

STUDY QUESTIONS
MOLIERE *TARTUFFE* (1664) COMEDY

1. Why does Tartuffe deceive Orgon?
2. Why does Orgon play such a benevolent role toward Tartuffe?
3. Why does Moliere use Tartuffe's lust as his undoing?
4. Why does Moliere make Tartuffe a religious hypocrite rather than just a hypocrite?
5. "Will to power" is a theme in the comedy. How does the play demonstrate man's attempt to gain power over others?
6. How can religion offer justification for a course of action that is destructive as well as self-seeking?
7. Why does Moliere use the artifice of intervention of the King to resolve the plot of *Tartuffe*?
8. What are the threats to rationality that the comedy *Tartuffe* reveals?
9. In what way is the Enlightenment idea of keeping chaos under control manifested in the structure of *Tartuffe*? That is, what specific literary conventions does Moliere use to try to attain this?
10. What specific eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideas are demonstrated in the play?
11. Since this is a comedy of character, what does each of the characters symbolize?
12. How is irony used as a tool of satire throughout the comedy?
13. What major Enlightenment concern is revealed by the satire of the play?
14. Is the play relevant to our modern world?

GROUP READING AND DISCUSSION – MOLIERE’S *TARTUFFE*

Read aloud scenes 1 through 5 (Act I)

Discuss the following:

1. Characterize Madame Pernelle.
2. What social concerns are raised?
3. What does Cleante state about human nature?
4. What does Dorinne say about Orgon’s folly?
5. What is humorous about scene 4?