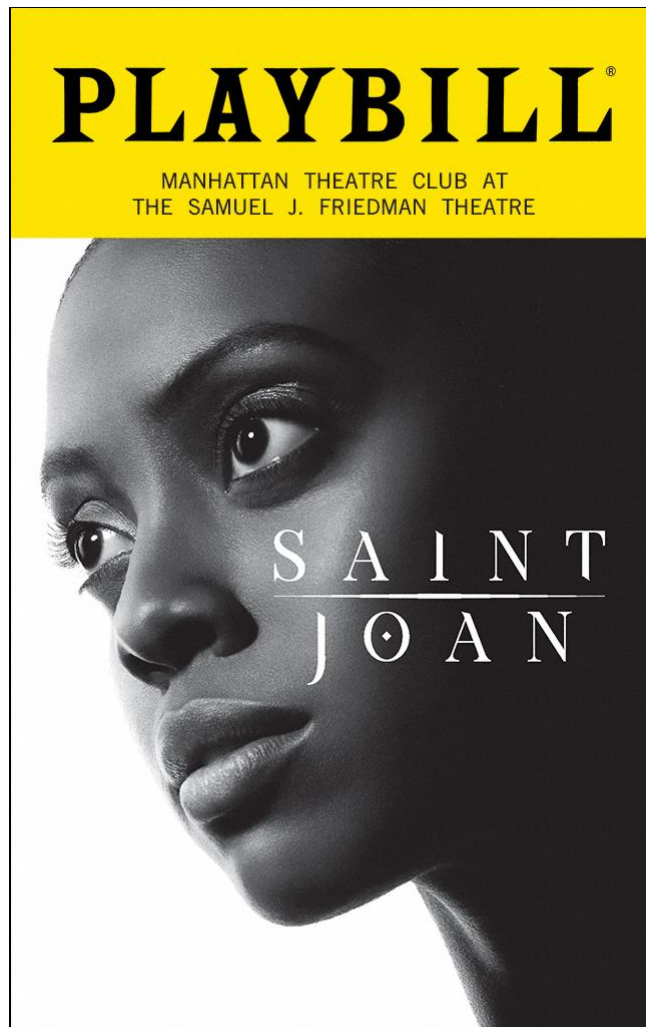




**Lights Up! Library
Classroom Activities**

Saint Joan

**By George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Daniel Sullivan**



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for bringing Manhattan Theatre Club's Lights Up! Library initiative into your high school classroom! We're thrilled to provide to you and your students these classroom activities and the performing recording of Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*.

Our goals for this initiative are:

- To help students better understand themselves and the world through the medium of theatre
- To help develop a knowledgeable, perceptive new audience for the theatre and for the arts in general
- To stimulate participants' imaginations, creativity, and critical thinking skills through engagement with challenging theatre works

The activities are divided into three sections:

- **Preparing Students to View the Play** — activities may include classroom discussion prompts, writing prompts, and theatre games or improvisations
- **Viewing the Play** — including questions for classroom discussion after students watch the performance
- **Follow-Up Activities** — further activities intended to deepen students' personal and intellectual interactions with the play

Additionally, click [here](#) to access supplemental resources which may include links to articles and videos meant to bring further context to this experience.

Our hope is that you will have the time to activate all the activities in this document; however, we understand that time is among the scarcest resources in a high school classroom. One could maintain a rich experience by engaging in the framing questions, one preparatory activity, post-show questions, and one follow-up exercise. And, of course, please modify these activities — or devise your own — in any way necessary to meet the needs of each student in your classroom.

Some of the activities you'll find on these pages align to the [National Core Arts Standards for Theatre](#), and may align to your local benchmarks and standards.

We hope that this experience will be enriching and educationally beneficial to your students!



ABOUT MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB

Manhattan Theatre Club is a not-for-profit theatre company that produces a season of bold, entertaining, and thought-provoking new plays and musicals both on Broadway and off-Broadway. It's Learning & Community Engagement program creates experiences that empower learners to engage joyfully and authentically with theatre while championing the organization's commitment to share the work on its stages with the widest possible audience.

To learn more about Manhattan Theatre Club, click [here](#).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Manhattan Theatre Club's production of Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* opened on April 25, 2018, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre. It was directed by Daniel Sullivan. The cast included Condola Rashad, Walter Bobbie, Adam Chanler-Berat, Jack Davenport, John Glover, Patrick Page, Daniel Sunjata, Tony Carlin, Ben Horner, Maurice Jones, Russell G. Jones, Mandi Masden, Max Gordon Moore, Howard W. Overshown, Michael Rudko, Matthew Saldivar, Robert Stanton, Lou Sumrall, and RJ Vaillancourt. The set was designed by Scott Pask; costumes were by Jane Greenwood; lighting design was by Justin Townsend; and, sound design was by Obadiah Eaves. Original music was by Bill Frisell.

PREPARING STUDENTS TO VIEW THE PLAY

FRAMING QUESTIONS

Either through classroom discussion or individual journaling, ask students to reflect upon these questions:

- Have you ever attempted to right a wrong or take up a cause despite great odds? If not, could you imagine doing so?
- Have you ever stood up to authority whose actions you perceived as unjust?
- What are the most important qualities in a leader?
- Is there anything you would be willing to give your life for?

ACTIVITY: YES / NO

This simple improvisation game uses only “Yes” and “No” to explore persuasion and tactical choices made in pursuit of an objective.

Divide students into pairs. One student will take the role of Player A, the other of Player B. Player A may only say “Yes.” Player B may only say “No.” Player A’s objective is to convince Player B to say “Yes.” To achieve their goal, Player A must try a wide variety of tactical choices until one finally works.

After independent practice, call up pairs to play the scenario in front of the class. After each pair exhausts their tactical choices, reflect with students on what they experienced.

- What different tactics did Player A try to pursue their objective, and how did Player B’s responses influence those choices?
- Which tactics seemed most effective (or ineffective), and what evidence from the performance supports that thinking?
- Think about a time when you were trying to achieve a goal with another person. How does this activity change or deepen your understanding of how people adjust their strategies when one approach isn’t working?

ACTIVITY: YES / NO WITH STATUS

This activity builds upon the previous.

Create and distribute index cards indicating one of three status levels: high, low, and middle. Do so privately so that each students knows only their own status level.

Ask students to walk about the space, greeting and relating to one another according to what is on they care and what they infer about the status of others based upon their actions.

Discuss the experience. What did students notice about how others moved about the space? How did they influence their own actions?

Next, divide the class into three sets of pairs to play the Yes/No game. Every student privately receives a new card designating status and either “Yes” or “No.” Ensure that the three sets of pairs are arranged by categories as follows:

- 1) Low status “Yes” versus high status “No.”
- 2) High status “Yes” versus low status “No.”
- 3) Middle status “Yes” and middle status “No.”

Ask students to play the game simultaneously. Then, select pairs from categories 1 and 2 to observe and discuss:

- Was the relative status clear? How did the players express their status?
- What tactics did students observe?

- What tactics are available to low-status “Yes” players?
- What about high-status?

Next, observe pairs from category 3 (equal middle status) and discuss:

- Was it clear that they were equal in status?
- Identify some of the tactics the players used.
- Did any “Yes” players succeed in moving “No” players to “yes?” If so, how?

ACTIVITY: INNER STATUS VERSUS OUTER STATUS

Joan’s extraordinary achievements are due in large part to her supreme self-assurance and self-confidence. Her outer status is relatively low, but her “inner status” is extremely high. The inner status of many of the nobles she encounters is much lower than their social position would suggest. This activity will enable students to explore this disparity between inner and outer status and the idea of “leading from below.”

Set up an improvisation between two individuals with disparate status in which the low-status character (A) tries to get permission for something from a reluctant superior (B). The scene may be relatively lighthearted: e.g. a student who wants the principal to reinstate off-campus lunch for juniors and seniors. Or, it could be more fraught: the students wants the principal to launch an investigation into educator misconduct.

The whole class should agree on the outer status of each character. Each player privately gets a card indicating “inner status.” The lower-status character should get “high,” while the superior receives a card that says “middle.”

This could be executed as a tag-team improvisation, with students tagging in for either character if they have an idea about a tactic or approach. Or, you could “hit pause” periodically and allow the class to make suggestions for either player to incorporate.

Allow the scene to reach a resolution. The low-status character succeeds in getting the “yes” or fails to do so.

Use these questions to facilitate a class discussion:

- Was the characters’ inner status clear from the improvisation?
- How did inner status affect the scene and its outcome?
- What specific actions did each of the players do to express their inner status? What about body language?
- Besides relative status, what factors contributed to the outcome?

ACTIVITY: MIRACLES AND ENEMIES

Count students off as ones and twos. Then, assign the below task relative to their number.

1: “Signs, Miracles, and Voices.” Have you ever experienced a sign or a miracle? Have you ever heard voices urging you to a course of action? Write down a scenario about making a critical decision in response to a sign, miraculous occurrence, or mysterious voices. What were the circumstances and what was the decision? The scenario can be based on real-life experience or totally imaginary.

2: “Enemy of My Enemy.” Consider and write down a scenario about rivals or even enemies (individuals, groups, organizations, companies, etc.) forming an alliance to combat a common adversary. The scenario can be based on real-life experience or totally imaginary.

After an appropriate amount of time has passed, students from each of the two task groups share their scenario ideas. The whole class responds to the ideas, fleshing them out, elaborating, etc.

Staying within the previous division of Ones and Twos, divide students into groups of three to five. Ask each group to select a scenario (remaining within their original task topic) and to devise and rehearse a scene. Students should retain the ideas of status, both outer and inner, as they develop characters in conflict with one another. Scenes should have a clear beginning, middle, and ending.

Ask each group to perform their scene for the whole class. Consider these questions to facilitate the conversation:

- What moment from a scene has stayed with you, and why do you think it continues to hold your attention?
- How did the performers help you understand the different perspectives of the characters, even if you disagreed with their choices or beliefs?
- What questions did these scenes leave you with about leadership, loyalty, belief, or conflict?
- How was status expressed, and how did it influence what happened in the scenes? Were there moments when a character's inner status seemed different from their outer status?
- What similarities or differences did you notice in how different groups approached the same prompt? What might those differences suggest about the range of human experience or imagination?
- Did any scene cause you to reconsider an assumption you held about trust, enemies, destiny, or decision-making? What in the performance prompted that shift in your thinking, or reinforced your original perspective?



VIEWING THE PLAY

You'll receive a link and password to the performance recording of the play based upon the semester for which you registered to view the play. The recording may be viewed only during regularly scheduled class time in classrooms or assembly spaces on your campus. Viewing credentials may not be shared with students for individual viewing at home or on social media.

You may wish to assign each student to "track" a character during the performance using a [Character Profile Form](#).

CLASS DISCUSSION

After viewing the play, use these questions to facilitate a class discussion about the theatergoing experience:

- What moments in the production were particularly vivid and powerful? These could be lines of dialogue, moments between characters, design elements, etc.
- What was surprising?
- What was confusing to you?
- What were the pivotal moments in the play?
- Have you ever experienced a similar social dynamic to any of those presented in this play?
- Why do you think the playwright structured the play in the way they did?
- How did race, gender, class, or culture shape the conflicts in the play?
- What remains unresolved in the play?
- Which character changed the most from beginning to end?
- Did the play challenge your thinking? How?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY: "MYSELF A JOAN"

Ask students to write, and then share with the class, an extended response entitled "Myself a Joan."

After students share their work, ask:

- To what extent are they already "Joans"?
- What might be a concrete next step toward being a Joan?



DRAWING CONNECTIONS

How does this play connect to the world around us?

Individually or in small groups, ask students to find an article, news feature, interview, or other recent artifact from current events that reflects one of the play's themes or ideas. Then, have students share and discuss:

- Why is this theme or idea relevant today?
- Have they encountered the theme or idea in other artistic mediums or media?
- Does this new information alter your personal response to the production? If so, how?

What did we discover?

Ask each student to identify a topic in the play with which they were previously unfamiliar. The student should gather as much information as they can on this subject and share with the class. Sources could include articles, news features, videos, interviews, or other relevant artifacts. Guide students through the compilation of research and the structure of the sharing as best appropriate for your subject area and curricular goals.

FEEDBACK FOR MTC

We appreciate that you chose to bring Manhattan Theatre Club's production of *Saint Joan* into your classroom, and we hope that your students had a great experience with these activities and the play.

You'll receive an email at the end of the month in which your class had access to the performance recording. Please complete the Lights Up! Library Feedback Form linked in that email so that we can continue to improve this initiative.