

1 John Froissart was a French poet and historian who lived during the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) between France and England. His famous chronicles are one of the best accounts we have of life in feudal times. The story of Jeanne de Montfort, like all Froissart's chronicles, was based on his own observations and on conversations with witnesses of the events.

2 I hope that some day you will come to know the fair duchy of Brittany, a land of proud, sturdy people, of sunny streams and smiling villages on the one hand, and on the other of battlefields and fortified towns.

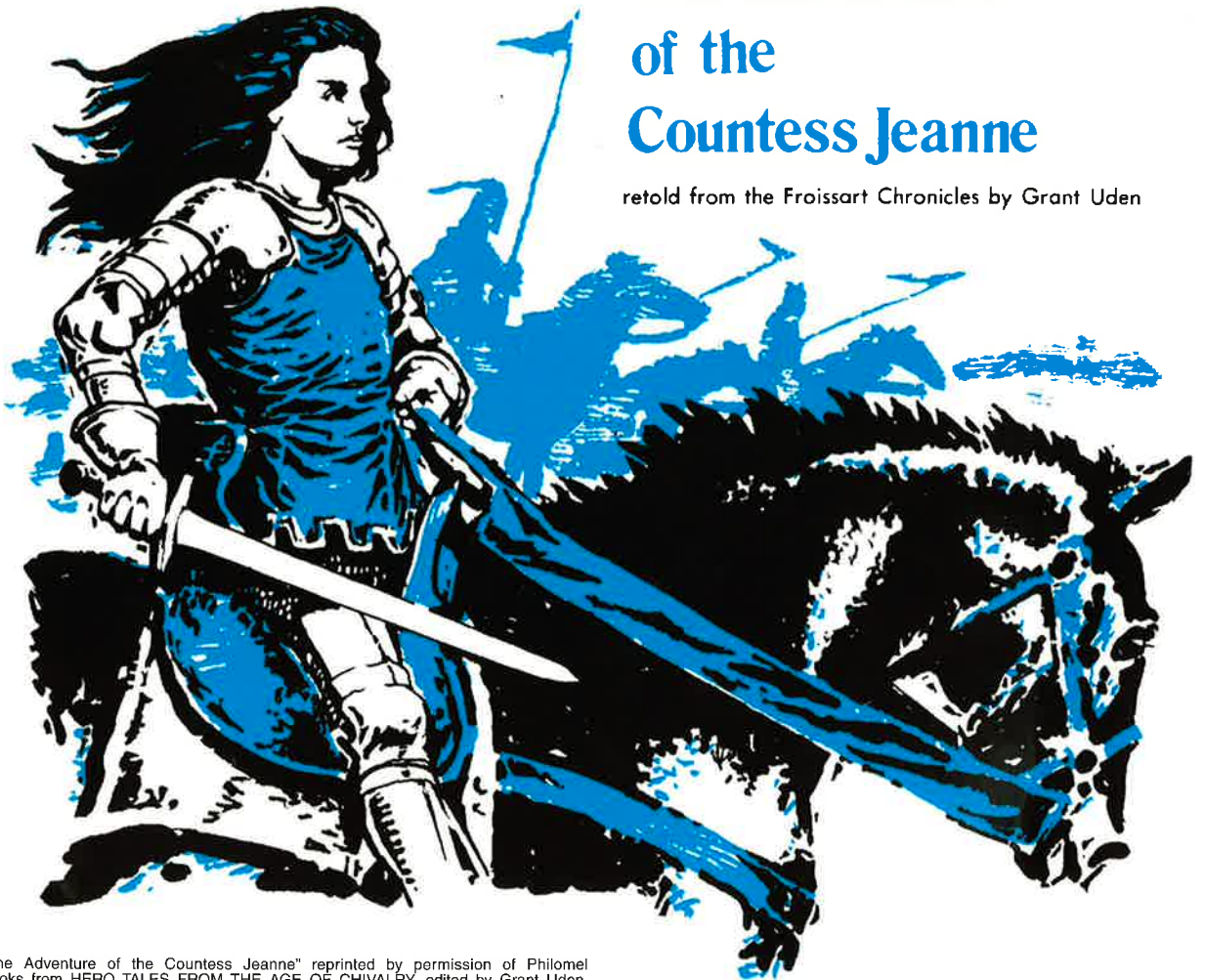
3 When the old Duke John of Brittany died, the question

arose as to who should succeed to the throne of the duchy. The king of France strongly supported his nephew, Charles of Blois, who had married the old duke's niece. But on the other hand Count John of Montfort, half-brother of the old duke, laid his claim, backed by his proud wife, Countess Jeanne. And where else should Count John look for support but across the Channel to the ancient foe of the king of France, the king of England?

4 So it came to war with, ranged on one side, the king of France and Charles of Blois, and on the other the king of England and John of Montfort—oh! and Countess Jeanne of Montfort. Let us never forget the Countess

The Adventure of the Countess Jeanne

retold from the Froissart Chronicles by Grant Uden



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Jeanne, for, faith, she was not a lady to allow herself to be forgotten.

- 5 I will not weary you with all the struggle so far as John of Montfort is concerned. He was captured in Nantes by a great French army and carried off captive to Paris.
- 6 When this happened, the Countess Jeanne immediately set about rallying her friends and all the soldiers she could muster, saying, "I have money enough to pay all the soldiers and captains I need." She set out for all her fortresses in Brittany, making the same plea, putting spirit into her followers, and paying them liberally into the bargain. Then she settled down for the winter in Hennebon, a fortress near the coast, so that she could keep in touch with her ally the king of England across the water.
- 7 With the coming of spring, the armies stirred again and Charles of Blois came into Brittany with a great host, intent on subduing the duchy. Countess Jeanne, immediately she knew of the invasion of Charles of Blois, sent one of her knights to England to beg the assistance of King Edward. He was very ready to give it, so he sent Sir Walter Manny with six thousand archers, but they ran into heavy gales and were at sea nearly six weeks before they could land in France.
- 8 Things had not begun well for my lady Jeanne. Sir Walter Manny hovered on the high seas, so near and yet so far, and moreover, Charles of Blois was sweeping triumphantly on to Hennebon, resolved to capture the countess and bring the whole war to a quick end.
- 9 Inside Hennebon there was a great bustle. The alarm bell was rung and every man was ordered to arm and prepare for the defense of the town.
- 10 Countess Jeanne was everywhere at once. She put on armor, mounted a great warhorse, and rode from street to street, cheering the citizens on to battle. Under her orders, the girls and womenfolk cut their gowns short, loaded themselves with stones from the streets, and staggered with them to the walls in order to hurl them down upon the attackers.
- 11 Then the countess climbed the top of a tower to see how the French army was faring outside. As she looked out over the steel-clad men storming to the attack, she noticed one thing that interested her greatly: the camp was deserted, its long lines of tents and pavilions emptied of soldiers. Quickly she came down from the tower, still in her armor, and called for her great horse again. She summoned three hundred mounted men and rode with them to one of the town gates that was free from attack. They flung it open, and, at the head of her three

hundred, she dashed straight for the deserted enemy camp. They slashed the tent ropes, demolished the fine lodgings of Charles of Blois, and set fire to the whole encampment. Then, seeing her return to Hennebon cut off, she rallied her forces, skirted the town, and rode hard for the port of Brest some seventy miles away.

- 12 Those inside the town, not knowing what had become of their valiant countess, were desperately worried for five days. Then at sunrise the watchers saw my lady Montfort come riding rapidly around the edge of the French army with five hundred men behind her. With a great wave of cheering and a blare of trumpets, the defenders threw open the gates. The astonished French, who thought they had seen the last of this unusual captain, watched helplessly. By the time they had recovered their wits, the gates were slammed and barred again.
- 13 The French army tried one more fierce assault on the town, and, with a dozen large siege engines, kept up a bombardment of stones day and night. Indeed, they made such good progress with their ceaseless battering that the courage of some of the defenders began to falter, and a group of them talked of surrender on condition that they might keep their goods.
- 14 That did not suit the lionhearted Countess Jeanne. She begged the Breton lords not to give up, but counsels against her were strong and made so deep an impression on the chief citizens that they were on the point of yielding up the town.
- 15 Then came the final surprise of this surprising tale.
- 16 My lady Montfort, sick at heart, climbed a stair in the castle of Hennebon, and, with little spirit left, stared out to sea. She could scarcely believe her eyes. For she saw a distant crowd of sail standing in the harbor. Her joyful cries brought the townsfolk running. They crowded the ramparts and saw for themselves the host of ships, great and small, making for hard-pressed Hennebon.
- 17 Sir Walter Manny and his storm-tossed fleet from England had at last arrived.
- 18 That is really the end of the story. If I wished, I could dwell on the reception the countess gave to Sir Walter Manny when he landed with all his captains and broke the siege engines into pieces. For good measure, before the laggard French host was properly astir, they set fire to the camp again!
- 19 The Countess Jeanne came down from the castle with a blithesome heart, and in her excitement she kissed Sir Walter Manny and his companions two or three times, one after the other. It must have been a formidable experience!

How Well Did You Read?

Write the letter of the best answer for each question.

- 1 Who are the conflicting parties in this story?
 - a France and England
 - b Charles of Blois and Count John of Montfort
 - c Both a and b
- 2 What is the cause of the conflict in this story?
 - a The king of England wanted to rule most of Europe.
 - b Both Charles of Blois and Count John of Montfort wanted to rule the same duchy.
 - c Countess Jeanne wanted to become queen of England.
- 3 Why didn't Count John of Montfort play an important part in solving the conflict?
 - a He was a poor soldier in battle.
 - b He became seriously ill at the start of the war.
 - c He was captured early in the war.
- 4 Which of the following incidents was most important in settling the conflict?
 - a Charles of Blois invaded Brittany with a large army.
 - b Sir Walter Manny landed with his archers.
 - c Countess Jeanne burned the deserted enemy camp.
- 5 Which words describe Countess Jeanne best?
 - a Wicked and scheming
 - b Courageous and determined
 - c Both a and b

The following sentences describe events in the story. Put the events in the right order by lettering each one a, b, c, or d.

- 6 Sir Walter Manny was delayed at sea.
- 7 Duke John of Brittany died.
- 8 The defenders of Hennebon talked of surrender.
- 9 Charles of Blois invaded Brittany with his army.

Learn about Words

Vocabulary

A You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 strengthened against attack (2)
- 2 territory of a duke or duchess (3)
- 3 at once (6)
- 4 generously (6)
- 5 strong winds (7)
- 6 waited nearby for the right conditions (8)
- 7 abandoned; emptied (11)
- 8 brave (12)

B A word may have more than one meaning.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning a, b, or c. Write a, b, or c.

- 9 **accounts** (1)
 - a statements telling about events
 - b statements of money received or spent
 - c records of business dealings
- 10 **spring** (7)
 - a elastic device
 - b small stream of water
 - c season following winter

Word Study

- C** **counter** + act = counteract (act against)
non + fiction = nonfiction (not fiction)

A prefix is a syllable that can be added to the beginning of a word to form a word with a different meaning. The prefix *counter* often means "against" or "opposing." The prefix *non* often means "not." Read the definitions below. Add a prefix to each word in **heavy type** to make a word with the stated meaning. Write the new word.

- 11** working against being **productive**: ___productive
12 not likely to cause an **allergic** reaction: ___allergic
13 **propaganda** directed against enemy propaganda: ___propaganda
14 not a **resident**: ___resident
15 an opposing point of **view**: ___view
16 a **trend** opposing another trend: ___trend
17 not **living**: ___living
18 not **porous**: ___porous
- D** Many English words come from the Latin language and contain Latin word parts. For example:

equ = same (as in *equal*)

lun = moon (as in *lunar*)

ped = foot (as in *pedal*)

Knowing Latin word parts will sometimes help you unlock the meanings of new words. Read the sentences below. The word in **heavy type** is a clue. It will help you find the right Latin word part to complete the partial word. Complete the word and write it in full.

- 19** In a ___ar eclipse, the **moon** looks as if it's being eaten away.
20 There is a **footbridge** over the river for ___estrians.
21 The two towns are ___idistant from here, so travel time to each should be about the **same**.
22 People once believed that a ___atic's actions were controlled by the **moon**.
23 A ___ometer tells how far one's **feet** have carried him.

- 24** The **feet** of the statue stood on a huge ___estal.
25 The two lakes are not the **same** shape, but they are ___ivalent in size.
26 Does a centi___e have a hundred **feet**?

- E** I've been feeling **weak** this **week**.

Words that have the same sound but different spellings and meanings are sometimes called homonyms. For example: *weak* and *week*. Each sentence below contains a pair of homonyms in parentheses. Write the word that makes sense in the sentence.

- 27** (Ring, Wring) the bell before you go in.
28 A huge grey (hair, hare) leaped out into the clearing.
29 We had (foul, fowl) weather all weekend.
30 The potatoes are in a basket in the (cellar, seller).
31 The (days, daze) flew by and soon vacation was over.
32 Daphne is taking a (coarse, course) in rapid reading.
33 Some dogs are (bread, bred) to be swimmers.

Use Your Imagination

The story describes a time hundreds of years ago. Suppose you had a chance to visit that period. What are some of the things you would like to do or see? Discuss your ideas with a classmate or friend.