one that directly led her to seek out the Dauphin (the future King Charles VII), occurred when she was about thirteen years old. If we stick with the 1412 birth year, this would be around the year 1425.

Joan testified that she was in her father's garden, working in the fields, when she first heard a voice from God. She described it as a great light, accompanied by a voice that spoke to her of her mission. She later identified these voices as belonging to **Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Margaret of Antioch, and Saint Catherine of Alexandria**.

These voices gave her a monumental task: to drive the English out of France and see the Dauphin crowned King at Reims Cathedral. This divine command set her on a path that would lead her from her simple village home to the courts of power and, eventually, to the battlefield.

From Domrémy to the Battlefield: A Timeline of Her Rise

To truly appreciate the brevity of her life, it's helpful to see the timeline of events after she heeded her voices. This timeline helps answer the "when was she doing what" questions that complement the inquiry into her birth.

1. 1428 (Age ~16): After months of persistent requests, she convinces a local captain, Robert de Baudricourt, to grant her an escort to travel to the Dauphin at Chinon.
2. February 1429 (Age ~17): Joan arrives at the Royal Court of Chinon. In a famous (and perhaps embellished) moment, she identifies the Dauphin, who had disguised himself among his courtiers.
3. April 1429 (Age ~17): After being examined by theologians in Poitiers, she is declared a trustworthy agent of God. She is given armor, a banner, and command of a small army.

4. April 29, 1429: Joan arrives at the besieged city of Orléans. This was the turning point of her mission.
5. May 8, 1429: After a series of aggressive attacks, the English are forced to lift the Siege of Orléans. Joan, wounded but leading the charge, becomes a celebrated military hero.
6. July 17, 1429: The Dauphin is crowned King Charles VII at Reims Cathedral. Joan, holding her banner, stands beside him. Her primary mission is complete.
7. May 23, 1430 (Age ~18): During a military action at Compiègne, Joan is captured by Burgundian soldiers.
8. January 9, 1431 (Age ~19): Joan is handed over to the English for a price and is put on trial for heresy in Rouen, a city under English control.
9. May 30, 1431 (Age ~19): Joan of Arc is burned at the stake in the marketplace of Rouen. Her last word was reported to be "Jesus."

This rapid timeline shows that her entire public career—from leaving Domrémy to her death—lasted just over two years. This makes her story all the more remarkable. Understanding when Joan of Arc was born helps us appreciate just how young she was when she accomplished so much.

The Trial of Condemnation: A Rich Source of Evidence

The transcript of Joan's trial in 1431 is one of the most important historical documents from the Middle Ages. It provides the most direct information we have about her life, her voice, and her character. It is from this trial that we get her estimate of her own age. When asked "When was Joan of Arc born?", she did not give a date. Instead, she gave her age in years.

The trial was not a fair hearing. It was a political and religious show trial orchestrated by the English to destroy her credibility and, by extension, the legitimacy of King Charles VII. Despite intense pressure, constant questioning, and the threat of torture, Joan answered with remarkable clarity, simplicity, and courage.

Her Enduring Legacy

The question "When was Joan of Arc born?" is more than just a search for a date on a calendar. It is a gateway to understanding a young woman who defied every expectation of her time. She was illiterate, yet she debated with the most learned theologians of Europe. She was a girl, yet she led men into battle. She was a peasant, yet she crowned a king.

Her legacy is vast and varied. She was canonized as a saint in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV. She is one of the patron saints of France. Her image has been used by everyone from political leaders to fashion designers. She has inspired countless books, films, plays, and works of art. The mystery of her birth only adds to the legend. The exact date may be lost to history, but the power of her story remains as strong as ever.

Conclusion

In summary, while the precise day remains elusive, the best answer to the question "When was Joan of Arc born?" is **1412**, with the Feast of the Epiphany on **January 6**being the traditional but unconfirmed date. Born in the small village of Domrémy in the midst of a brutal war, she lived a life that burned as brightly and briefly as a shooting star. She was a young woman of intense faith, unshakeable courage, and remarkable leadership. Her birth in 1412 set the stage for a life that would change the course of French history and inspire the world for centuries to come. The exact day may be a mystery, but her impact is an undeniable and everlasting fact.

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