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VEILS

By Tom Coash

Directed by Leah C. Gardiner

Sponsored in part by Berkshire Bank



STUDY GUIDE 2015

barringtonstagecompany

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PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE

This guide is meant to be a practical educational resource for teachers to draw connections between the play and the core curricular subjects being studied in the classroom. The guide contains background information on the play as well as suggested activities that can be used to explore the play's key themes either before or after viewing the performance. The activities and topics are organized in modules that can be used independently or interdependently according to class level and time availability.

Teachers can use this guide to:

- Enhance student appreciation of the experience of live theatre.
- Introduce students to relevant cultural and historical topics that support classroom learning
- Creatively draw connections to topics addressed in the play as they relate to core curriculum
- Gather instructional tools, which can be used to plan lessons in alignment with national learning standards

BEFORE THE PLAY

Read articles from this guide with your class and lead one of the suggested pre-show activities in order to prepare students for the experience of viewing the play. Go over the tips for Theatre Etiquette with your class.

THE DAY OF THE PLAY

Please arrive 10-15 minutes before the performance and allow time before the show for students to use the restrooms, which are located in the theatre lobby. It is recommended that you assign one chaperone for every 15 students, and ask your chaperones to disperse themselves amongst the student group to help support best behavior during the performance.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

The audience's job is to watch, listen, and applaud. Students should not leave their seats except to use the restroom. Students who disrupt the performance or are seen using cell phones, iPods, or any other electronic devices during the performance will be asked to leave the theatre and wait in the lobby with a teacher or chaperone. No food or drink is allowed in the theatre.

AFTER THE PLAY

Lead one of the post-show lessons found in this guide in order to help your students draw connections to the curriculum.

Complete the evaluations found at the end of this study guide with your class and send to Barrington Stage Company. We would love to hear from you about your experience.

The National Standards for Arts Education - Theater Standards

The National Standards for Arts Education were developed by the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (under the guidance of the National Committee for Standards in the Arts). These standards outline basic arts learning outcomes integral to the comprehensive K-12 education:

1. Writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience, heritage, imagination, literature, and history
2. Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes
3. Designing by visualizing, arranging, and developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes for Classroom Dramatizations
4. Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
5. Researching by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes
6. Comparing, connecting, and incorporating art forms by analyzing methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and other art forms
7. Analyzing, explaining personal preferences, evaluating, and constructing meanings from classroom dramatizations and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
8. Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and music in the community and in other cultures

CAST AND CREATIVES

LEAH C. GARDINER (DIRECTOR) New York theatre credits include *generations* (Soho Rep, U.S. premiere), *Fidelis*



(Public Theater), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Atlantic Theater Company, U.S. premiere), *Born Bad* (Soho Rep, U.S. premiere, Obie Award), *Pitbulls* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), *Bulrusher* (Urban Stages, world premiere and Pulitzer finalist), *The Ghost of Enoch Charlton* (Keen Company), and *Kent, CT* (Zipper Theater). Select national credits include Anna Deavere Smith's *Notes from the Field* (Berkeley Rep, world premiere); *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello* (Houston Shakespeare Festival); *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Alliance Theatre); *Fences* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Sucker Punch* (Studio Theatre, U.S. premiere); *Clementine in the Lower Nine* (TheatreWorks, world premiere);

The Last Five Years (Crossroads Theatre Company); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Pillsbury House Theatre); *Blue Door* (South Coast Repertory, world premiere and Pulitzer finalist); *Topdog/Underdog* (Philadelphia Theatre Company); *Birdie Blue* (City Theatre); *Orange Flower Water* (Contemporary American Theatre Festival, world premiere); *The Flag Maker of Market Street* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival, world premiere); *The Piano Lesson* (Madison Repertory Theatre); *Angels in America, Parts I and II* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre); Broadway's *The Normal Heart* (Arena Stage, American Conservatory Theater, re-staging director); and the national tour of *Wit* (Kennedy Center, Ordway, among others). As a writer and director she worked on *Cultures Collide* (Sony Entertainment); as a short film director, *The Belle of New Orleans* (Alliance Theatre); and as a film producer, *Mother of George*, best cinematography, Sundance. She will make her screen acting debut in Ira Sachs's forthcoming film *Thank You for Being Honest* opposite Greg Kinnear. Leah holds an MFA in directing from the Yale School of Drama.

ARNULFO MALDONADO (SCENIC/COSTUME DESIGNER) is a New York City-based set and costume designer. At BSC: *The Golem of Havana*. Notable design credits include: the world premiere of Anne Washburn's transadapted *Iphigenia In Aulis* (Classic Stage Company), the world premiere of Jenny Schwartz and Todd Almond's *IOWA* (Playwrights Horizons), the world premiere of Max Posner's *Judy* (Page 73), the U.S. premiere of Debbie Tucker Green's *generations* (Soho Rep), the New York premiere of George Brant's *Grounded* (Page 73) and Ain Gordon's *Not What Happened* (BAM's Next Wave Festival). New York credits include: Brooklyn Academy of Music, Classic Stage Company, Ensemble Studio Theater, HERE Arts Center, Fisher Center for the Performing Arts. Regional credits include: Anchorage Opera, Barrington Stage Company, Center Stage, Central City Opera, Cleveland Play House, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Peak Performances, Perseverance Theatre, San Francisco Ballet, Studio Arena, Two River Theater, Westport Country Playhouse. Arnulfo is a recipient of a Princess Grace Theatre Fellowship (Faberge Theater Award). MFA: NYU Tisch. www.arnulfomaldonado.com

MICHAEL CHYBOWSKI (LIGHTING DESIGNER) has recently lit *The Magic Flute* and *The Elixir of Love* for Opera Theatre of St. Louis, *Acis and Galatea* for the Mark Morris Dance Group, and Moliere's *School for Wives* at Two River Theatre. Other work in opera includes *Parsifal* for Seattle Opera and Mark Morris' *Four Saints In Three Acts* for English National Opera. Michael has worked extensively in theatre, opera, and dance, as well as with the performance artist Laurie Anderson and fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi. Michael is the Head of Lighting at the UCONN theatre training program and is the recipient of an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence, as well as the Hewes Award and two Lucille Lortel awards for his work in New York.

MATT SHERWIN (SOUND DESIGNER / ORIGINAL MUSIC) Off & Off-Off Broadway: *Born Bad* (Soho Rep, Leah C. Gardiner, Dir), *The Accomplices*, *A Spalding Gray Matter*, *Critical Darling* (The New Group), *Macbeth* (Lincoln Center Theater), *365 Plays: Week 6* by Suzan-Lori Parks (Public Theater), *Rough Sketch*, *1000 Blinks*, *Gluten!* (59e59), *Heresy/Progress* (HERE); Regional: *The Valley of Fear* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *The Last Five Years* (Crossroads Theatre Company, Leah C. Gardiner, Dir), *Cymbeline*, *The Compleat Works of William Shakespeare* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival), *Sons of the Prophet* (TheatreSquared); University Theatre: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *In the Next Room* (Yale Dramatic Association), *Vinegar Tom* (Manhattanville College), *The Blue Room* (Pace University). Two albums as a singer/songwriter: 12:30 Songs and Cold Reader. Ten years as a teaching artist with Lincoln Center Theater's Songwriting in the Schools Program. MFA: NYU Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. (mattsherwin.com)

C. ANDREW BAUER (PROJECTION DESIGNER) At BSC: *Dancing Lessons*. Off-Broadway: *CQ/CX* (co-design with Peter Nigrini) for the Atlantic Theater, *An Error of the the Moon* at Theater Row. Off-Off-Broadway: *Fetes de la Nuit* at the Ohio Theater, *Diary of a Teenage Girl* and *Milk-n-Honey*, both at 3LD, *Kaddish* at HERE and the East 4th Street Theater. Regional: *Dancing Lessons* at TheatreWorks Hartford, *Adding Machine* and Joël Pommerat's *Cinderella*, both at University of Rochester, *Hydrogen Jukebox* at Fort Worth Opera. As Associate and Assistant: Broadway: *An Act of God*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, *Rocky*, *A Night with Janis Joplin*, Gore Vidal's

The Best Man, Fela!, 9 to 5. Off-Broadway: *Our Lady of Kibeho* at Signature Theater, *Here Lies Love* at the Public Theatre, *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* at Second Stage. International: *Fela!* and *Here Lies Love* at the National Theatre in London. Film: Producer and Editor of *Brooklyn Bound*, 2004 Tribeca Film Festival. Awards: Innovative Theater Award for Outstanding Design, 2011 Prague Quadrennial. Upcoming: Associate on a new musical based on the movie *Amelie* at Berkeley Rep.

RENEE LUTZ (PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER) At BSC: Associate Artist. Over 50 BSC productions including *Man of La Mancha, Kiss Me, Kate, On the Town, Fiddler..., Guys and Dolls, Sweeney Todd, West Side Story, Follies, Funny Girl, Crucible, South Pacific, Cabaret,* etc. Venues: numerous off-Broadway and regional theatres including Goodspeed, Signature, Playwrights Horizons, MTC, The Public Theatre, La Jolla, Primary Stages, Theatre for a New Audience, the Wein Festwochen, the Royal Shakespeare Festival, and national tours. She is a trustee of historic FDNY fireboat John J. Harvey. Her work honors her father, Ross Lutz. As always, her best credit and longest run is her husband, actor Gordon Stanley.

MATTHEW LUPPINO (ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER) At BSC: *Engagements, A Little More Alive, Shining City, Butler.* NYC credits: *The Nomad* (The Flea Theater), *Ordinary Days* (TDF Benefit Concert), *Run For Your Wife* (The Gallery Players). Regional: *The Alchemist* (The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (STNJ- Next Stage Ensemble). University: *Metamorphoses, Lysistrata, Footloose, The Drowsy Chaperone,* and more. Matthew has also interned with the Broadway Company of *Wicked*, and has worked as a stage manager for the Brooklyn Arts Exchange. Matthew is a proud alum of The College of New Jersey, and member of AEA's EMC program.

CAST



HEND AYOUB (SAMAR) is thrilled to be making her Barrington stage debut. Hend's theater credits include Broadway's *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* starring Robin Williams as well as its previous run at Los Angeles Mark Taper Forum and *Veils* world premiere production at Portland Stage. She was nominated for best actress in the 2013 Planet Connections theatre awards in NYC. TV credits include Showtime's *Homeland, Damages, USA's Royal Pains, Comedy Central's The Watch List,* and back home was a series regular on *Sesame Street*. In film, she co-starred in the Emmy Award-winning film

Death of a President and the award-winning film *Private*.



DONNETTA LAVINIA GRAYS (INTISAR) Brooklyn based actor and playwright. Acting credits - Broadway: *In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play, Well.* New York: Clubbed Thumb, Ars Nova, Primary Stages, New York Stage and Film and The Civilians Regional: A.C.T, Portland Stage, Westport Country Playhouse, Arena Stage, Hartford Theaterworks, Centerstage, The Huntington Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and The Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company. 2 Time Connecticut Critics Circle Award winner and a Helen Hayes Award nominee. Plays include *Sam, The Review* and *The New Normal*

among others. Inaugural Doric Wilson Independent Playwright Award recipient, O'Neill Theater Center National Playwrights Conference Finalist and Todd McNerny National New Play Award recipient. www.donnettagrays.com

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



TOM COASH (PLAYWRIGHT) is a New Haven, CT, playwright and director. Prior to New Haven, he spent three years in Bermuda and four years teaching playwriting at The American University in Cairo, Egypt. Coash was a Co-founder of the Offstage Theatre in Charlottesville, VA, and has worked for such theatres as the Manhattan Theatre Club, Stageworks/Hudson, and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Coash has won numerous awards for his new play *Veils*, including the American Theatre Critics Association's 2015 "M. Elizabeth Osborn Award", the Clauder Competition for New England Playwrights, an Edgerton Foundation National New Play Award, and was a Finalist for the very prestigious

2015 American Theatre Critics Association's ATCA/Steinberg New Play Award. His plays have been produced worldwide including the recent production of his play *CRY HAVOC* in the South African National Arts Festival where he was an artist-in-residence. Coash is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and has an MFA in Playwriting from the University of California at Davis. *Veils* is available online at: www.indietheater.com

An Interview with Barrington Stage Company Artistic Director Julianne Boyd & Veils Playwright Thomas Coash

As transcribed from a live interview in February 2015

Julianne Boyd (JB): Hi. I'm Julie Boyd, the Artistic Director of Barrington Stage, and I am here with Tom Coash, who's the playwright of *Veils*. I have a few questions I'd like to ask him. We'll start with: what inspired you to write the play?

Thomas Coash (TC): Good question. My wife and I lived in Cairo, Egypt, for several years and loved it there. We absolutely loved the Middle East and love Cairo, and Egyptians are really fun, friendly, wonderful people. I was living there, and I found it fascinating and I started writing plays about Egypt.

JB: When was that?

TC: So we lived there from 1996 to 2000, and then I've been back a couple times since then. And I just found that people were so interesting and so much fun and so different from what you see in a lot of the media here in the States and, I think, in the West where you usually turn on the TV and there's a woman in a burka and guy with no teeth burning a flag or something. Our experience was so very different from that that it made me want to introduce audiences to the world that I was seeing and I was experiencing.

JB: And why two women? Why two Muslim women?

TC: Because women are just interesting, aren't they?

JB: Thank you!

[both laughing]

JB: Great answer.

TC: I think women are fascinating. And, in particular, I think people have a stereotypical image of Middle Eastern women as being really oppressed and really—you know, hiding in a burka in the kitchen and with bare feet—and that's not what I was seeing at all. I taught at a university there and a lot of our colleagues were women with doctorates, and are teaching this, teaching that, and are really powerful, strong women. Our students there at the University were really fascinating, and the Egyptian students, in particular, were very sophisticated, very worldly. They all spoke three or four languages, which is two or three more than I speak. And I thought, "Wow, these people are really sort of fantastic."

JB: Did you know two women such as you wrote about? There are two women in the play—there's an African-American Muslim who goes to Cairo to study, and, of course, her Egyptian counterpart, a Muslim woman. Did you know two such women?

TC: I knew a lot of women like them, and so they are not real people, but they're a composite of people I know. But in particular, the African-American Muslim woman was inspired by somebody that I knew in particular. Every year there would be several African-American Muslims who would come over for a year and study abroad from the States, and thinking they were gonna finally be somewhere where they would be accepted. It didn't work out that way, usually, and for many of them it was very difficult. And for many of them it was the first time they'd ever been out of the country and the Middle East is a big culture shock for a lot of people. But I found it really fascinating that these veiled American women were coming over to Egypt, and at that time, certainly, I'd say maybe 95% of our women students were not veiled—the Egyptians and the Middle Easterners and so

JB: The Muslim women?

TC: The Muslim women. And so I thought, "Well, that's really interesting." So I kept that in my mind for a long time and thought about two characters, about these two women, and finally had a chance.

I was commissioned to write a short play about Egypt and I thought, “This is my chance. I’m gonna write about these two women.” And I thought, “What can I write about? Well, let’s see. What’s a really interesting topic?”

JB: Right. So a lot changed because of the Arab Spring in 2010. And the women you knew from ’96 to 2000 are very different from after the Arab Spring?

TC: No, I wouldn’t say that at all. I’d say they’re still the same women in very different circumstances.

JB: Are they still wearing veils?

TC: No. And I’d say—I was just back there two years ago—I’d say when I lived in Cairo before 2000, it was more of a class thing, who was wearing veils, and who wasn’t wearing veils. If you had a college education, you didn’t wear a veil and you’d dress Western, no matter if you were a man or a woman or whoever. And I would say in the big city maybe 20% of the women were veiled. If you went out in the country, it was different. But Muslims and Christians both were veiled out in the country, so it wasn’t necessarily just a Muslim thing. It was a traditional thing.

JB: Christians wore veils?

TC: (*nods head*)

JB: Really?

TC: And still are. And every Arab thinks about that. There was this big to-do about Mrs. Obama and whether she should have been wearing a veil to see the Saudi King, but nobody made a to-do about either her or Mrs. Bush wearing a veil to the Vatican, right?

JB: Do you know, I just saw a cartoon of a Muslim woman and a nun in a habit—

TC: Right, right.

JB: And it’s saying, “So what’s the difference here?”

TC: Exactly, exactly. And you know, a lot of churches in America, women always wear hats; it’s something you do. But now, even in Cairo, there’s a lot more, a lot more veiling going on and for a variety of reasons. When I started writing the play, I had this sort of Western, liberal outlook on the whole topic, and I thought I knew something about it, which I found that I really didn’t. And I did some really great, fascinating research.

JB: What did you learn? What was the major thing?

TC: Well, I think that the biggest eye-opener for me was that the vast majority of women that I spoke to who were veiled, they were very positive about it and it being their choice and saying, “No, we hate it when people say we’re oppressed,” and, “we hate it when everybody thinks my father makes me wear this.” And in fact, you know, lots of women wear veils.

Young women whose parents and whose mothers are not veiled, and they’re horrified that younger women are starting to veil because—but it’s more of a political thing; it’s popular, it’s fashionable, it’s political. It’s also a little bit about religion as well, that’s all in there. But there’s definitely part of a society that [says], “We want to break from the West. We don’t want to be dependent.” And there’s a lot of very charismatic ministers, Muslim preachers, evangelists even, who are really pushing that idea forward [saying], “We need to get back to our own culture, our own traditions.” And so, contrary to a lot of the popular belief and certainly different from what I thought, wearing a veil is not just about being a Muslim. There’s a million real reasons why different women wear veils, and I think every woman has her own reason.

I didn’t want to write a play that was about, “Okay, this is what I think that answer is.” You know, I wanted to—I found that I really didn’t know much, which surprised me because I think it’s one of those topics that everybody has a really strong gut reaction to, but nobody really knows much about

it. And so I thought, “Well, let’s just get some information out there and open up the question and put a human face on it and see what happens.”

JB: Which leads me to: what do you hope the audience takes away from this play?

TC: Well, last year I was doing a reading of a play and had a really nice group of people, audience members, giving some feedback. One older gentleman—this was up in Maine, and so the whole audience was white, you know, just for, pretty much for starters—but he raised his hand and he said, “You know what? I really knew nothing about why women put on veils and, you know, when I see a veiled woman in the street now, I’m gonna look at her really differently and see that she’s a human being.” And that’s not the way it was before; she was a stereotype to him.

JB: That’s what a lot of us think.

TC: Right, right.

JB: A lot of people say—actually, we had a staff member who wore a veil for a day. Not when she was here, but when she was in undergraduate school, and she said people treated her differently. They stayed away from her a little bit, and she was horrified and shocked that that happened.

TC: Yeah. Well, I actually have written a short play with that very topic where a woman is—an actress—well, I was doing another reading of *Veils* and this actress came in and said, “Wow. I have had the weirdest day.” And I said, “Why?” And she goes, “Well, I put a veil on and I wore it around and that was really strange.” And I thought, “Wow. Good idea for a short play.” And it was, yeah.

JB: Is there anything else you think we should know about the play that would help us understand it before our audience sees it?

TC: Well, I think [about] even the title, *Veils*, and you think, “Oh, we’re gonna go see a play about this controversial topic in the Middle East and we’re gonna have to be really serious and learn a lot of things.” And I think I really would love everybody to know that there’s a lot of humor in the play; there’s dancing. I really wanted to bring the whole world of Egypt and the Middle East and the place that I really love to the stage. And I think that these are young, college-aged women who are strong and who are dealing with issues of their times, but they’re humans and they’re fun, and they’re—you know, they go through a lot of things. But I think it’s, hopefully, sort of an uplifting play.

JB: So you’ve humanized the experience that we think is very formal and so we can get to know women and their thoughts behind the play.

TC: Mhmm. I hope so. That’s the idea.

JB: Great. Thank you.

THE STORY

(as described by Playwright, Tom Coash)

Intisar, a veiled, African-American Muslim student, thought she might finally fit in when she enrolled for a year abroad at the American Egyptian University in Cairo. However, the Arab Spring soon explodes across the Middle East, threatening to overwhelm the young American woman and her liberal Egyptian roommate, Samar. In the struggle to find their footing in this political storm, the young women instead find themselves on opposite sides of a bitter and dangerous cultural divide. *Veils* is not meant to be an exact or even approximate historical account of events leading up to the recent Egyptian revolution. For dramatic purposes, historic timelines have been changed and compressed. The play is a fictional account of two totally young women struggling to find their footing in a world exploding around them.



SETTING

Cairo, Egypt. Pre “Arab Spring”, circa 2010. Various locations including a dorm room at the American Egyptian University (AEU), a school editing room, and a hotel room.

Cairo is the capital of Egypt and—with a population of 6.76 million spread over 175 square miles, plus an additional 10 million inhabitants just outside of the city—Cairo is the largest city in the Middle East, second largest city in Africa, and 15th largest metropolitan area in the world. Located near the Nile Delta, Cairo was founded in 969 CE and is associated with Ancient Egypt because of its proximity to the ancient cities of Memphis and Giza as well as the Great Sphinx and Pyramids of Giza. Cairo has the oldest and largest film and music industries in the Arab world, as well as the world’s second-oldest institution of higher learning, al-Azhar University, which focuses on the studies of Islamic Law, Theology and Linguistics. Many international media, businesses, and organizations have regional headquarters in the city. Cairo, like many other mega-cities, suffers from high levels of pollution and traffic. Cairo’s Metro, one of only two metro transit systems on the African continent, ranks among the fifteen busiest in the world, with over 1 billion annual passengers. Cairo’s economy was ranked first in the Middle East and 43rd globally by Foreign Policy’s 2010 Global Cities Index.

CHARACTERS

INTISAR - Female, African-American Muslim, 20-23 years old, wears a veil (hijab) that is wrapped snugly around her head covering her hair but not her face. “Inti” is a strong-willed, intelligent, passionate young woman who is doing a year abroad at the American Egyptian University (AEU), a Middle-Eastern/Religious Studies major.

SAMAR - Female, Egyptian Muslim, 20-23 years old, does not wear a veil. Samar dresses in chic, western clothes, modestly dressed when she goes out, not so modest at home or among friends. She often wears a NY Yankees baseball hat. She is also a student at AEU, studying journalism. Well off, cosmopolitan, speaks Arabic, French and English. Friendly, outgoing.

TYPES OF VEILS

(from BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/05/europe_muslim_veils/html/1.stm)

In Islamic culture, women often wear veils as a signifier of religious or cultural tradition or as a show of personal modesty. The type of veils worn differs based on cultural and religious variances.



THE SHAYLA is a long, rectangular scarf popular in the Gulf region. It is wrapped around the head and tucked or pinned in place at the shoulders.

THE HIJAB or Hejab is a square scarf that covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear. The hijab is worn in many countries and sects of Islam, and is the most common form of veiling in western countries. The hijab can be seen in many colors and styles.

THE AL-AMIRA is a two-piece veil. It consists of a close fitting cap, usually made from cotton or polyester, and an accompanying tube-like scarf.

THE KHIMAR is a long, cape-like veil that hangs down to just above the waist. A popular style in Egypt, the Khimar covers the hair, neck and shoulders completely, but leaves the face clear.

THE CHADOR, worn by Iranian women when outside the house, is a full-body cloak. It is often accompanied by a smaller headscarf underneath.

THE NIQAB is a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear. However, this may be obscured by a separate eye veil. It is worn with an accompanying headscarf, such as a khimar.

THE BURQA is the most concealing of all Islamic veils. It covers the entire face and body, leaving just a mesh screen to see through. There have been attempts to ban both the niqab and burka in some European countries.

KEY DISCUSSION TOPICS

1). THE ARAB SPRING

The term Arab Spring refers to a wave of demonstrations, protests, riots, and civil wars that began on December 17, 2010, with the Tunisian revolution and spread throughout the countries of the Arab League, including Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen among others. The wide-spread protests shared similar aspects including youth involvement and techniques of civil resistance as well as the effective use of social media to organize, communicate, and raise awareness in the face of government attempts at repression and censorship. Many demonstrations were met with violent responses from authorities and pro-government

militias, which in some cases were answered in turn with violence from protestors. While the wave of initial revolutions and protests faded by mid-2012, the succeeding and still ongoing large-scale conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa are sometimes referred to as the Arab Winter.



The Arab Spring is generally believed to have been instigated by dissatisfaction with the rule of local governments although there were numerous factors that led to the initial protests, including issues with dictatorship, human rights violations, political corruption, economic decline, unemployment, and extreme poverty.

The main catalyst for the escalation of the protests is thought to have been the self-immolation of

Mohamed Bouazizi, an unemployed Tunisian, who was selling fruit at a roadside stand on December 17, 2010, when a municipal inspector confiscated his wares. An hour later Bouazizi doused himself with gasoline and set himself on fire. Bouazizi's death triggered a chain reaction in Arab nations, as his story was shared through social media. His story brought together various groups dissatisfied with the existing political systems, spurring the start of the Tunisian Revolution and ultimately the Arab Spring.

The Egyptian Revolution began on January 25, 2011, following the uprising in Tunisia and lasted for approximately 18 days consisting of demonstrations, marches, occupation of plazas, riots, non-violent civil resistance, civil disobedience, and strikes. Millions of protesters from a range of socio-economic and religious backgrounds demanded the overthrow of Egyptian President of 30 years, Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian protesters' grievances focused on legal and political issues, including police brutality, government corruption, state-of-emergency laws, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, as well as economic issues including high unemployment, food-price inflation and low wages.

During the uprising, Cairo was described as "a war zone" as violent clashes between security forces and protesters resulted in at least 846 people killed and over 6,000



injured. Protesters burned over 90 police stations. In response to the protests, the Egyptian government attempted, somewhat successfully, to eliminate the nation's Internet access in order to inhibit the protesters' ability to organize through social media. In response to mounting pressure, Mubarak announced he did not intend to seek re-election. On February 11, 2011, Vice President Omar Suleiman announced that Mubarak would resign as president, turning power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which would provide temporary military rule until elections could be held. In June of 2011 the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi narrowly won the election and was sworn into office.



The Egyptian government, however, continued to grapple over changes in the constitution as members of the Muslim Brotherhood pushed for more conservative laws, limiting the rights of minorities and closely linking governmental rule with the Islamic religion. Morsi's government encountered fierce opposition from secularists and members of the military, and mass protests broke out against his rule. On July 3, 2013, Morsi was deposed and the Minister of Defense, General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, became Egypt's de facto leader and was eventually elected president in 2014.

ARAB SPRING AFTERMATH

Excerpt from 'Arab Spring aftermath: Revolutions give way to violence' by Greg Botelho, CNN.com, March 28, 2015

It wasn't supposed to turn out like this. The Arab Spring was supposed to bring peace, democracy and stability to not only the nations where it took root, but also others around it in the Middle East and North Africa. It was supposed to usher in an end of violence and heavy-handed government tactics, just like it ushered out entrenched leaders. In short, it was supposed to mean a brighter future. Not more instability, not more violence, not fewer freedoms. But that's what happened, even if the level of unrest hasn't been even or universal. Here's a look at what's happened since.

Egypt: After Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned, the move was met with raucous celebration in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the hub of the protest movement. "God is great!" some chanted. For others, the mantra was, "Egypt is free!" But this freedom -- at least many protesters' idealistic vision of it -- didn't last. Yes, there was hope. That was especially true when Egyptians headed to the polls in the spring of 2012 to participate in an election in which, for the first time, people didn't know the outcome beforehand. "I am here to vote for the first time in my life," Nadia Fahmy, a 70-year-old grandmother, said then. "I want to see a new generation for my country. I want everything to change."



Mohamed Morsi, a top figure in the once banned Muslim Brotherhood, beat former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq with 51.7% of the vote to become president. A brand new constitution, approved by voters in a referendum, became law in December. Yet these seeming steps forward were overshadowed by simmering divisions within Egypt. These came to a boil in July 2013, when the North African nation's military toppled Morsi and put him under house arrest. Morsi's supporters called it a "coup;" his opponents called it a "correction." Morsi "did not achieve the goals of the people" and failed to meet the generals' demands that he share power with his opposition, Egypt's top military officer, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. This was followed by a broader crackdown on Morsi's backers and the military -- long a powerful force in Egypt -- taking more and more control. There would be another presidential election in Egypt, in spring 2014. By then, el-Sisi had gone from military general to presidential candidate. This time, there was no close race, as when Morsi won. The results were more reminiscent of Mubarak's days, with el-Sisi garnering more than 96% of the vote.

SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN THE ARAB SPRING

The significance of the role social media played during the Arab Spring is a controversial and hotly debated issue. Given that the protests took place both in countries with a very high level of Internet usage as well as in countries with some of the lowest Internet penetration levels in the world, the impact of social media was different in each particular country involved and cannot be cited as a unifying aspect. However, it is widely acknowledged that social networks played an important role in the rapid disintegration of at least two regimes in Tunisia and Egypt where websites such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have been instrumental in both the organization of protesters and the dissemination of information.

In Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi's self-sacrificing protest on December 17, 2010, which is thought to be the instigating factor in the start of the Tunisian Revolution and, ultimately, the Arab Spring, was caught on video and uploaded to a social media website. Cable network Al Jazeera then broadcast the footage and the news quickly reached a broader international audience. In Egypt, young, underemployed people learned of the events in Tunisia and took to the streets in protest, using social media to organize rallies and promote awareness under the guidance of Tunisian bloggers and cyber-activists. Protestors also used social media to alert mass media organizations in real time, broadcasting their actions of protest to the world. Activist and author Wael Ghonim helped to inspire protests through the creation of a Facebook page, called "We Are All Khaled Saeed," which he used to raise awareness of police brutality. The page was immensely popular, growing to over 200,000 members in a matter of months.

The governments of Tunisia and Egypt responded to this new revolutionary tactic by attempting to initiate blanket bans on the use of social media. While the Tunisian government blocked only certain websites, thought to be the hub of protest coordination, the Egyptian government went further, at first blocking both Facebook and Twitter, then on January 28, 2011, totally blocking the access to the Internet in the country. The Internet blackout in Egypt lasted five days, and instead of achieving its goal in stopping the protests, it fueled them.

Social networks were not the only instrument rebels used to coordinate their efforts and communicate. In the countries with the lowest Internet penetration, such as Yemen and Libya, where the reach of social media was not as prevalent, electronic media devices such as cell phones were very important in capturing video footage of the country's situation and then spreading the news about the protests to the outside world. In Egypt and Cairo particularly, the role of television was very significant as the cameras provided exposure and security. Some argue that the constant live coverage by Al Jazeera and other news agencies during the Egyptian Revolution prevented mass violence by the Egyptian government in Tahrir Square.

ARAB SPRING - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What factors led to the Arab Spring? Have any of these issues been resolved?
2. Why was the role of social media and other online platforms important in the events of the Arab Spring?
3. Can you relate the Arab Spring to any other historical revolutions? What are the similarities and differences?
4. Can real change be brought about by non-violent demonstrations or is violence necessary as a catalyst for revolution?
5. What power do you hold as a young person in the United States to inspire or mobilize change?

2). THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

(an Excerpt from Portland Stage PlayNotes for *Veils*, Season 40 Issue 05)

Over 1,400 years ago in the Valley of Abraham, an unusual merchant lived in the ancient city of Mecca. The merchant became wealthy early in life because of good family connections and intelligently used this wealth to build a thriving caravan trade. She was also generous with her wealth, using it to clothe and feed the poor as well as care for her family. It was not the merchant's intelligence, wealth, or even charity that was unusual, but that the merchant was a woman. This merchant lived in a time when women, considered little more than possessions themselves, were forbidden from inheriting property. She was a twice-widowed, 40-year-old mother named Khadija, and was soon to become the first convert to Islam. As the first wife to the Prophet Muhammad, she was known as the "Mother of the Believers." Their 25-year-long union is seen today as a romantic love story, built upon mutual devotion and respect.

In *Veils*, Samar talks about Khadija with deep respect and admiration, noting that she was a successful businesswoman who did not wear a veil. For Samar, a young woman raised in a nation where women are regularly degraded, denied an education, and sexually harassed, Khadija acts as her feminist, Islamic role model. Because Egypt is predominantly an Islamic nation, though, Samar associates the religion that she practices and loves with her own subjugation. Conversely, Intisar, a dedicated American Muslim looking to develop her knowledge of her religion and the Quran by studying in Cairo, is shocked when she first experiences Samar's world of severe gender discrimination. Some of the forms of discrimination that Samar and Intisar encounter in *Veils*—the abuse of women, forced veiling and seclusion, and limiting girls' educational opportunities—are attributed by many Islamic scholars today to religious misappropriations used to benefit existing social, political, and cultural power structures.



Arabia, an unforgiving, harsh desert, was populated by sparse settlements and nomadic tribes before Islam. These tribes customarily practiced the horrifying act of female infanticide—the murder of newborn girls. Wiebke Walther explains in *Women of Islam* that the custom of female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia was caused by "fear as result of poverty, or more precisely, dire need." Women—prohibited from warfare, forbidden from entering most occupations, and banned from inheriting property—were seen as unequal contributors to the survival of the tribe and family. A female child was consequently a blight upon the family honor, and a hindrance more than a blessing. It is no wonder, then, that the men of Medina were furious when Muhammad declared, in accordance with his revelations, that women were of spiritual and worldly equality with men. In accordance with the Quran, the men of Medina argued that women were assigned specific gender roles and duties, separate yet equal and of "complimentary" measure. Banning infanticide, enabling women to keep their dowries for personal use, forbidding forced marriage, and legalizing the inheritance by women of property, Mohammed set unprecedented measures for female rights. Though women were still at an unequal economic disadvantage, these measures enacted by Mohammed are still balanced by the gender responsibility of men to provide for women.

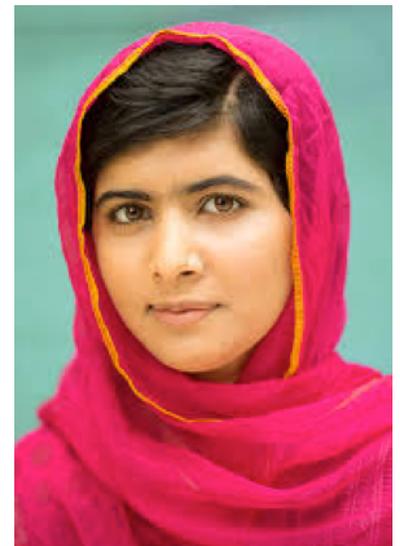
At its founding, Islam was unlike its fellow Abrahamic religions, at the forefront of progressive gender equality. We are thus confronted with this conundrum: for many, Islam as a religion has come to be intrinsically connected with the degradation of women. However, as Wiebke Walther finds, the precepts and tenets of Islam honor women and stress their equality with men.

Reflecting upon Muhammad's life and legacy, religious leaders, scholars and political figures began to interpret the hadiths of Muhammad and started to use the Quran to disenfranchise women. Largely attributed to Islam's encounters with Mediterranean and Persian societies where the seclusion and veiling of women were customary, to the point of acceptance. Muslim women were in effect, forced to veil and restricted often from public; unfortunate consequences that persist now in some areas of the Middle East. Muhammad's progressive leadership afforded women the choice to veil. Much controversy centers on Muhammad's later marriages, specifically citing as concerning the polygamous nature of the unions. The flip side here is that many scholars agree that the marriages were vital to cultivating the political ties that allowed Islam to blossom and expand. The verse of

hijab in the Quran (33:53) unambiguously singles out Muhammad’s wives and is preceded in the same Surah with the reminder that his wives were “not like anyone among women” (33:32).

Throughout *Veils*, the details behind Intisar and Samar’s debates stem from veiling. Activists seek to ban veils for the sake of “true freedom of decision in the matter,” free from the fear of social stigma and other repercussions traditionally present. Dr. Saadawi, an activist in favor of a veil ban, has encountered opposition of his views, pointing out that removing the right to veil is just as terrible as enforcing it. In *Veils*, this fight is personified by the characters of Intisar and Samar—Samar’s self-perceived progressive view of veils is in direct juxtaposition to Intisar’s more conservative views of veils with specific ties to religion. Observation of the conflict also sheds light on the belief that women who veil as a form of protection and cultural connection would be stripped of the right, ultimately preventing them from seeking other societal rights. In an interview with Isobel Coleman for her book, *Paradise Beneath Her Feet*, Jawhar said that when she’s traveling outside of her country, she chooses to wear the hijab because “her interpretation of religion just requires her to cover her hair and dress modestly.” However, when in Saudi Arabia, Jawhar wears the niqab out of choice, to show her fellow women that the niqab “shouldn’t be a hindrance. It shouldn’t prevent them from following their dreams. It shouldn’t veil their minds.”

In the Middle East and predominantly Islamic countries in Africa, there are many activists such as these pushing for women’s education and equal rights. There are many hadiths purporting Muhammad’s support for women’s education, including the often repeated “Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim,” as recorded by Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn-Majah. In the early Islamic era, women routinely received a religious and secular education. However, as Coleman explains, beginning in the 16th century “states began to formalize their religious education programs and women were largely excluded . . . Women became marginalized from centers of Islamic learning.” Since that time, education for women has been on a heavy decline in many predominantly Islamic nations. Women are severely undereducated when compared to their male counterparts. Activists argue this keeps women ignorant and at a severe economic disadvantage. On October 9, 2012, while on her way home from school, one 15-year-old girl was shot in the head by the Taliban. The girl became famous overnight, as a media storm blew up around the Pakistani girl from Swat Valley who had dared to defy the Taliban’s bans against women’s education. When the girl, Malala Yousafzai, boldly took to the podium on her 16th birthday months later on July 12, 2013, she called upon the specially convened United Nations Youth Assembly:



“So let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism and let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world.” Malala Yousafzai has since started the Malala Foundation Fund for schools, and has been honored as the youngest ever Nobel Prize Laureate, awarded the Peace Prize in 2014.

As we’ve seen, there are many religious scholars and activists who claim that the discrimination and subjugation of Muslim women that has persisted in many parts of the Middle East and Islamic countries in Africa. It is a result not of Islam as a religion, but of clashes with other cultures and the desire to maintain patriarchal power structures. In their arguments, they’ve singled out strong women and men throughout Islamic tradition and history who have struggled in and continue the battle for their equality and human rights. It is in this complex world that we find Samar and Intisar in *Veils*, fighting for their own freedom as women, at the beginning of one of the greatest Arab uprisings of the century.

3). GENDER EQUITY AROUND THE WORLD

(an Excerpt from Portland Stage Playnotes for *Veils*, Season 40 Issue 05)

Tom Coash's *Veils* depicts a world seen through the eyes of two young women, Intisar and Samar, who debate among other things the freedom of expression and the equal rights of women. Outside of the play, prominent debates over what constitutes equal rights for women exist in countries all over the world. These debates are further fueled by the question of what role both government and religious beliefs should play. As illustrated by the characters in *Veils*, gender equity differs from culture to culture. Apart from their conflicting personal views, Intisar, an African-American Muslim from Philadelphia, and Samar, an Egyptian Muslim living in Cairo, present a direct representation of how cultural relativity affects their individual views on the topic.



Within the United States, gender equity has set a high precedent for the rest of the world, presenting in a very broad sense a level playing field for men and women. The U.S. has quite a distance to go as evidenced in workplace discrimination, the concept of the “glass ceiling,” and, more specifically, in Sheryl Sandberg’s 2013 *Lean In*. Beyond discrimination in the workplace, debates over women’s reproductive rights still plague the United States. Individual state jurisdiction still impacts who should have say over a woman’s body with some states still attempting to eliminate public funding of Planned Parenthood’s efforts, specifically services that attempt to achieve gender equity, as granted in the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision of *Roe v. Wade*. Throughout the United States, however, the discussion of gender equity exists in public forums, including classrooms, and this alone maintains a level of equality absent in many other societies.

In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Preserving this mission to “condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, and agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women,” UN Women is a unit of the United Nations that was created to achieve the goals of this convention and works to aid women around the globe and monitor the status of gender equality. In addition, the organization promotes the end of violence against women and the issue of sexism around the world.

Evidenced in *Veils*, Intisar encounters a horrifying act of sexism when, dressed in her Niqab, she is met by men who grope and grab at her. Equally as startling to her is Samar’s modern response: “this is a big problem in Egypt. I think they watch too much American TV.” The concept of cultural relativity is again presented here through the differing responses of the characters. Though these two women have personal reactions to this gender discrimination, it is important to understand how the many cultures of the world can coexist before any type of international standard for gender equity can be created.



In conjunction with the concept of cultural relativity, a theme rooted in anthropology, is the idea of preserving tradition. Cultural relativity suggests that an individual’s beliefs must be contextualized in the culture from where they originate. As aforementioned, the United States’ ideas of gender equity are far more progressive than that of Egypt. Egypt’s shifting government over the past decade has favored the male gender, utilizing the concept of sharia law – the Islamic set of laws from the Quran – which allow men to stay in power and that more favorably (as much as doubly) weigh the value of a man’s testimony over that of a woman’s. Think of the example from *Veils* of Intisar’s aspiration to one day lead the *adhan*, or call to prayer. Samar almost insensitively scoffs at her goal, reminding Intisar that she still has to use the back door to enter the mosque and that during prayer she must remain behind the men so as not to ‘distract’ them. More explicit is the example of Samar’s character undergoing the “virginity test,” a terror tactic used by police to examine women to see if they are

virgins, sometimes followed by rape. In 2011, the most famous prosecuted case of the “virginity test” involved Dr. Adel El Mogy who performed said test on Samira Ibrahim, but was exonerated of all charges. Though changes are being made to match Western standards of gender equity, there is much progress to be made in Egypt.

The Gender Inequality Index as reformatted in 2010 by the UN Development Programme, is an index of measurement for gender disparity. The index is a composite measure which captures the loss of achievement within a country due to gender inequality. It uses three dimensions to do so: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation. In 2011, the imbalance of women in government was quite prominent, specifically in Tunisia where the Arab Spring began. Taking strides to correct the imbalance the constitution of Tunisia, as ratified on January 27, 2014, guarantees equal representation of men and women in legislative assemblies; empowerment. Unfortunately, the clause initially received backlash from groups who disliked the belief that women are not already equal and others who believe men are now at risk because of this clause. Though the document in question is “bound to make history” according to Naveena Kottoor, a Tunisian journalist, she also informs that “large parts of the Tunisian public remain unconvinced that this constitution will actually make a difference to their lives.” A huge step in any case for women’s rights in Africa toward the Western standard of gender equity.



As expressed through the study of cultural relativity, one must absorb the notion that a person must contextualize his beliefs within the culture from where they are based. In applying this concept to that theory of gender equity, it is important to understand that different standards of equality are applied in many different cultures. In India, women are susceptible to horrifying acts of violence enacted by men within a culture that accepts a hierarchy that is unheard of in Western cultures. Though views are changing with every new incident, cultures heavily rooted in tradition do not always agree with the Western standard of gender equity. In Saudi Arabia, the culture of male dominated leadership is a tradition driven by a strict interpretation of the Quran and a culture that is unwilling to be dismissed.

Understanding different standards of gender equity through the lens of cultural relativity is important when examining the status of women in the world. Take, for instance, the concept of female leaders within the United States. The Fortune Magazine 2014 study of the Most Powerful Women in Business found that half of the top 50 included in the list ran large corporations such as IBM, General Motors, PepsiCo and Hewlett-Packard. Additionally, eight of the top ten Most Powerful Women in Business lead large industrial, tech and consumer products companies—a shift from the previously dominant creative fields such as advertising, media and publishing. As evidenced in this study, attitudes and perceptions shift over time. Intisar and Samar of *Veils* do their part in shifting their own beliefs to understand that of their counterpart; however, the questions remain: what does it mean to be a Muslim woman in today’s society? What roles do women play in the changing landscape of the world? Though these questions remain unanswered, *Veils* provokes the discussion – how are things changing in our society and in the world at large?

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Excerpt from “French Muslims Say Veil Bans Give Cover to Bias” - NYTimes.com 5/28/2015

WISSOUS, France — Malek Layouni was not thinking about her Muslim faith, or her head scarf, as she took her excited 9-year-old son to an amusement site near Paris. But, as it turned out, it was all that mattered. Local officials blocked her path to the inflatable toys on a temporary beach, pointing at regulations that prohibit dogs, drunks and symbols of religion. And that meant barring women who wear head scarves. Mrs. Layouni still blushes with humiliation at being turned away in front of friends and neighbors, and at having no answer for her son, who kept asking her, “What did we do wrong?” More than 10 years after France passed its first anti-veil law restricting young girls from wearing *Veils*

in public schools, the head coverings of observant Muslim women, from colorful silk scarves to black chadors, have become one of the most potent flash points in the nation's tense relations with its vibrant and growing Muslim population. Mainstream politicians continue to push for new measures to deny veiled women access to jobs, educational institutions and community life. They often say they are doing so for the benefit of public order or in the name of *laïcité*, the French term for the separation of church and state. But critics say these efforts, rather than promoting a sense of secular inclusion, have encouraged rampant discrimination against Muslims in general and veiled women in particular. The result has been to fuel a sense among many Muslims that France — which celebrates Christian holidays in public schools — is engaging in a form of state racism.

The ban, some critics argue, also plays into the hands of Islamists, who are eager to drive a deeper wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims in the West. So far, France has passed two laws, one in 2004 banning veils in public elementary and secondary schools, and another, enacted in 2011, banning full face veils, which are worn by only a tiny portion of the population. But observant Muslim women in France, whose head coverings can vary from head scarves tied loosely under the chin to tightly fitted caps and wimple-like scarves that hide every strand of hair, say the constant talk of new laws has made them targets of abuse, from being spat at to having their veils pulled or being pushed when they walk on the streets. In some towns, mothers wearing head scarves have been prevented from picking up their children from school or from chaperoning class outings. One major discount store has been accused of routinely searching veiled customers. Some women have even been violently attacked. In Toulouse recently, a pregnant mother wearing a head scarf had to be hospitalized after being beaten on the street by a young man who called her a “dirty Muslim.” Statistics collected by the National Observatory Against Islamophobia, a watchdog group, show that in the last two years 80 percent of the anti-Muslim acts involving violence and assault were directed at women, most of them veiled.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do perceived gender roles affect our beliefs about what women's abilities and what women should or should not be allowed to do in a society?
2. What factors influence a society's view of the differences between the sexes? Should there be one standard for gender equality throughout the world?
3. How might banning the practice of wearing veils limit women's rights in the same way as requiring women to wear a veil?

LESSON PLANS

Pre-Show Lesson for *Veils*

STEREOTYPES: The two characters in *Veils* come from very different but interconnected worlds. Before they meet for the first time, each girl has a pre-conceived idea of what the other will be like based on inherent cultural assumptions or stereotypes, but they soon discover that the reality is much different than what they had expected. This lesson will give a brief introduction to the characters of *Veils* by examining the role that stereotypes play in shaping our identities.

QUESTION: What role do stereotypes play in shaping our identities?

DIRECTIONS:

Opening Activity:

1. Give each student a blank sheet of paper and ask them to draw or trace the outline of a human figure.
2. Ask them to identify in writing (or represent by drawing) the following attributes for themselves:
 - **On the outside of the outlined figure:**
 - The following descriptive features: nationality (current and ancestral), race, religion, gender, and age
 - 4-5 nouns that might be used to label who you are (i.e. student, cheerleader, sister, etc.)
 - 3-4 adjectives other people might use to describe you
 - Something someone might assume about you based on those descriptions
 - **On the inside of the outlined figure:**
 - 3-4 adjectives you would use to describe yourself
 - 2-3 values or beliefs that are important to you
 - A goal or a dream of yours
 - Something most people don't know about you, but you wish they did
3. Invite (*but don't require*) students to share what they wrote/drew and what they learned about themselves. As a class answer the following questions:
 - What conflicts have you identified between the way other people view you and the person you know yourself to be?
 - How much of what other people say/think about you is based on superficial qualities?
 - How have you been stereotyped and what have you done to discourage (or encourage) that stereotype?
 - What commonalities do you see among the students? What differences?

Main Activity:

1. Split the class into small groups of 3-4, and give each group a blank sheet of paper as well as one of the following character descriptions:
 - **Intisar** - Female, African-American Muslim, 20-23 years old, wears a veil (hijab) that is wrapped snugly around her head covering her hair but not her face. "Inti" is a strong-willed, intelligent, passionate young woman who is doing a year abroad at the American Egyptian University, a Middle-Eastern/Religious Studies major.
 - **Samar** - Female, Egyptian Muslim, 20-23 years old, does not wear a veil. Samar dresses in chic, western clothes, modestly dressed when she goes out, not so modest at home or

among friends. She often wears a NY Yankees baseball hat. She is also a student at AEU, studying journalism. Well off, cosmopolitan, speaks Arabic, French and English. Friendly, outgoing.

2. Ask the students to repeat the same exercise for their assigned character by identifying the following attributes:
 - **To the best of your knowledge, on the outside of the outlined figure identify:**
 - The following descriptive features: nationality (current and ancestral), race, religion, gender, and age
 - 4-5 nouns that might be used to label this character (i.e. student, cheerleader, etc.)
 - 3-4 adjectives other people might use to describe him or her
 - Something someone might assume about you based on those descriptions
 - Using your imagination, on the inside of the outlined figure identify:
 - 3-4 adjectives this character might use to describe themselves
 - 2-3 values or beliefs that are important to him or her
 - A goal or a dream this character might have
 - A secret this character keeps hidden
3. Ask the groups to hang their character portraits on the wall and allow them to walk around and look at the work of the other groups. If time allows, students may also add to the other groups' portraits.
 - When everyone has had a chance to look over all of the portraits as the students to reflect on the following:
 - What commonalities do we see among these characters? What differences?
 - What is the difference between the way these characters view themselves and the way they are viewed by others?
 - How do stereotypes affect the way these characters are viewed by others?
 - What role do stereotypes play in the creation of our identities?
 - Are stereotypes always harmful or in what ways might they be useful or productive?
 - How are stereotypes connected to discrimination?

POST-SHOW LESSON PLAN FOR VEILS

DEBATE: In *Veils*, the main two characters represent different sides of a controversial debate: should women in the Islamic culture be allowed or required to wear *Veils*? This is a question both of personal choice and religious freedom, where in some countries women have required to wear veils regardless of their personal beliefs and in others the practice has been banned. Both situations represent a dangerous limitation to personal freedoms and a limitation on women's rights. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to explore this issue as described by the characters in *Veils*.

QUESTION: Why is the practice of Veiling controversial?

Directions:

1. Split the class into groups of 3-4, and have each group represent one of the following viewpoints:
 - The choice to wear a veil should be left up to the individual and not regulated in any way by government or religious authorities.
 - Certain types of veils, such as the Burqua, that cover a person entirely, should be banned due to the danger they pose to public and personal safety.

- Islamic countries that follow conservative religious laws should be allowed to require women to wear veils and be subject to penalties for failure to do so.
2. Each group should come up with one main argument and at least three textual supports for that argument based on the evidence provided by the characters in *Veils* in defending their decision to either wear or not wear a veil.
 3. Each group will have 2-3 minutes to make their first (introductory) argument. The introduction should list three main points that will be discussed throughout the debate to illustrate the main argument.
 4. Each group will then have 2 minutes to come up with a rebuttal, which they will present to the other group.

RULES FOR THE DEBATE: The debate is not meant to lead to the declaration of a winner, but rather to create an opportunity for discourse and allow for all three viewpoints to be examined with respect for religious and culture traditions. Encourage students to not to shut down each other's ideas, but rather listen, respond and ask questions with the goal of gaining a full understanding of the other side of other argument.

REFLECTION:

As a class discuss the following:

- Which side do you feel had the stronger argument and why?
- Do you feel that you stated your case clearly? Why or why not?
- What was it like to listen to the arguments of the opposing side?
- Why do you think that this is a controversial issue?
- Do you see any room for compromise in finding a solution that would satisfy all sides?

Further Discussion Questions for Veils

1. Why might theatre be a useful medium for raising awareness for issues related to foreign religions or cultures?
2. How do our cultural backgrounds shape our perception of the world, for better and for worse?
3. How has the increased use of social media changed our awareness and understanding of world events and politics?
4. How does public activism inform and influence change in a society?
5. Does living in a country where you are provided with personal freedoms necessarily mean that you can always choose freely? Do outside influences affect our choices in positive as well as negative ways?
6. How do stereotypes influence how we perceive people from different ethnic groups? Is it possible to have no bias of any kind?

Glossary of Terms

AL AZHAR: The most important mosque and Muslim university in Egypt. Founded in 970 by Shiite Muslims, students study Islamic Law, Theology, and Linguistics.

AL-QAEDA: An Islamist organization founded by radical extremist Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s.

ANGELA DAVIS: (b. 1944) A radical African-American political and social activist, a key figure in the American Civil Rights Movement. Most active in the 1960s, Davis was a member of the communist party and linked to the Black Panther Party, although not an official member.

FATWA: A legal opinion or ruling issued by an Islamic scholar. In recent years, the term “fatwa” has been widely used to indicate that a death sentence has been dealt to someone or some group of people, although this is not always an accurate representation of the term.

FOLL (FOAL): Also known as Arabian Jasmine, this small, white flower has a sweet smell and is often used as the chief ingredient in perfumes and teas. In some Middle Eastern countries, the flower is sprinkled on a child’s head on his or her first birthday.

FREEDOM RIDERS: The Freedom Riders of 1961 were a group of civil rights activists from the Northern United States who rode busses into the South to protest oppressive and inhumane Jim Crow laws.

GALABEYA: A traditional, loose-fitting, Egyptian garment that is native to the Nile River region, worn by both men and women.

HAJ: A pillar of the Islamic religion that dictates a pilgrimage of faith to Mecca.

IMAM: A spiritual, and sometimes political, leader in the Muslim community. The Imam leads Muslim congregations in prayer, and often gives moral judgment in difficult situations that occur in the community.

NILE RIVER: A major river in northeastern Africa, generally regarded as the longest river in the world.

MINARET: From the Arabic word manara which means “lighthouse,” a minaret is a tower that protrudes from every mosque. From this tower, the muezzin recites the call to prayer five times a day.

PUBLIC ENEMY: One of the most influential rap and hip-hop groups from the 1980s. The music of Public Enemy tended to be political and spoke to the urban black experience, addressing social problems and advocating social activism.

SHEIKH: A teacher in a mosque, an Islamic teacher often literally translated as “elder.” The title is considered honorable by devout Muslims. Traditionally, the Sheikh has received training specific to Islam at a university or mosque.

MOSQUE: The building in which Muslims worship God. The mosque is the center of Muslim culture. In Muslim countries, such as Egypt, mosques may be found on almost every street corner, making it easy for Muslims to observe the five daily prayer rituals. In the Western world where there are fewer mosques, they also become Islamic community centers.

MUEZZIN: A Muslim member of the mosque who is responsible for reciting the call to prayer five times per day.

MOHAMMED BOUAZIZI: (1984-2011) A young Tunisian street vendor whose vegetable cart was repeatedly confiscated by local law enforcement. On December 17, 2010, when his cart was confiscated, he paid the fine to reclaim it, but was denied restitution and harassed by police. When Bouazizi tried to complain at provincial headquarters, he was refused an audience. At 11:30 AM, Bouazizi set himself on fire, initiating popular street protests in Tunisia.

SUFI: A member of the mystical sect of Islam known as Sufiism. Practicing a form of meditation known as “dhikr,” Sufis chant divine names in order to heighten their faith.

UMM KULTHUM: (1898-1975) One of the most beloved Egyptian pop-culture figures, Umm Kulthum was a singer whose career began in the 1930s and spanned over thirty years. As a female Egyptian singer, Umm Kuthum’s music became a symbol of Arab nationalism and pride.

ZEBIBAH/“MARK OF GOD”: A zebibah, also often referred to as the “third eye of Islam” is a mark on the forehead of some Muslims, due to the repeated contact with the prayer mat during the five daily prayers.

Translation of Arabic Terms

Translations by Tom Coash

- ABADAN:** (AH-ba-dan) never
AFWAN: (AF-wan) you're welcome
AHWA: (AH'-wah): coffee house/cafe
AHLAN WA-SAHLAN: (AH-lan wa-SAH-lan)
Greetings!
AIWA: (AY-wah) yes
ALF FI SHUKR: (alf-fee-shuk-er)
a thousand thanks
AL HUB AL MUSTAHEEL: (amoo-stah-HEEL)
Impossible love
AMREEKA: (am-REE-ka) America
AMLAH EH?: (AAM-lah eh?) What's up?
ANA LA ATE HA: I found her
ANA ASFA: (A-na AS-fah) I'm sorry
ASAL: (AH-SAL):
honey, a slang term for a pretty woman
ASHEN: (AHH-shen) because
AWEE: (AH-wee) very
BAB AL MATAR: (bab al MA-tar)
In front of the door
BALADI: (ba-LAH-dee)
people from the country, hicks
BAZZAPT: (baz-ZAPT) Exactly
BAZZAPT A KIDDA: (baz-ZAPT a KID-da)
exactly this way
BUKRA: (BUK with long u-ra) tomorrow
DAYKHA: (DAY-kha) dizzy
ENTI FEYN?: (EN-tee feyn) Where are you?"
ET TANI: (eh TAHN-nee) What else?
FEE EH?: What is it?
FEE WAH FEE: It is what it is.
FEE-HIM-TEE?: Understand?
FEYN: (fayn -long a) where?
FU GUSITI: Over my dead body
GAMEELA: (ga-MEE-la) beautiful
GIDDA: (GID-da) grandmother
GIDDAN: (GID-dan) very, a lot
HABIPTY: (ha-BIP-tee) darling, to a woman
HELWA: (HELL-wa) sweet or pretty
HOMEER: (ho-MAR) donkeys
IL HAMDU LILAH: (ill HAM-du li-LAH)
Thanks to God
IMSHEE: (IM-shee)
an insulting way to say "get away"
ISHTA: (ISH-tah)
cream; slang for the ultimate best
IT FIDALLI: (it fi-DAL-li)
please take this, this is a gift
IZAYIK?: (iz-ZEY-ik) "How are you?"
KHALASS: (kha-LAAS) Enough
KWAY-YISSA: Good (feminine)
LA': (la with a glottal stop at the end) no
LAKIN: (LAYK-in): but, however
LEYH: Why?
LEYH LA?: Why not?
LEYH, LEYH YA-ROOBBY?: Why, why O God?!
MA-A-LISCH:
slang for "It doesn't matter", "No big deal"
MABSOOTA: (maab-SOOT-tah) happy
MARHABA: (mar-HA-bah) Welcome!
MAGANEEN AWEE: (mahg-NOON OW-ee)
They are crazy
MASICA: (ma-SEE-ka): music
MESHIE: (MESH-ee): Ok
MESHIE KHALASS: (MESH-ee KHA-laass)
ok, enough
MIN EL ALB LILALB: (min el alb lil-alb):
From heart to heart
MINFADLIK: (min-FAAD-lick) please
MISH FAHMA: (mish FAH-ma) I don't understand
MISH KIDDA: (mish KID-dah) Isn't it this way?
MISH MA-OOL: (mish ma-OOL) Unbelievable
MISH MUMKIN: (mish MUM-kin)
not possible, impossible
MISH MUSHKILLA: (mish Muush-KILL-a)
No problem.
MUMTEZ: (mum-TEZ) Excellent!
SABAH IL KHEYR: (sa-BAH il KHEYR)
Good morning
SABAH IL NOOR: (sa-BAH il NOOR)
morning of light
SABAH IL FOLL: (sa-BAH il FOLL)
morning of flowers.
SHAHTRAH AWEE: (SHAH-trah AH-wee)
clever girl
SHUKRAN: (SHUK-ran) thank you
STANNI: (STAN-nee) just a minute
SHEWAYA: (Sheh-WHY-a) a little
STANNI SHEWAYA: (STAN-naa sheh-WHY-a)
wait a moment
TABAN: (TA-ban) of course
TAYTA: Grandmother
WALA HAGA: (wa-la HA-ga) nothing
WAHID..ITNEEN..TALETA!: One..two..three!
WALLAHEE: (wal-LA-hee) Really?
WE-HISH: (WEH-hish short i): ugly
WENTI?: (wen-tee?) And you?
YALLA: (YALL-la) slang for "hurry, let's go!"
YAHK SAARA: (yukh-SAAH-rah) What a pity
YANNI: (YAHN-nee) common slang word that is
used in the same way as the American use of
the word "like"

Educator Evaluation

Please rate your experience of the following:

	GREAT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
The Play (characters, plot, dialogue)				
The Production (design, direction, performances)				
Your experience at the theatre				
Talkback (if applicable)				
Study guide				
Your students' response to the play				
In-school workshop (if applicable)				

1) What was the most valuable part of this experience for your students?

2) What other of theatre arts programming would you like your students to be able to participate in?

3) Further comments or questions?

Please send your evaluation to:
Education Department / Barrington Stage Company
58 Union Street / Pittsfield, MA 01201

Student Evaluation

Please rate your experience of the following:

	GREAT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
The Play (characters, plot, dialogue)				
The Production (design, direction, performances)				
Your experience at the theatre				
Talkback (if applicable)				
In-school workshop (if applicable)				

1. What was your favorite part of *Veils*?

**2. Do you feel that this would be an important play for students your age to see?
Why or why not?**

3. Further comments or questions?

Please send your evaluation to:
Education Department / Barrington Stage Company
58 Union Street / Pittsfield, MA 01201