

LA Opera Das Rheingold Lesson Plan: The Ring Musical Bingo

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Subjects: Literature, Music, Art

GRADE 5

This lesson is easily modified for higher grades. Suggestion for higher grades, or classes with music background: have the students write down the notation as well as sing it as a class.

3.0. LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS: Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature. They begin to find ways to clarify the ideas and make connections between literary works. The selections in *Recommended Readings in Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight* illustrate the quality

Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text:

3.4. Understand that theme refers to the meaning or moral of a selection, and recognize themes whether implied or stated directly in sample works

3.5. Describe the function and effect of key literary devices (e.g., imagery, metaphor, symbolism)

Literary Criticism:

3.6. Evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols that are found in myth and tradition by using literature from different eras and cultures (Reader Response)

Visual and Performing Arts Standards

Music

1.4 Analyze the use of music elements in aural examples from various cultures.

3.5 Identify different or similar uses of musical elements in music from diverse cultures.

Classroom/Teacher Prep

1. Copies of Worksheet A, B, C, D
2. Internet connection with speakers to play audio from the Internet.
3. Color pencils.
4. Gold coin candy or other prizes.

Goals & Objectives

1. Allow students to brainstorm on the topic of Language and Function of Music.

2. Allow students to write a story in journals that mirrors the ideas they hear in the music.
3. Introduce students to the opera: *Das Rheingold*.
4. Introduce students to the idea of Leitmotif and Themes in music.
5. Allow students to hear musical examples from the opera.
6. Allow students to visualize the musical ideas further by writing down/drawing ideas into Bingo- Chart.
7. Allow the students to recall and identify the musical ideas heard in a game of Bingo.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will guide the students in a class discussion on the Language and Function of Music, **Worksheet A**.
2. The teacher will allow students to listen to musical samples from *Das Rheingold* and ask the students to make journal entries and write short stories that they believe represent the music that they are listening to.
 - a. Suggested listening:
 - i. Transformation Music
 - ii. Prelude
3. The class will have a discussion on how musical themes or ideas in the music influenced students' stories.
4. The teacher will pass out **Worksheet B Das Rhinegold Synopsis**. The class will read the synopsis of *Das Rhinegold* by Wagner.
5. The teacher will discuss the opera. Wagner's opera is based on German myths. What is unique about music composed by Wagner, is his use of "leitmotifs." The teacher will give the definition of leitmotifs and use previous musical example(s) to demonstrate.

Leitmotif Definition:

A **leitmotif** (also spelled **leitmotiv**) is a recurring [musical](#) theme, associated within a particular piece of music with a particular person, place or idea. The word has also been used by extension to mean any sort of recurring theme, whether in music, [literature](#), or the life of a fictional character or a real person. The German word *Motiv* is borrowed from the French *motif*, meaning motive or theme. Prefixing it with Leit- (coming from [G. leiten](#), to lead), produces *Leitmotiv* (G. [pl.](#) Leitmotive), meaning "lead motif". A **leitmotif** is usually a short [melody](#), although it can also be a [chord progression](#) or even a simple [rhythm](#). Leitmotifs can help to bind a work together into a coherent whole, and also enable the composer to relate a story without the use of words, or to add an extra level to an already present story. The word is usually used when talking about dramatic works, especially [operas](#), although leitmotifs are also used in other musical genres, such as instrumental pieces or video game music as well.

(Definition taken from: <http://www.onpedia.com/encyclopedia/Leitmotif>)

6. The teacher will guide the students through a **Listening Guide** of *Das Rheingold*.
7. The teacher will show and emphasize samples of music that represent characters-objects-places in the story.
8. As the teacher is doing the Listening Guide, the class individually will be creating a **Worksheet C: Bingo Chart** using the **Necessary Themes List, Worksheet D**. They will draw or write ideas that will remind them of the themes that represent each character-object-place.
9. After the presentation, the class will play Musical Bingo using the charts they have created.
10. Optional: The winners will receive gold coin candy!

Assessment:

1. Students will be able to discuss the Language and Function of Music.
2. Students will be able to write stories that demonstrate musical ideas.
3. Students will be able to visualize the musical examples on paper.
4. Students will be able to play Bingo and be able to recall the musical examples.

Worksheet A - The Language and Function of Music

*Why do we listen to music?

*What kind of music is good music?

*How does the “good” music make us feel?

*Does the music we listen to reflect our personality?

*Does the music we listen to affect our mood? Can you give an example?

*How similar or different is the music at the movies or the theater to the music that we listen to during our free time?

*How does the music in the theater/movies make us feel? Does it help us to understand the story/character/plot? What does it do? Can you give examples?

Worksheet B

Synopsis of *Das Rheingold* from LA Opera Website:

<http://www.laopera.com/production/0809/rheingold/synopsis.aspx>

Scene 1

The three Rhinemaidens, guardians of the river's golden treasure, laugh and play, scarcely noticing the Nibelung Alberich. The lustful Alberich tries, with no avail, to catch the Rhinemaidens as they dart through the waters, taunting him. Suddenly sunlight illuminates the river's treasure, the Rhinegold. The Rhinemaidens explain that this gold is all-powerful: if fashioned into a ring, its wearer would rule the world. But, they insist that the gold is safe, since whoever would steal the treasure must renounce love. Hearing this secret, Alberich renounces love and escapes with the Rhinegold. The waters are plunged into darkness as the Rhinemaidens lament their loss.

Scene 2

As the sun rises, Fricka and Wotan are asleep on a mountaintop, while their new home, the fortress Valhalla, gleams in the distance. When they awaken, Wotan hails Valhalla as the fulfillment of his dreams. Fricka reproaches her husband for having promised her sister Freia to the giants Fafner and Fasolt as payment for constructing the fortress. Wotan replies that he never meant to keep his word, and tells her that Loge will help the gods solve their dilemma. When Fafner and Fasolt arrive to claim Freia, Wotan protests that he made the pact in jest, informing them that they must settle for another fee. But, Fasolt, smitten with Freia, balks. Fafner, aware that the gods would lose their eternal youth and power without Freia's golden apples, decides to abduct her. As the giants drag Freia away, her brothers Froh and Donner attempt to thwart them. Wotan intervenes, reminding them that all treaties are guaranteed by the writings on his spear. Denied Freia's golden apples, the gods begin to weaken and age.

Loge, who helped Wotan draw up the contract with the Fafner and Fasolt, arrives and suggests that the giants might find the Rhinegold an acceptable substitute for Freia. He then relates how Alberich stole the gold, forging it into a ring in order to gain world dominance. Wotan is enthralled by the absolute power the ring imparts; Fricka is intrigued by its power to keep a philandering husband faithful, so she urges Wotan to obtain it. Loge suggests that Wotan steal the gold, as Alberich did, and restore it to the Rhinemaidens. Fafner, desiring the gold, advises Wotan to use his wits to gain the treasure. The giants leave, taking Freia hostage until evening, when they will return to claim the Nibelung's gold as ransom. Wotan asks Loge to accompany him to the nether world to seek Alberich's treasure.

Scene 3

In the dark underground caverns of Nibelheim, Alberich's slaves clang their anvils as they work on his gold. Wearing the all-powerful ring, Alberich torments his brother

Mime. Alberich tries on the Tarnhelm, the magical helmet Mime has forged, which can transform the wearer into any size or shape. Alberich uses the Tarnhelm to make himself invisible, thrashes Mime, and then vanishes to torment his slaves.

Wotan and Loge arrive and encounter Mime, who confesses that he had hoped to regain the ring he forged by using the Tarnhelm. Wotan and Loge offer to help the Nibelungs free themselves from Alberich's tyranny. Alberich returns, driving slaves bearing mounds of gold. He suspiciously questions Wotan and Loge, warning of his plan to overthrow the gods and rule the world. When Loge asks Alberich what would happen if someone stole the ring while he slept, the Nibelung extols the powers of the Tarnhelm. Loge asks for a demonstration, and Alberich transforms himself into a large serpent, then back again. Loge asks whether the Tarnhelm could also transform him into something small - a toad, for instance. When Alberich demonstrates this, Wotan traps him, and Loge seizes the Tarnhelm. Wotan and Loge bind Alberich and drag him to the surface of the earth.

Scene 4

Back on the mountaintop, Loge and Wotan tell Alberich that they will free him only if he yields his gold. Alberich feels sure that the ring will replenish his fortune, so he orders his slaves to surrender the gold to Wotan. Alberich asks for the return of the Tarnhelm, but Loge says the gods will keep it. Wotan also demands the ring as part of the booty, reminding Alberich that it was not rightfully his. Though Alberich replies that Wotan is as much a thief as he, Wotan tears the ring from Alberich's finger. As Loge frees Alberich, the Nibelung places a curse upon the ring: until it returns to him, trouble, envy, and death will befall all who possess it.

Alberich leaves as the other gods approach, followed by the giants with their hostage, Freia. Saddened at losing Freia, Fasolt agrees to accept the Nibelung gold only if it will hide Freia from his view. When all the gold is piled in front of Freia, Fafner complains that he can still see her hair, and demands that the Tarnhelm be added to the pile. Fasolt then complains that he can see the gleam of Freia's eye, so Fafner demands the ring, now on Wotan's finger. When Wotan refuses, the giants begin to seize Freia. Erda, the earth goddess, suddenly appears and warns Wotan to yield the ring, which spells doom for the gods. Wotan then surrenders the ring, and Freia is released. Fafner and Fasolt quarrel over their booty, and Fafner kills Fasolt, claiming the ring, the Tarnhelm, and the hoard for himself. Alberich's curse has taken effect.

Fricka urges Wotan to turn his thoughts to their new home. Donner summons lightning and thunder to form a rainbow bridge to the fortress. Noting how the setting sun gilds it, Wotan tells Fricka their abode is called Valhalla. Wotan leads the other gods—all except Loge, who claims that they are doomed—across the rainbow bridge. The Rhinemaidens, in the valley below, lament their lost treasure.

Worksheet C: Bingo Chart – Use each square to write down ideas or draw pictures that remind you of a particular theme that goes along with the specific character-object-place-event. Use the **Needed List of Themes** to make sure that you fill in all of the squares. Note: you do not have to draw all of the themes. There are 26 themes to choose from. Once you are done, you will have at least 9 of them represented in squares. However, make sure all of your squares are assigned and taken. Feel free to create a bigger version of this chart.

Worksheet D: LIST OF IMPORTANT THEMES

Instruction: Write down the important themes your teacher wants you to pay special attention to.