STANDARDS: Student Matinee performances and pre-show workshops provide unique opportunities for experiential learning and support various combinations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. They may also support standards in other subject areas such as Social Studies and History, depending on the individual play's subject matter. Activities are also included in this Curriculum Guide and in our pre-show workshops that support several of the Massachusetts state standards in Theatre. Other arts areas may also be addressed depending on the individual play's subject matter.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 1

- **Grade 7**: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grade 8**: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 9-10**: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 11-12**: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 2

- **Grade 7**: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grade 8**: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 9-10**: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 11-12**: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 3

- **Grade 7**: Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
- **Grade 8**: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
- **Grades 9-10**: 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 themes.
- **Grades 11-12**: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop related 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).

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 5

- **Grade 7**: Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
- **Grades 9-10**: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks), create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **Grades 11-12**: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Reading Literature: Craft and Structure 6

- **Grade 7**: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- **Grade 8**: Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
- **Grades 9-10**: 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.
- **Grades 11-12**: Analyze a case in which grasping point of view required distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7

- **Grade 7**: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).
- **Grade 8**: Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **Grades 9-12**: 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).
ACTING
• 1.7: Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene (By the end of Grade 8).
• 1.12: Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters’ wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics (By the end of Grade 8).
• 1.13: In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process) (By the end of Grade 8).
• 1.14: Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices (Grades 9-12).
• 1.15: Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis (Grades 9-12).
• 1.17: Demonstrate increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble (Grades 9-12).

READING AND WRITING SCRIPTS
• 2.7: Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict (By the end of Grade 8).
• 2.8: Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts (By the end of Grade 8).
• 2.11: Read plays from a variety of genres and styles; compare and contrast the structure of plays to the structures of other forms of literature (Grades 9-12).

TECHNICAL THEATRE
• 4.6: Draw renderings, floor plans, and/or build models of sets for a dramatic work and explain choices in using visual elements (line, shape/form, texture, color, space) and visual principals (unity, variety, harmony, balance, rhythm) (By the end of Grade 8).
• 4.13: Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production (Grades 9-12).

CONNECTIONS
• Strand 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts—Students will describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings (Grades PreK-12).
• Strand 10: Interdisciplinary Connections—Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (Grades PreK-12).

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE
Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to the Huntington Theatre Company.
• How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
• Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience’s behavior and reactions will affect the actors’ performances. No two audiences are exactly the same, and therefore no two performances are exactly the same — this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students’ behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
• Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be? Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
• Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Food, gum, and drinks should not be brought into the theatre.
• Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun.
THE PLAYWRIGHT — JEAN BAPTISTE POQUELIN, AKA MOLIÈRE

Jean Baptiste Poquelin, better known by the stage name “Molière,” which he invented when he began his career in the theatre, was born in Paris to well-to-do parents in January of 1622. His father was a successful bourgeois merchant who held a royal appointment as “Upholsterer to the King," a prestigious position which he hoped one day to pass on to his son. The position required that Molière’s father live in the King’s household at court for three months of the year, where his duties included caring for the tapestries and the furniture in the royal chamber. With this position came the honorary title of squire and a modest pension. Molière’s mother, who was from a well-to-do family, died when Molière was ten years old, leaving him an inheritance which was to help finance his early theatrical projects.

The details of Molière’s life are clouded by legend and speculation. As a young man, he was sent to College de Clermont, a prestigious Jesuit school in Paris which catered to the upper class. Latin dramas were frequently performed by students at Clermont, and there is some speculation that Molière may have gotten his first taste of acting while a student there. Molière’s activities after he completed his studies at Clermont are unknown; there is some evidence that he may have studied law in the city of Orleans, and he may have even practiced law for a few months in 1642 before deciding to return to Paris to take up his father’s profession. He was working with his father, preparing to take on the successorship as “valet de chamber du roi,” when he met Madeleine Bejart, an actress who was a leading member of a troupe of travelling players. Their acquaintance was to change his life. Molière and Madeleine became lovers, and at the age of 21 he scandalized his family by giving up his right of royal appointment to join her band of travelling actors.

Molière’s decision to take on the stage was a radical move for the son of an ambitious bourgeois with the prospect of an appointment in the King’s household. In France at the time, acting was a disreputable profession, and theatre was thought by many people to be an enemy of public morals. Although the theatre had been made somewhat more respectable during Molière’s youth through the influence of Cardinal Richelieu, the profession itself was looked down upon and actors had a social status little better than that of criminals or vagabonds.

In 1643, Molière and a group of other actors headed by Madeleine Bejart formed themselves by legal contract into a company called “The Illustrious Theatre.” There were 13 members in all; three of the names on the contract were those of Bejart and her brother and sister. The new ensemble established themselves in an old tennis court, which they paid to have converted into a theatre. The fledgling company failed to attract an audience, however, and on December 17, 1644, “The Illustrious Theatre” moved to another location closer to the center of the city. The cost of these two endeavors put the troupe deeply in debt. Without resources to pay their creditors, they were forced to close. Molière was tried for debt and was imprisoned three times in 1645. When enough money could be borrowed (partly form Molière’s father) to free him, Molière and the company left Paris to try their luck in the provinces.

The life of a traveling acting company in 17th century France was a difficult existence at best. Troupes generally travelled by oxcart, and often played to audiences in vacant granges and tennis courts at the whim of the civic authorities of each village. Companies such as Molière’s were constantly on the move often on the verge of arrest. Crowds were frequently small and unsympathetic.

Little is known about these years of Molière’s life. It is believed that for a time the company was able to gain the patronage of the Duke of Epernon, Governor of Guyenne. About this time, the company merged with another troupe of comedians which included Charles Dufresne and Rene Berthelot (also known as Gros-Rene), who later returned to Paris with Molière. During his years of performing in the provinces, Molière emerged as a director of the troupe, and Madeleine Bejart became the keeper of the travelers’ finances.

When an unstable political situation put the Duke of Epernon in a compromised position, the troupe was forced to search for a new situation. Around 1652 or 1653, the troupe arrived in Lyon, where they based their activities for the next several years in the provinces. During these touring years, Molière, whose theatrical career had been solely that of an actor, began to compose short farces, which played as afterpieces to the tragedies regularly performed by his company. These farces proved extremely popular, and succeeded in attracting audiences to the theatre. Encouraged by his success, Molière wrote a full length dramatic work, a farce entitled L’Étourdi (The Blunderer) in 1651, which became a huge success with audiences in Lyon. Shortly thereafter, the company secured the patronage of the Prince of Conti, and its prosperity increased.

This prosperity was brought to an abrupt end in 1660, however, when the Prince of Conti became a zealous convert of Jansenists (French Puritans of the day). In keeping with his new-found
religion, the Prince renounced the theatre as immoral, putting Molière and his troupe out of work. Encouraged by the success of their years in the provinces, Molière decided that his company was ready to return to Paris. They moved to Rouen in the summer of 1658. Through the influence of friends, Molière was able to obtain patronage of the Duke of Anjou, Louis XIV's brother, who issued a royal command for the troupe to return to Paris.

On October 24, 1658, the company was called to perform before the king. They performed Corneille's tragedy *Nicomedes* followed by a brief farce by Molière, *The Amorous Doctor*. Molière’s work pleased the king so much that he granted Molière and his company the right to perform in the Petit Bourbon, a small theatre connected to the Louvre which they were to share with a well-established troupe of Italian actors.

Molière wrote prodigiously during the company’s subsequent years in Paris; more than two out of every three plays the company presented were written by their director. In 1664, Molière wrote *Tartuffe*, his most controversial play, which concerned religious hypocrisy. The king, who saw it in a private performance at Versailles, liked the play, but the clergy and certain factions of noblemen surrounding Louis urged its suppression. Less than a week after its first performance, the Archbishop of Paris vowed to excommunicate anyone who listened to, read, watched, or performed the heretical play. The King, however, decided to wait before letting it open to the public, and consequently *Tartuffe* was not performed in public until 1669. At this performance, the box office took in the most money that had ever been recorded for one of Molière’s plays.

Molière’s company nonetheless enjoyed its most successful period in the mid-1600s. While they continued to perform a repertoire of classic tragedies, as they had done in the provinces, it was the great popularity of Molière’s own comic farces that most drew audiences to the Palais Royal theatre, which the troupe occupied after being evicted from the Petit Bourbon in 1660. Molière was often called upon to produce entertainments for the king or for nobility wishing to provide an impressive evening for a special guest. Many of Molière’s “comedy ballets,” a theatrical form in vogue at that time, were produced for just such occasions, sometimes written in as little as two weeks.

In 1662, at the age of 40, Molière married the 20-year-old Armande Bejart, younger sister of his former companion and current business partner, Madeleine Bejart. Many allege that Armande was actually Madeleine’s illegitimate daughter, and some of Molière’s enemies suggested that Molière himself had fathered Armande. An actor at the Hotel de Bourgogne, Montfleury, reported Molière’s incestuousness to Louis XIV in 1663. The King showed where his sympathies lay by consenting to be the godfather of Molière’s first child on February 28, 1664. Molière and Armande were to have three children, only one of whom, a daughter, was to survive him.

While Molière was evidently deeply in love with his young wife, their marriage was not entirely happy. In 1667, the couple temporarily separated, although they saw each other every day at the theatre. Molière’s friend Chapelain, with whom the playwright lived while separated from his wife, reported that Molière said of Armande, “all things in the world are connected with her in my heart... When I see her, an emotion, transports that may be felt but not described, takes from me all power of reflection; I have no longer any eyes for her defects; I can see only all that she has that is lovable. Is not that the last degree of madness?”

In 1673, at the age of 51, Molière became ill during a performance of his comedy, *Le Malade Imaginaire*. After the play was over, Molière collapsed and was carried to his home by his wife and a young actor. In a fit of coughing, Molière damaged a blood vessel—either in his throat or lungs. Armande, seeing that the end was near, went to find a priest to give her husband final absolution. Two refused because of Molière’s profession as an actor. A third agreed, but arrived too late. Molière died on February 17, 1673.

The Archbishop of Paris would not allow Molière to be buried in a church cemetery, because he had not received last rites, nor had he formerly renounced his profession; however, through the

---

**FIND US ONLINE**

Did you know the Huntington Theatre Company's website provides students and teachers opportunities to explore the season's offerings and upcoming events in the Education department?

**EXPLORE!**

Utilizing the website at huntingtontheatre.org find the answers to the following questions:

- Who will direct *Tartuffe*? Who will play the role of Valère in the Huntington's production?
- Who is the Artistic Director of the Huntington Theatre Company? Who is the Managing Director?
- Your friend broke her foot and is in a wheelchair. What accessibility services does the Huntington provide for patrons like her?
intervention of the king, the Archbishop relented, and Molière was buried in a remote corner of St. Joseph’s cemetery in Paris, “after dark...with no pomp...and unaccompanied by any service.” Rumors were later circulated that Molière’s corpse had been exhumed and tossed into a mass grave for the unholy. The gravestone his wife had ordered was never found, and it is uncertain whether the remains that now rest in state at the Pantheon in Paris are those of the man universally judged to be France’s greatest playwright.

Ranjit Bolt

When Ranjit Bolt, a leading British translator and writer, was seven years old he sent his first manuscript to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). His piece, Henry II, was rejected with an enthusiastic note encouraging him to try back in 20 years. Thankfully, that’s exactly what he did. But Bolt’s road to professional success would not be direct or without its challenges.

Bolt was born in Manchester, England to Anglo-Indian parents who were part of a literary family. Bolt’s father, literary critic Sydney Bolt, spent his career as a director of English studies at Corpus Christi College University in Cambridge, England. Bolt’s uncle, Robert Bolt, authored the critically acclaimed play A Man for all Seasons, the story of Sir Thomas More, a 16th century chancellor of England. Bolt’s mother, an English teacher herself, encouraged her children to pursue careers in writing; however, Bolt did not accept her advice, and spent eight years as a stockbroker plotting his way out of the profession. Of this time, he reflected, “I was desperate to escape, any escape route would have done and translating turned out to be the one.”

As one of the leading British translators of all time, Bolt’s work has been extremely influential in the theatre world, but perhaps his greatest achievement is his translation of Tartuffe from the original French text. At just 14 years old, Bolt made his an attempt at creating an English version; after one rhyming couplet he put the idea away. Translating Molière can be a daunting task because Molière’s writing is full of nuanced humor and the French poetic form is not easily adapted. While other translators have successfully completed the task (poet Richard Wilbur who set the standard for Molière translation in 1963 and Donald M. Frames who followed his lead with some improvements in 1967), Bolt’s 1991 translation (revised in 2002) was groundbreaking and caused significant reaction among literary and theatrical critics, some of whom objected to the work on the grounds that the translation was coarse, informal, and lacking in the depth found in other translations and in the original. It was said that this translation turned “Molière’s Tartuffe” into “Bolt’s Tartuffe.” Bolt was not shy about updating the play and making it accessible, employing the use of rhyming couplets along with the short comic form of four beats per line, which helped to provide its maximum entertainment value. From Bolt’s perspective, “what you try and do is combine Molière’s brilliance in making clear, moral points in a very funny way, with the English language’s propensity for producing rhyming couplets.” Bolt felt unrestricted by Molière’s original wording and used whatever lines necessary to get the message across. Despite some negative critics, many others have hailed Bolt’s Tartuffe as second-to-none for modern audiences; its wit, dynamic dialogue, and preservation of Molière’s truest sentiments remain. Bolt remarked, “I try to follow the rule laid down by perhaps the greatest translator of all, John Dryden, who maintained that a translator should . . . make the version as entertaining as possible, while at the same time remaining as faithful as possible to the spirit of the original.”

Despite his successful writing career, Bolt did not avoid all hardships. While rising to fame in his profession, he developed a gambling addiction which resulted in a crippling amount of debt. Bolt’s need for money brought him to the streets of his hometown of Cambridge, England, where he acquired a license to sell homemade booklets full of limericks to pedestrians. The response to his poetry was overwhelming and Bolt ultimately decided to approach his agent about publishing a collection. A Lion was Learning to Ski, and other Limericks was published in 2015. What started as a way to entertain friends and fulfill Bolt’s desire to use his artistic talents, turned into the path away from addiction and one furthering a successful creative career.

QUESTIONS:
1. Despite his family’s support of his artistic pursuits, why would Bolt spend so many years in a career he didn’t enjoy?
2. Why might Tartuffe have been an appealing translation project for Bolt? How might the play’s message have resonated with him?
3. Is Bolt’s translation more relevant to audiences of today than other translations? Why or why not? Provide examples from the text to support your answer.
HYPOCRISY

Tartuffe instilled profound feelings of anxiety in the 17th century French ruling elite who attended the play, as they claimed that their Christian faith was under attack in the work. Despite tremendous opposition from his audience, Molière maintained that he was not attacking Christianity or religion in general. Instead, he claimed, he hoped to point out the glaring hypocrisy of the antagonist in his play. Molière wrote at a time when many religious leaders exploited faithful churchgoers by using their own power and influence for personal gain. Perhaps those in the top ranks of the church hierarchy saw themselves in the character of Tartuffe’s and felt exposed; whatever their true motivations, Molière was labeled a heretic and a “demon in human flesh.”

Tartuffe’s fraud is relatively straightforward: By convincing Orgon that he is a virtuous and humble man and exploiting Orgon’s desire for holiness, Tartuffe hopes to marry Orgon’s daughter and steal away with the family fortune. Tartuffe puts on a pious appearance, but his list of sins include a secret seduction of Orgon’s wife, Elmire, and the eviction of Orgon’s son, Damis, who is certain to expose his fraud.

Orgon may have been deceived by the manipulative Tartuffe, but other members of his household are outraged by his self-righteousness and the control the man wields over the family. At the play’s opening, Damis and Dorine, a trusted household maid, do not mince their words:

DAMIS: Tartuffe’s a fraud. It’s plain as day, Yet he’s been given total sway In all things. That’s been Father’s choice: To give Tartuffe the ruling voice. He’s seized control, that’s what he’s done! No one can have an ounce of fun, Do anything but eat and sleep, Unless it’s sanctioned by that creep.

DORINE: Name just one thing he hasn’t banned, Condemned as “sinful” out of hand. We’ll have some harmless fun in view, Something social. Happy, too. But right off he prohibits it, The pious, pompous, puffed-up twit!

Later in the play, Orgon’s brother-in-law, Cléante, dissects Tartuffe’s holy image. He can see that Tartuffe is a person entirely lacking self-control: he drinks too much, eats too much, glums onto others in order to avoid work because he is lazy, and covets another man’s wife. Tartuffe is not grateful to God or to his friend, Orgon, who is caring for his every need. In Cléante’s view, simply stating that you are a pious man does not make it so, nor does questioning the morality you; such activities are not a sign of godliness. A holy man is not full of pride, relentlessly bragging about his superior religious status, nor does a truly pious man spend his time condemning others in order to secure his own social status. Cléante believes that holiness can be achieved,
but a person of true virtue rejects recognition and accolades. While a virtuous person would never seek power at the expense of others, Tartuffe does the opposite.

The question, of course, is how Tartuffe's signs of hypocrisy are lost on Orgon, the most powerful member of the household. How does he miss that Tartuffe’s deceit threatens to destabilize his entire family? Tartuffe is a master criminal who recognizes Orgon’s weakness: ambition. With blind faith and the belief that a moral household would improve his social status and strengthen in his position in dealings with the king, Orgon falls prey to Tartuffe’s deception. Appealing to Orgon’s sense of righteousness and desire for piety provides Tartuffe with an opportunity to wield authority and exercise control over the household. In explaining his relationship with Tartuffe, Orgon remarks, “You'd have been captivated too./ Each day, in church, he'd take the pew/ Right next to mine, and with an air/ Oh, perfect meekness, kneel in prayer” (I,1).

Orgon goes on to explain that he heard of Tartuffe’s impoverishment and made significant efforts to help improve his situation. Orgon justifies his decision to allow Tartuffe to stay with the family by reasoning, “I've prospered, flourished since that day/ Everything seems to go my way.../ His light now guides my life./ As for his interest in my wife/ You know, it almost equals mine!/ He guards my honor all the time” (I,1). Yet Tartuffe’s greatest flaw, and the weakness that so clearly exposes him, is his lust for Orgon’s wife, Elmire. In one of the most repeated lines from Ranjit Bolt’s translation is both provocative and absolutely fitting, as Tartuffe takes a predatory stance, Elmire quips, “And now you’re rushing to the sweet/ Before you’ve had the soup and meat” (II,1).

Orgon believes that Tartuffe provides his household with a moral compass and pleasing Tartuffe becomes Orgon’s greatest desire. Orgon’s journey to lead a more holy life is thwarted by a man who is in reality is the exact opposite of everything Orgon holds so dear.

QUESTIONS:
1. Why does Orgon have so much difficulty seeing Tartuffe for who and what he is?
2. Does Tartuffe think he is defrauding Orgon and his family? How aware is he of his own hypocrisy?
3. Who is this play about: Orgon or Tartuffe? For which audience did Molière intend this play? Provide examples from the text to support your answer.
4. Who are the “Tartuffes” in the world right now? Can you think of anyone who pretends to be a noble person to gain access to money or power?
5. Is Tartuffe disrespectful of religion and religious people? Why or why not? What does it mean to be a hypocrite? Was it more brave or more foolish for Molière to continue to promote his controversial play despite backlash from the church and government officials?
6. Are there public figures in society today who behave in hypocritical ways? Is it possible to criticize hypocrites without criticizing the groups or organizations of which they claim to support?

REASON VS. PASSION

Tartuffe’s opening moments submerge the audience in an explosive family feud sparked by the radically divided perspectives between Madame Pernelle and the rest of her family. In the first few pages of Act 1, Scene 1, Madame Pernelle makes a lasting impression with a combination of passionate, fiery retorts and an unrelenting approach to proving her point with blunt observations and logic. Initially in her matriarchal lecture she reservedly reprimands, “I’m horrified by all of you/…/When will you people ever learn/ To hold your tongues, or speak in turn/ Respecting person, time and place?/ Your slipshod ways are a disgrace” (I,1). But her claws come out soon after when her family members attempt to interject with their own reasoning. In her passionate rampage, she devolves to scolding her grandson Damis, calling him “an absolute disgrace./ A clown. A fool. A waste of space,” and lashing out at her daughter-in-law, Elmire, describing her as a “stepmother from Hell,/ You don’t do right, you don’t live well”(I,1).

This roasting of the family also reveals that Madame Pernelle is stubbornly resolute about the state of the house and that her passion has eclipsed her reason. Furthermore, it has made her deaf to the reason others offer her. In her passionate rampage, she devolves to scolding her grandson Damis, calling him “an absolute disgrace./ A clown. A fool. A waste of space,” and lashing out at her daughter-in-law, Elmire, describing her as a “stepmother from Hell,/ You don’t do right, you don’t live well”(I,1). This roasting of the family also reveals that Madame Pernelle is stubbornly resolute about the state of the house and that her passion has eclipsed her reason. Furthermore, it has made her deaf to the reason others offer her. This dynamic clash between passion and reason is a significant obstacle for members of the family at the center of Tartuffe as they attempt to communicate with each other.

In Tartuffe, playwright Molière created a household steeped in passion that manifests in the family members’ rage, tactics of persuasion, love, lust, protection, pride, scheming, manipulation,
QUESTIONS:

1. Although Orgon is greatly outnumbered by his family members’ views, he unreservedly fawns upon his guest of honor, Tartuffe. What does Orgon see in Tartuffe? What does Orgon feel he gains from this connection? What does it mean to choose an outsider against your family?
2. Who in the household is ruled by passion and who is ruled by reason? Compare and contrast their perspectives, tactics, and motivations.

3. Every character in Tartuffe believes his or herself to be the most sound of mind in the house. Which character is actually the most reasonable? What truths do they see that others cannot? Use specific examples from the text to support your answer.

4. What would you do if someone in your life was behaving completely unreasonably? How would you burst their bubble? What tactics would you use to show them the illusions that cause errors in their logic?

**OBSESSION WITH POWER**

Tartuffe is obsessed with power and draws on an impressive slate of acting skills to persuade Orgon and Madame Pernelle that he is an extremely pious man. The remainder of Orgon's family, however, is not so easily convinced. In the opening scene, Cléante describes Tartuffe as a fraud, emphasizing that Tartuffe "is more greatly to be feared/ Because his weapons are revered" (I.1). By craftily performing as a deeply religious and submissive man, Tartuffe builds his social currency and his influence over his hosts.

When Molière wrote the play in late 17th century France, religion occupied an important place in the social hierarchy. France had endured multiple wars of religion and in King Louis XIV had found a ruler with a fervent belief in religious uniformity. Ongoing land ownership disputes between Louis and the Catholic Church created overlaps between politics and the faith, which meant support of anything but the French church was akin to social treason. The character of Tartuffe capitalizes on this religious frenzy, protecting and growing his social status by performing calculated and public acts of repentance. Tartuffe pretends to be submissive after Damis tattles on him to Orgon, calling himself "a sinner, yes, a wicked man!" before he cunningly uses reverse psychology on Orgon to remain in his favor (I.3). Tartuffe advises that "there must be no more mingling/Between me and your wife" to which Orgon responds "No, no!/ Be intimate with her, more so" (I.3). Tartuffe is power hungry and is more than willing to turn the family members against each other if it means he will get uninterrupted control.

Moreover, Tartuffe uses his faith as justification for his power over the household. "Your bosom's nearly bare!" he scolds Dorine. "It wounds my soul. It's Satan's snare,/ Engend'ring sinful thoughts. So, please,/ Cover your improprieties!" (I.3). After he censors Dorine's body, he tries to censor her speech as well. He reprimands, "Be pure of speech, Dorine, I pray,/Or must I leave the room?" (I.3). Tartuffe's use of religion both as an excuse to restrict Dorine's freedoms and a declaration of his own innocence to her sinful ways is a form of victim-blaming and places himself firmly in a place of power.

It is Tartuffe's obsession with power, his self-absorption, and his lack of empathy that enable him to use religion, normally viewed as a script for morals, as a tool for manipulation. He is a schmoozer and a salesman who grovels at Orgon's feet only for his own personal gain. Tartuffe exhibits an utter lack of concern for the effect his actions have on Orgon's household.

QUESTIONS:

1. Orgon generously provides housing and money to Tartuffe, treats him like a brother, and saves him from a life of poverty and homelessness. What might have motivated Tartuffe to turn on someone who has helped him so selflessly? How does Tartuffe feel about Orgon? Does he think about the repercussions of his actions?

2. Orgon tries to prevent his daughter Mariane from marrying Valère, whom she loves, and instead commands her to marry Tartuffe, whom she loathes. How would you respond to a parent forcing you into an unwanted marriage?

3. When Tartuffe sees Orgon's favor slipping, Tartuffe betrays his benefactor with the ultimate power play of providing his incriminating documents to the king. Why do human beings seek and crave power? What gives someone power in the modern world? Does a desire for power make a person inherently untrustworthy? Identify a powerful person in your world and explain why you do or do not trust them.

4. How can acting be used as a tool to control a situation? Explain a time where you may have pretended to be something you are not in order to get what you wanted.
Mastery Assessment

**Act 1**

**Scene 1**
1. Who is Madame Pernelle?
2. How does she think servants should behave?
3. What critiques does Madame Pernelle have about Elmire?
4. Who is Tartuffe? Which characters like him and which characters do not?
5. What role does Tartuffe play in this household?
6. How does Orgon feel about Tartuffe? How does he show these feelings?
7. Who is Mariane going to marry?
8. Who does Damis hope to marry?
9. What happened to Elmire in Orgon's absence? How does Orgon react?
10. How does Orgon claim Tartuffe has helped him and improved his life?
11. How did Orgon and Tartuffe meet?
12. What does Cléante say about religion?
13. What does Orgon want to do about Mariane and Valère's wedding?

**Scene 2**
14. Who does Orgon want Mariane to marry?
15. What was Dorine doing outside the door? How does she feel about Orgon's intentions for Mariane's marriage?
16. How does Orgon respond to Dorine's comments about Tartuffe's poverty?
17. Does Mariane have a say in whom she is to marry? What does she threaten to do instead of following her father's plans for her marriage?
18. What is Mariane and Dorine's relationship like? How do they interact with each other?
19. How does Valère react to Orgon's new intended marriage for Mariane?
20. What does Valère tell Mariane to do now that there are other plans for Mariane's marriage? How does Mariane react?
21. What does Dorine do to intervene in their argument?

**Scene 3**
23. What does Dorine say Elmire intends to do in regards to the proposed marriage between Mariane and Tartuffe?
24. Why does Tartuffe give Dorine his handkerchief? What does he ask her to do?
25. What does Tartuffe do while talking to Elmire? How does she react?
26. What does Tartuffe think of Mariane? What does he think of Elmire?
27. How does Tartuffe respond when Elmire indicates she might tell Orgon of Tartuffe's feelings towards her?
28. What does Elmire tell Tartuffe to do about Valère and Mariane's engagement?
29. Does Elmire intend on keeping Tartuffe's actions a secret from Orgon?
30. What does Damis tell Orgon? How does Orgon react? How does Tartuffe react?
31. Who does Orgon believe: Damis or Tartuffe?
32. How does Tartuffe react to Orgon's anger towards Damis?
33. What orders does Orgon give to Damis?
34. What does Tartuffe threaten to do? How does Orgon react?
35. When Tartuffe says he should no longer be seen with Elmire, how does Orgon respond?
36. Throughout this scene, is Tartuffe being serious with his threats to leave and his request to stay far from Elmire, or is he manipulating Orgon?

**Act 2**

**Scene 1**
1. What does Cléante advise Tartuffe to do?
2. How does Cléante feel about the gifts Orgon has been giving Tartuffe and the promises he has been making to him?
3. What is Orgon's contract for?
4. What alternative does Orgon give for girls who refuse to marry their intended husbands?
5. What does Elmire suggest they do to prove Tartuffe's inappropriate behavior? What is her plan?
6. Does Tartuffe play into Elmire's plan? How so?
7. How does Tartuffe react to the scene to which he has just been witness?
8. What does Orgon order Tartuffe to do?
9. How does Tartuffe respond?
10. Who now holds the power and rights to the house?

**Scene 2**
11. What did Orgon entrust to Tartuffe?
12. Which member of the family doesn't believe Orgon's explanation of what Tartuffe has done?
13. Who is Monsieur Loyal? Why does he come to the house?
14. What does M. Loyal order the family to do? How do they react?
15. What does Valère reveal Tartuffe has done?
16. What does Valère give Orgon?
17. After the officer arrives, seeming to be about to arrest Orgon, who does he really arrest? Why?
18. What does the officer say was the king's reaction to Tartuffe's claims?
19. How does the play end? What does Orgon promise?
MOLIÈRE’S THEATRE

While the theatre was a popular pastime for the men and women of France’s court during Molière’s time, in the early part of the century it had been an almost exclusively lower-class form of entertainment, disapproved of by the Church. Attending performances was considered inappropriate for members of the upper classes, and ladies were urged to stay away altogether. By the middle of the century, however, theatres had begun to attract more polite society. To separate them from the rowdy masses who viewed performances from a pit in front of the stage, noblemen were allowed to sit on the stage. Eventually, a seat on the stage became a sign of rank and prestige, and seats in this part of the theatre were highly sought after; it became the practice for people to go out to the theatre in order to “get out in society,” to see and be seen. The goings-on in the audience often attracted more attention than the play itself. Montesquieu describes a typical scene in a French theatre of the 17th century:

> Here an afflicted mistress languishes; another, more animated, demurs her lover with her eyes, and is demurred in turn by him; all sorts of passions are painted on their faces and expressed with an eloquence no less lively for being mute. There, the actresses can only be seen from the waist up... Below stands a horde of people making fun of those up on the stage; the latter in turn laugh at those below.

Audiences were notoriously disruptive before and during plays, and taunting the performers was a regular part of many an afternoon’s entertainment. Quarrels and fights were frequent and plays were sometimes interrupted. According to one source, a porter in Molière’s theatre was killed while fighting a patron, a member of the king’s household.

Acting was considered a disreputable profession, and all actors, simply because they were actors, were excommunicated from the Catholic Church. They were not allowed sacramental marriage (they could be married only by common-law ceremony), and weren’t allowed burial in church cemeteries unless they had renounced their vocation.

In Molière’s time, men and women were seated in separate sections of the theatre. Only men were able to sit in the best seats, which were located right on the stage, two or three rows on each side. Both the stage and theatre hall were illuminated by candles. On stage these candles were attached to wooden cross-pieces and raised and lowered by pulleys. Performances usually took place between two and four in the afternoon. Sometimes earlier performances were given in the morning, and this is the reason the term “matinee,” although inaccurate, is used today. Scenery was much more modest than the carefully researched and constructed set designs that audiences see in 20th century theatres. The scene was generally not changed during the performance, and the company generally made do with a few props and perhaps a canvas backdrop to indicate setting.

Actors were paid each day from the admission money collected. After all overhead expenses were taken care of, the money was divided into shares. Chief actors usually received one share each,
a director possibly two shares, an experienced actor a half or even a quarter share. A successful author usually received a fixed sum for his work, but if his play proved to be a hit, he might also be given a cash gift for his efforts. Plays by little-known authors were often performed on a share basis. 17th century costumes were usually the players’ private property. Molière’s troupe wore costumes of velvet, taffeta, satin, and multi-colored feathers. Yellow and green are said to have been Molière’s favorite colors, and they predominated in the costuming of his troupe.

The popular form of performance during the 17th century included the use of pompous and stilted declamation. This style of acting was ridiculed by Molière in L’impromptu de Versailles. Molière preferred a more natural style of acting, led a vociferous campaign against affectation in elocution; several of his plays satirize the acting styles of well-known actors from rival theatre companies.

At the end of each day’s performance, a spokesman appeared on the stage to thank the audience for its kind attention, and to announce the next play and describe its merits. Competition was fierce among the three established theatres in Paris during Molière’s time (Paris did not have its own theatre company at all until 1630; previously, the only performances available to Parisians were produced by travelling bands of actors). Theatres continually attempted to lure each other’s audiences by producing parodies of each other’s plays, or mounting plays on the same theme. Such rivalry and intrigue, punctuated by witty attacks on the personnel at each opposing company, often served to increase the revenue of all competing theatres, and worked to their mutual advantage. After the death of Molière, two of the surviving rival theatres were merged to form what eventually became the Comédie-Française, which continues to this day, after more than 300 years.

QUESTIONS:
1. How has society’s view on acting as a profession changed since Molière’s time? Were noble audiences hypocritical for supporting and patronizing theatre while condemning performers as immoral?
2. How successful were Molière’s plays on 17th century French stages? Where did they perform?
3. When attending the Huntington Theatre Company’s production of Tartuffe, pay close attention to the acting style. Are their performances best described as stylized or realistic? How does the poetic nature of the dialogue inform their work?

THE CLASSICAL AGE OF FRENCH LITERATURE

The 17th century is viewed as having been one of the richest periods in French letters. In this classical age, authors revered the achievement of their Greek and Latin predecessors, often producing works that drew on the myths and legends of the ancient world for their subject matter or imagery, and frequently emulating their styles as the supreme example of style.

In the world of drama, in addition to Molière, leading writers were Corneille, Racine, and Boileau. Great classical poets include François de Malherbe and Jean de La Fontaine. Prose writers included the philosophers René Descartes and Blaise Pascal.

One of the earliest novels was written in this period by a woman, Madame de La Fayette. The Princess of Cleves, her masterpiece, is often called the first psychological novel. Another famous woman writer, Madame de Sévigné, left a legacy of hundreds of letters that have given succeeding generations a witty and incisive perspective into the social and political life of aristocrats in the 17th century.

Below are excerpts from the works of Jean de La Fontaine and Madame de Sévigné. Like Molière, both were observers of and commentators on the social life that surrounded them – La Fontaine in his famous fables, Madame de Sévigné in a collection of over 1,700 letters describing life and politics.

Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695) is best known for his fables. Using Aesop as his model, La Fontaine often employed the form of fable to comment on contemporary society. Born of a bourgeois family, La Fontaine for many years earned his living as an inspector of forests and waterways, a position he inherited from his father. He eventually earned the patronage of Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV’s finance minister. He frequented all the literary circles of Paris, and was acquainted with Molière, Racine, Corneille, Madame de Sévigné, and other important artistic figures of his day. He was elected to the Académie Française despite the opposition of the king.
“THE RAT AND THE ELEPHANT”
I fear that appearances are worshipped throughout France:
Whereas pre-eminence perchance
Merely means a pushing person.
An extremely French folly –
A weakness of which we have more than our share –
Whereas false pride, I’d say, has been the Spaniard’s snare.
To be epigrammatical,
They’re foolish folk; we’re comical.
Well, I’ve put us in this tale
Which came to mind as usable.
A mite of a rat was mocking an elephant
As it moved slowly by, majestically aslant,
Valued from antiquity,
Towering in draped solemnity
While bearing along in majesty
A queen of the Levant –
With her dog, her cat, and sycophant,
Her parakeet, monkey, anything she might want –
On their way to relics they wished to see.
But the rat was not one whom weight could daunt
And asked why observers should praise mere size.
“Who cares what space an object occupies?”
He said. “Size does not make a thing significant!
All crowding near an elephant? Why must I worship him?
Servile to brute force at which mere tots might faint?
Should persons such as I admire his heavy limb?
I pander to an elephant!”
About to prolong his soliloquy
When the cat broke from captivity
And instantly proved what her victim would grant:
That a rant is not an elephant.

Madame de Sévigné (1626-1696) was a French noblewoman who was widowed at the age of 26. She never remarried, but maintained an active life at court, recording her observations in detailed letters to her daughter. Madame de Sévigné’s accounts of politics, social life, literature (she knew most of the writers of her day, and was related to La Rochechouart) have served to provide later generations with insights into the social and political life of her time.

On Saturday, I went to Versailles, and here is how they day was spent... At three o’clock, the King, the Queen, Monsieur and Madame and the Grande Mlle, all the Princes and Princesses, Mme de Montespan and all her retinue, all the courtiers – all, in sum, the so-called Court of France, gathers in that handsome apartment of the King’s which you well know. The furnishings are divine, utter magnificence everywhere. Gambling is the principal attraction. A game of reversis was the main event... There sits the King, with Mme de Montespan holding his cards; there are Monsieur, the Queen, and Mme deSoubise; Mons. De Dangeau and company; Langlée and company. Thousand-louis gold pieces are scattered across the table, no other tokens... I saluted the King... and he returned the salutation as gallantly as if I were young and beautiful... The Queen chatted with me as lengthily as if my illness had been a case of childbirth, and had several words to say about you... Mme de Montespan talked to me about her trip to Bourbon, and asked me to tell her about Vichy, and how I liked it.

QUESTIONS:
1. Compare and contrast the work of Molière’s contemporaries with Tartuffe, in terms of themes, subject matter, and politics.
2. Which contemporary writers best capture the politics and social life of today in their work? In 300 years, which literary works will be referenced as accurate representations of the present time?
BOOK-BANNING AND CENSORSHIP: SILENCING MOLIÈRE

Despite a warm reception from King Louis XIV following the royal performance of Molière’s Tartuffe in 1664, the play was banned from public performance. The young monarch, who was only 24 years old at the time, was under pressure not only from church officials but also from his devoutly Catholic mother who thoroughly disapproved of Molière’s masterwork. The play’s popularity forced the Archbishop of Paris to issue an edict that anyone caught acting in, reading or attending a production of Tartuffe would be immediately excommunicated. The pressure of three separate factions may have prompted this move: the elite members of the French Roman Catholic Church, the French aristocracy, and members of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, an illegal and secret religious organization that was partly responsible for the Catholic Church’s early growth in France.

Molière, however, did not give up. After revisions and private readings, Molière requested permission to perform the play again, hoping that the title change from Tartuffe, or the Hypocrite to Tartuffe, or the Imposter and some alterations to Tartuffe’s religious costuming would prompt religious elites to view the play more favorably. Despite the playwright’s efforts, the Parisian Parliament upheld the ban, but although the Archbishop was also unmoved, the play was not placed on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, a list of books banned by the Roman Catholic Church. In response to the ongoing criticism in 1667, Molière wrote an official letter in which he reflected, “The comic is the outward and visible form that nature’s bounty has attached to everything unreasonable, so that we should see, and avoid, it.”

Molière would be forced to wait another two years and file a third petition before being granted permission to perform his work. The play was ultimately well-received and brought the playwright financial success.

QUESTIONS:

1. Despite the Archbishop’s many threats, private viewings of Tartuffe for society’s elites continued while the ban was in place. Why were the rich, religious, or intellectual able to see the production but members of the middle and lower classes were not?

2. The prohibition of Tartuffe was maintained because many viewed the play as an attack on religion. Molière insisted that he was not attacking the church or any of the clergy, but rather was highlighting hypocrisy and those who abused religious authority for their own personal gain. Why do you think Molière was censored? Do you think religious elites were correct in their conclusions about the playwright’s motives? What was Molière’s purpose in writing this play?

3. Do you or do you not think that there is ever a time a book, play or film should be banned? Can you think of a time when the government, news media or other organization has been unwilling to publish a piece of writing, pictures, or video? What are the circumstances under which you believe speech against government, religious or any other organization should be legally prohibited? Do you believe that fear of a negative reaction is a good enough reason to prohibit speech?
COMPARE AND CONTRAST TRANSLATIONS

In the centuries since Molière wrote Tartuffe in French in 1664, it has been translated into many languages for audiences around the world. Two very popular English translations are those by Richard Wilbur in 1969 and Ranjit Bolt in 2001, which is the script used in the Huntington Theatre Company’s 2017 production of the play. In an interview with Theatre Voice, Ranjit Bolt states that his priority in crafting a translation is to “make the thing entertaining” without compromising “the spirit of the original.” Additionally, he describes himself as someone who uses his “creative license” to spin originally dull lines in the French to get “a chuckle or even a belly laugh ... without changing the overall sense.”

Below find two different excerpts of the moment when Tartuffe confesses his desire for Elmire, one from Wilbur’s translation and the other from Bolt’s translation. Compare and contrast the language chosen by the two translators. Consider:

• Does word choice change the meaning of the moment? If so, how?
• Does it expose something new or different about the character or situation?
• Or does it have no effect on the story at all?
• How does the each translator use language distinctively? Which translation do you prefer and why?

FROM RICHARD WILBUR’S TRANSLATION:

TARTUFFE:
Ah, well—my heart’s not made of stone, you know ... 
A love of heavenly beauty does not preclude 
A proper love for earthly pulchritude;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated 
By perfect works our Maker has created.
Some glory clings to all that Heaven has made;
In you, all Heaven’s marvels are displayed.
On that fair face, such beauties have been lavished,
The eyes are dazzled and the heart is ravished;
How could I look on you, O flawless creature,
And not adore the Author of all Nature,
Feeling a love both passionate and pure
For you, his triumph of self-portraiture?
At first, I trembled lest that love should be
A subtle snare that Hell had laid for me;
I vowed to flee the sight of you, eschewing
A rapture that might prove my soul’s undoing;
But soon, fair being, I became aware
That my deep passion could be made to square
With rectitude, and with my bounden duty.
I thereupon surrendered to your beauty.
It is, I know, presumptuous on my part
To bring you this poor offering of my heart,
And it is not my merit, Heaven knows,
But your compassion on which my hopes repose.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss — or desolation;
I bide your judgement and, as you think best,
I shall be either miserable or blest.
...

I may be pious, but I’m human too:
With your celestial charms before his eyes,
A man has not the power to be wise.
I know such words sound strangely, coming from me,
But I’m no angel, nor was meant to be,
And if you blame my passion, you must needs
Reproach as well the charms on which it feeds.
Your loveliness I had no sooner seen
Than you became my soul’s unrivalled queen;
Before your seraph glance, divinely sweet,
My heart’s defenses crumbled in defeat,
And nothing fasting, prayer, or tears might do
Could stay my spirit from adoring you.
My eyes, my sighs have told you in the past
What now my lips make bold to say at last;
And if, in your great goodness, you will deign
In compassion for my soul’s distress,
You’ll stoop to comfort my unworthiness,
I’ll raise to you, in thanks for that sweet manna,
An endless hymn, an infinite hosanna.
With me, of course, there need be no anxiety,
No fear of scandal or of notoriety.
These young court gallants, whom all the ladies fancy,
Are vain in speech, in action rash and chancy;
When they succeed in love, the world soon knows it;
No favor’s granted them but they disclose it
And by the looseness of their tongues profane
The very altar where their hearts have lain.
Men of my sort, however, love discreetly,
And one may trust our reticence completely.
My keen concern for my good name insures
The absolute security of yours;
In short I offer you, my dear Elmire,
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

FROM RANJIT BOLT’S TRANSLATION:

TARTUFFE:
Ah, well—my heart’s not made of stone, you know ...
A love of heavenly beauty does not preclude
A proper love for earthly pulchritude;
Our senses are quite rightly captivated
By perfect works our Maker has created.
Some glory clings to all that Heaven has made;
In you, all Heaven’s marvels are displayed.
On that fair face, such beauties have been lavished,
The eyes are dazzled and the heart is ravished;
How could I look on you, O flawless creature,
And not adore the Author of all Nature,
Feeling a love both passionate and pure
For you, his triumph of self-portraiture?
At first, I trembled lest that love should be
A subtle snare that Hell had laid for me;
I vowed to flee the sight of you, eschewing
A rapture that might prove my soul’s undoing;
But soon, fair being, I became aware
That my deep passion could be made to square
With rectitude, and with my bounden duty.
I thereupon surrendered to your beauty.
It is, I know, presumptuous on my part
To bring you this poor offering of my heart,
And it is not my merit, Heaven knows,
But your compassion on which my hopes repose.
You are my peace, my solace, my salvation;
On you depends my bliss — or desolation;
I bide your judgement and, as you think best,
I shall be either miserable or blest.
...

I may be pious, but I’m human too:
With your celestial charms before his eyes,
A man has not the power to be wise.
I know such words sound strangely, coming from me,
But I’m no angel, nor was meant to be,
And if you blame my passion, you must needs
Reproach as well the charms on which it feeds.
Your loveliness I had no sooner seen
Than you became my soul’s unrivalled queen;
Before your seraph glance, divinely sweet,
My heart’s defenses crumbled in defeat,
And nothing fasting, prayer, or tears might do
Could stay my spirit from adoring you.
My eyes, my sighs have told you in the past
What now my lips make bold to say at last;
And if, in your great goodness, you will deign
In compassion for my soul’s distress,
You’ll stoop to comfort my unworthiness,
I’ll raise to you, in thanks for that sweet manna,
An endless hymn, an infinite hosanna.
With me, of course, there need be no anxiety,
No fear of scandal or of notoriety.
These young court gallants, whom all the ladies fancy,
Are vain in speech, in action rash and chancy;
When they succeed in love, the world soon knows it;
No favor’s granted them but they disclose it
And by the looseness of their tongues profane
The very altar where their hearts have lain.
Men of my sort, however, love discreetly,
And one may trust our reticence completely.
My keen concern for my good name insures
The absolute security of yours;
In short I offer you, my dear Elmire,
Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

FROM RANJIT BOLT’S TRANSLATION:

TARTUFFE

My heart’s not made of stone, you know.
There are two kinds of love: one springs
From contact with eternal things;
But that can easily comport
With passions of a temporal sort.
God’s works enthrall me, and therefore,
Madame, I cannot but adore
A lovely creature such as you —
You are a sheet on which God drew
His very image, which inspires
More... ardent feelings. No: desires.
At first, they frightened me: maybe
Satan himself was tempting me,
In his familiar, devious fashion,
Through you. I wrestled with my passion,
I fought it back for my soul’s sake,
As if salvation were at stake.
I was resolved to shun your sight,
But then I thought: “This can’t be right!
This passion cannot but be pure.”
Then, O you wonder, I was sure
My soul was safe, and I was free
To love you unreservedly.
I know it’s folly on my part
To offer you this chaff, my heart,
Reckless, impudent, and gross.
But look how far God’s bounty goes!
Can yours be very far behind?
Such is the grace I hope to find —
Though none to my mean self be due,
Yet I may look for all from you.
My hope, my happiness, my peace
Begin with you, without you cease;
How is my pilgrimage to end?
Upon your wish I now depend:
I’ll be the happiest of men
Or wretchedest – pronounce it, then!
...

I’m pious, but I’m still a man.
To glimpse your beauty is to fall,
To lose oneself beyond recall,
And when a heart is forced to yield,
Reason gives up; it quits the field.
You don’t expect such words from me
But I’m no saint. Why should I be?
You find this declaration strange?
To change it, you will have to change —
Become less lovely, less divine.
(Ha! Tell the sun it shouldn’t shine!) You were adored as soon as seen,
Crowned in that instant, as my queen.
How desperately my poor heart fought,
Yet, in no time, it was the sport
Of that sweet face, those sparkling eyes,
That dazzling beauty, which defies
Description! Fasting, weeping, prayer
Could not prevent your triumph there.
Don’t say you don’t realize,
See in my looks, hear in my sighs,
That I was yours? I beg you: Take
Some pity on this worthless rake.
If your... your majesty will deign
To stoop to such a lowly plane,
Then, glorious goddess, I shall prove
There’s such a thing as boundless love —
A love, moreover, free from shame:
The lady-killers of the Court
Treat love as just another sport,
To puff and plume themselves about,
The woman falls, the word is out,
She’s named to everyone they meet,
Thus are their tongues so indiscreet
They desecrate the altars where
Their hearts make sacrifice. Compare
These braggarts with another breed,
Silent and secretive, whose need
To board of conquests is so small
They don’t speak lovers’ names at all.
It’s to this class that I belong.
With us, Madame, you can’t go wrong,
Your honor’s safe, since we abhor
What you, too, have a loathing for:
Scandal. In me, and in my king,
If you accept us, what you’ll find
Is love of which the world won’t hear,
And pleasure unalloyed by fear.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: Repeat this process with Madame Pernelle’s speech reprimanding her family in the play’s first scene.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RANJIT BOLT’S APPROACH TO TRANSLATION, listen to his Theatre Voice interview in its entirety at theatrevoice.com/audio/ranjit-bolt-discusses-the-fine-art-of-translating-plays/.
CASTING CHALLENGE

“When I decided to stage Tartuffe I studied all the previous productions. That’s when I realized that there is no such thing as tradition.”
- Roger Planchon, theatre director whose French productions of Tartuffe in the 1960s and 1970s examined the play’s domestic issues through a political lens

Imagine you are a casting director who has been hired to select a cast for a groundbreaking presentation of Molière’s classic Tartuffe; the new interpretation will take the play out of Paris in the mid-17th century and move the action to present day, any place in the world of your choosing. The production’s concept will center on a reality television show, so you must find “actors” whose public personas closely match their “characters” so that they may essentially play themselves. The personalities you select may be chosen from any country and be famous for their work in any field: religion, entertainment, politics, the arts, medicine & science, professional sports, etc.

Describe the setting of the play. Which current local, national, or world-wide events influence the context of your production?

Cast the following characters based on people you know are alive today. Write the actor names next to the character he/she will be playing in the cast list below:

ORGON, a gentleman
MARIANE, his daughter
ELMIRE, his wife
DAMIS, his son
MME PERNELLE, his mother
CLÉANTE, Elmire’s brother
DORINE, their maid
VALÈRE, engaged to Mariane
TARTUFFE
LAURENT, his acolyte
MONSIEUR LOYAL, a bailiff
An OFFICER of the court
FLIPOTE, Mme Pernelle’s maid

Share your artistic vision of an updated interpretation of this classic with your class.

1. How do your casting choices change or alter the central conflict of the piece?
2. Is this play a satire or parody? Or should we accept the play as it is seen onstage?
3. Is there a consensus as to whether or not your casting choices would work for this modernized production?
MARIANE’S VOICE: USING POETRY ONSTAGE

Using text from Tartuffe, write a poem from the perspective of Orgon’s daughter, Mariane!

Molière’s original French text relied heavily upon a particular form of poetry called the Alexandrine. In this form, each line contains twelve syllables and six beats, and pair to form rhyming couplets. Keeping true to this form is difficult when adapting to a new language, and many English translators have dropped it entirely. Ranjit Bolt, whose translation is being utilized for the Huntington’s production, commented that in his work he tries to maintain the “spirit” of the original, so while he does not follow the Alexandrine form, Bolt does employ the use of rhyming couplets.

Consider Mariane’s speech to her father regarding who she will ultimately marry and write a new poem representing this moment. What is Mariane’s objective? Does Orgon listen to her? As the poet adapting from the monologue, you will modernize the language but keep the meaning and message of the text as close to the original as possible. You may choose to keep a rhyme scheme or try out your hand at blank verse (no rhyme scheme, but the form does contain iambic pentameter, meaning the verse consists of lines of five feet two syllables long, one unstressed followed by a stressed syllable).

MARIANE: (kneeling)
Father, I beg you, in the name
Of Heaven, who beholds my pain:
If, in your heart, I still excite
Some feeling, waive a father’s right;
When you command, I must obey.
This once, don’t exercise your sway.
For pity’s sake, don’t make me rue
The day that I was born, when you
Bestowed on me the gift of life.
Stop me from being Valère’s wife,
Destroy my only hope of bliss,
But, please, content yourself with this,
Consider it as Hell enough,
Don’t add the torment of Tartuffe!

1. Did you choose a rhyme scheme or blank verse form for your poem?
2. In what ways is the original translation “old fashioned”? What words or ideas did you replace with more updated language and vision?
3. Did you find adapting the text to be difficult or straightforward? As the poet, what were the challenges you faced when completing this exercise?
4. Once you have written your poem, share with members of your class. Leave time for comments and questions

Gabriel Brown plays Valère and Sarah Oakes Muirhead plays Mariane
COSTUME DESIGN

Molière wrote Tartuffe while France was under the leadership of the Louis XIV, also known as Louis the Great or the Sun King. Louis XIV in his reign of 72 years and 110 days had major influence on every aspect of France from the structure of its government to the flourishing of the arts. All his subjects strove to emulate Louis’ decadence and ostentatious displays of wealth, most noticeably demonstrated in his parties and lavish fashion sense. Some recognizable trends from this time were:

- Slippers and high heels for men and women
- Bright colors and exuberant patterns
- Tight corsets, ornate jewelry, plunging neck lines, dropped shoulders for women
- Elaborate hairstyles & head gear for men and women (toppling curls from updos, grand hats, and wigs, wigs, and more wigs)
- Coats, breeches, long draping sleeves for men
- Neckwear for men, especially the cravat, a long linen strip ending in lace held in place by a ribbon bow (the great grandfather of the modern day tie)

Tartuffe received its premiere in 1664 at a festival taking place at the Palace of Versailles. After a few bumpy early years of being censored by the King and opposed by religious authorities, Tartuffe has reached audiences around the world for centuries through many different adaptations. While each production has had an entirely unique design, there are similar motifs:

- References to religion in Tartuffe’s costume and black as a color of piety for Tartuffe and Orgon
- Bright colors and extravagant dresses for Mariane and Elmire vs less flashy and practical work outfits for Dorine and Flipote
- Excessive wigs, bows, ruffles, makeup for all characters (almost to a cartoonlike extreme)
- Replicas of French fashion from the time it takes place
- Long ornate coats for male characters

What does affluent fashion look like today? What about the clothes of those who pursue religious orders? Using this information about 17th century French fashion and traditional costumes as an inspiration, create your own contemporary costume design for at least 4 characters in Tartuffe.
QUOTABLE MOMENTS

Choose one of the following quotes from Tartuffe. Write an essay analyzing the quote's meaning. Consider:

- Which character said it?
- Does the character mean it literally or is there an unspoken subtext?
- What does this statement reveal about the character’s way of looking at the world?
- How do the character’s actions support or contradict the quote?
- Do other characters seem to agree or disagree?
- How does the quote contribute to the forward progression of the scene and of the plot as a whole?

A. I wrestled with my passion, I fought it back for my soul’s sake, As if salvation were at stake. I was resolved to shun your sight, But then I thought: “This can’t be right! This passion cannot but be pure.”

B. You know, Tartuffe’s completely changed My view of life. He’s re-arranged My attitudes, and helped me find A true tranquility of mind. Just talking to him’s set me free: I needed things. Now I can see It’s an illusion, even love — That’s one disease he’s cured me of: Yes, I could see my family die And not so much as blink an eye.

C. Nothing on earth disgusts me more Than the religious charlatan, The social-climbing holy man Whose sanctimonious public face Is worn to get some post or place.

D. You mean these little breasts can wreak Such havoc? Is your flesh so weak? Your blood so turbulent and hot? Well, mine is definitely not! Take you for instance: you could be Completely nude right next to me, Just miles and miles of naked skin, Yet I’d have no desire to sin.

E. I hadn’t just been raped, had I? A woman’s color needn’t rise Or fire be flashing in her eyes Over a harmless little grope — That man’s less sexy than the Pope! I’m not some prude, forever keen To throw a fit and make a scene...

F. Be kind to him, be far too kind, Pamper, prefer him, I don’t mind. By all means, let him help himself To hearth and home, to wife and wealth, Add my wealth too, to stretch yours out — My body? Let him do without!

G. ...Nothing can. Alter my feelings for that man: I hate him, and because I do, I say so. “To thyself be true!”— That’s my creed. He enrages me, And to be honest, I forsee Big trouble: I’ll do something rash. That swine and I are sure to clash.

H. Look, when a girl is made to wed Against her wish, the risk is great That some day she will deviate From the straight path. D’you catch my drift? ... She’ll sizzle in the fires of Hell, And you’ll be sizzling there as well, For being such a brainless fool And breaking Cupid’s card’nal rule.

Gabriel Brown (Valère), Paula Plum (Madame Pernelle), Brett Gelman (Tartuffe), Frank Wood (Orgon), and Sarah Oakes Muirhead (Mariane)
2017-2018 STUDENT MATINEES

MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG SEPT. 28
TARTUFFE NOV. 17
MALA JAN. 18 & 25
SKELETON CREW MAR. 15
TOP GIRLS MAY 3