

# *Siegfried*

Lesson Plan: Looking at Siegfried Through Different Literary Theories  
*Written by Olga Bezrukova for L.A. Opera*

**Grades:** High school

**Subjects:** Literature, English, Philosophy, Theater

**Duration:** This lesson can be done in 2-3 class periods, depending on how much research time and prep time the groups need.

## **California State Board of Education**

*Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards Theater- Advanced*

1.3 Identify the use of metaphor, subtext, and symbolic elements in scripts and theatrical productions.

## **Connections and Applications**

5.1 Create projects in other school courses or places of employment, using tools, techniques, and processes from the study and practice of theatre, film/ video, and electronic media.

## *Language Arts Content*

Grade 11/12; 2.0

Students deliver polished formal and extemporaneous presentations that combine traditional rhetorical strategies of narration, exposition, persuasion and description. Student speaking demonstrates a command of standard American English and the organization and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0. Using the grades 11/12 speaking strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0, students:

- a. Explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns, using appropriate rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, description, exposition, persuasion).
- b. Draw comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes that illustrate the speaker's beliefs or generalizations about life.
- c. Maintain a balance between describing the incident and relating it to more general, abstract ideas.

Grade 11/12; 2.4 Deliver oral responses to literature:

- a. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the significant ideas of literary works (e.g., make assertions about the text that are reasonable and supportable).
- b. Analyze the imagery, language, universal themes, and unique aspects of the text through the use of rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, description, persuasion, exposition, a combination of those strategies).
- c. Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text or to other works.
- d. Demonstrate an awareness of the author's use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created.
- e. Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text.

## Preparation:

1. Copies of Synopsis, Worksheet A, Worksheet B, and (selected) Libretto.

## Goals & Objectives

1. The teacher will discuss the function of criticism.
2. The students will be introduced to *Siegfried*, an operatic drama by Richard Wagner.
3. As a class, the students will read the synopsis and understand the basic story line.
4. In groups, students will research different literary theories and use their research to analyze selected text.
5. Students will work as a group and present the theory assigned as well as use the given theory to analyze assigned text selection.
6. Students will present their topics to class.
7. Students will take notes on group presentations and use their notes to write an essay, demonstrating their understanding of many levels and ways to look at text.

## Procedure

1. The teacher will read *Siegfried* synopsis with the class and facilitate a discussion: Why is literary criticism important? How can we look at the same text from different perspectives? How can the same text have multiple layers of definition? (Note: For LA Opera Ring Synopsis, visit the website, where each synopsis is available individually: <http://laoperaring.com/operas.php> Direct link to *Siegfried*: <http://laoperaring.com/siegfried/synopsis.php> )
2. Teacher will divide the class into groups, and assign each group to a specific literary theory. The theories to include, depending on class size and teacher preference: Historical Biographical, Psychological (psychoanalytical), Mythological/Archetypal/Symbolic. ADDITIONAL THEORIES CAN INCLUDE: Cultural Materialism, Feminist Criticism, Lesbian/gay criticism, Postcolonial Criticism (**SEE ATTACHED GUIDE**) **NOTE TO THE TEACHER:** Do not feel obligated to include all of the theories. Choose the ones that you feel will benefit your students and class as a whole.
3. Teacher will give out **Worksheet A**, where each group will answer the questions by researching each one of the theories using internet and library.
4. Teacher will give out an assigned libretto text from *Siegfried*. (Note to teacher: Depending on your preference and the time you want to spend on this lesson plan, you may want to examine a section of the libretto, and use the synopsis as additional resource. There are different books/websites where the libretto can be found. Here is a link to a libretto in German/English: <http://www.rwagner.net/libretti/siegfried/e-t-sieg.html> ) A teacher guide to Worksheet A is available, and depending on the preference of the teacher, can be distributed to students.
5. Each of the groups will read assigned libretto section of *Siegfried*.
6. The teacher will instruct the students to read the selected text, and find examples of the theory they have been assigned.
7. The teacher will monitor progress of each of the groups as the students talk about their findings.
8. The group will prepare 8-10 minute presentation. In the presentation they will cover these topics:
  - a. Describe the theory they were assigned using **Worksheet A**.
  - b. Give an explanation on how this theory can be used to analyze the given text.
  - c. Give an analysis of the selected text using the assigned theory by providing at least one quote from text per each member of the group. (For example, if the group has four

members; there needs to be at least four quotes as examples, each person needs to talk at least about one of their chosen quotes.

- d. Explain the themes that are prominent in the group's analysis due to the theory the group is using.
- e. Talk about the way imagery is used to explain and justify each of the theories/lens ideas.
- f. Describe how the actions of the characters can be viewed through this theory.

#### Class 2:

9. The teacher will answer questions and organize group presentations.
10. As each group is presenting, each student in the class will individually take notes on each of the theories presented.
11. Assignment: **Worksheet B.** Students will write an article for a magazine of their choosing, using one of the theories of their choice. Note: The student may look up the actual magazine articles as stylistic examples for their assignment.

#### Assessment:

1. The teacher and students will be able to discuss the function of criticism.
2. The students will be introduced to *Siegfried*, an operatic drama by Richard Wagner.
3. As a class, the students will be able to read the synopsis and understand the basic story line.
4. Students will be able to research different literary theories and use their research to analyze selected text.
5. Students will be able to work as a group and present the theory assigned as well as use the given theory to analyze assigned text selection.
6. Students will be able to present their topics to class.
7. Students will be able to take notes on group presentations.
8. Students will be able to use knowledge in completing the assignment **Worksheet B- Using Literary Theories in the Field.**

## **Synopsis: *Siegfried* by Richard Wagner**

Taken from: <http://laoperaring.com/siegfried/synopsis.php>

### **Act I**

In his cave deep in the forest, the dwarf Mime forges a sword for his foster son Siegfried. He hates the boy but hopes that Siegfried will kill the dragon Fafner, who guards the Nibelungs' treasure, so that Mime can get the all-powerful ring and rule the world. Siegfried runs in, picks up the new sword and smashes it, raging at Mime's incompetence. The dwarf, acting innocently, offers him food and kind words, but Siegfried doesn't want any of it. He knows he cannot be Mime's real son, as there is no physical resemblance between them, and demands to know who his parents were. For the first time, Mime tells Siegfried how he found his mother, Sieglinde, in the woods and how she died giving birth to him. Siegfried is moved by the story but asks for proof. When Mime shows him the fragments of his father's sword, Nothung, Siegfried orders Mime to repair it for him and rushes out.

As Mime sinks down in despair, a stranger enters. It is Wotan, lord of the gods, in human disguise as the Wanderer. He challenges the fearful Mime to a riddle competition, in which the loser forfeits his head. The Wanderer easily answers Mime's three questions-who lives under the earth (the Nibelungs), on it (the giants), and above it (the gods). Mime in turn knows the answers to the traveler's first two questions but gives up in terror when asked who will repair the sword Nothung. The Wanderer admonishes Mime for enquiring about faraway matters when he doesn't know about the things that closely concern him. Then he departs, leaving the dwarf's head to "him who knows no fear" and who will re-forged the magic blade.

When Siegfried returns demanding his father's sword, Mime tells him that he can't repair it and tries in vain to explain the concept of fear to the boy. To teach him, he proposes a visit to Fafner's cave. Siegfried agrees and enthusiastically begins to forge the sword himself. While he works, Mime prepares a sleeping potion to give to Siegfried once he has killed Fafner. Flashing the finished sword, the boy smashes the anvil in half and runs off into the forest.

### **Act II**

That same night, Mime's brother Alberich is hiding by the entrance to Fafner's cave, obsessed with thoughts of winning back the ring. The Wanderer enters, assuring the startled Nibelung that he is not after the ring. Instead, he warns Alberich to watch out for Mime. He then wakes Fafner and tells him that a young hero is on his way to kill him. Unimpressed, the dragon goes back to sleep. The Wanderer and Alberich disappear.

As Dawn breaks, Mime and Siegfried arrive. The youth sends Mime away and, caught up in the peaceful beauty of the woods, thinks about his parents. Listening to the song of a bird, he tries to imitate it on a reed pipe but fails and blows his horn instead. This awakens Fafner, who comes out of the cave, and in the ensuing fight Siegfried kills the dragon. With his dying breath, he warns the boy of the destructive power of the treasure. When Siegfried accidentally touches a drop of Fafner's blood to his lips, he suddenly understands the singing of the bird, directing him to the gold in the cave. Alberich and Mime appear quarreling but withdraw as Siegfried comes out with the ring and the Tarnhelm. The bird

warns Siegfried not to trust Mime, and when the dwarf returns with the potion, Siegfried kills him. The bird then tells Siegfried of a beautiful woman named Brünnhilde, asleep on a mountain surrounded by fire. He immediately sets out to find her.

### **Act III**

On a wild mountain pass, the Wanderer summons Erda, goddess of the Earth, to learn the gods' fate. She evades his questions, and he resigns himself to the impending end of the gods' reign. His hope now rests with Brünnhilde and Siegfried and the redemptive power of their love. When Siegfried approaches, making fun of the god whom he takes for a mere old man, the Wanderer attempts to block his path. With a stroke of Nothung, Siegfried shatters the Wanderer's spear (the same one that smashed Nothung to pieces years before) and advances.

Dawn breaks on the mountaintop where Brünnhilde sleeps. Siegfried, who has never before seen a woman, thinks he has discovered a man. When he removes Brünnhilde's armor, he is overwhelmed by the sight of her beauty. For the first time he feels fear. Mastering his emotions, he awakens the girl with a kiss. Hailing the daylight, Brünnhilde is overjoyed to learn that it is Siegfried who has brought her back to life. At first she resists his declarations of passion, realizing that earthly love must end her immortal life. Finally understanding that her vanished godhood has left her a mortal woman, she says goodbye to Valhalla and joins Siegfried in praise of love.

**Worksheet A**

**NAMES OF STUDENTS IN THE GROUP:**

**THE THEORY ASSIGNED:**

**BASIC IDEA(S) OF THE THEORY:**

**WHAT DO CRITICS PRACTICING THIS THEORY DO?**

**USE THIS THEORY FOR THE READING OF THE ASSIGNED TEXT. PREPARE 8-10 MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATION. BE PREPARED TO**

- a. Describe the theory using **Worksheet A**.
- b. Give an explanation on how this theory can be used to analyze the given text.
- c. Give an analysis of the selected text using your theory by providing at least one quote from text per each member of the group. (For example, if the group has four members; there must be at least four quotes used, each student should present at least about one of their chosen quotes.
- d. Explain the themes that are prominent in your group's analysis which reflect the theory you are using.
- e. Talk about the way imagery is used to explain and justify each theory.
- f. Describe how the actions of the characters can be seen through this theory.

**Worksheet A- TEACHERS GUIDE**

**This guide contains a brief description and main ideas of theories. In order to create this guide, necessary reduction of the theories were made, affecting the whole context and richness of these theories. The teacher should be aware that there is more to these theories than is contained in the guide, and therefore the students may find more information than is provided here. Hence, the students may come up with additional correct answers. Many answers can be valid, as long as there is a clear case made. The teacher should use his or her judgment. Copies of this guide can be distributed to students per teacher’s discretion. NOTE: some theories overlap. By looking at literary theories, we can analyze text to discover the many hidden layers and meanings within that text. This is a vital skill that one can learn and use in many areas!**

**NARRATOLOGY**

**Basic idea/**

**What the theorists using this theory do**

**Application and questions to discuss in *Siegfried***

<p>Basic idea: It is the study of narrative structure and more precisely how the narrative affects our perception. The idea is traced back to Aristotle (<i>Poetics</i>), however, modern Narratology has been attributed to Russian Formalists. Two important figures are Vladimir Propp and Gerard Genette.</p> <p>Aspects of the theory:</p> <p>-Three key elements are identified in a plot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Sin” or “Fault,” a.k.a. “Tragic Flaw” in the story/plot (in Greek, <i>hamartia</i>)</li> <li>2. Recognition or Realization - a moment in narrative when the truth of the situation is recognized by the protagonist (a moment of self-recognition). (Greek <i>anagnorisis</i>)</li> <li>3. Reversal – hero falls from greatness (Greek <i>peripeteia</i>)</li> </ol> <p>What narratologists do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look at individual narratives seeking out the recurring structures that could be found in all narratives.</li> <li>2. The focus is on whomever is telling the story and the way he/she is telling it, not the mere content of the plot.</li> <li>3. Explore the similarities of the plot to other well-known stories/plots.</li> </ol> <p>Important questions to answer for a narratologist:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the narrative dramatizing (or represented in a specified setting with the dialogue containing direct speech) or is it ‘staged’ (creating an illusion that the audience/readers are ‘seeing’ and ‘hearing’ things for ourselves), or both?</li> <li>2. How is the narrative brought into focus?</li> <li>3. Who is telling the story?</li> <li>4. How is time handled in the story?</li> <li>5. How is the story ‘packaged’ or presented?</li> <li>6. How are speech and thought represented?</li> </ol>	<p>Some points: The back-story is slowly told with dialogue (Wanderer tells the whole back story through in duel of wits with Mime).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of this theory should include: the way the story is told, the way readers know the back-story (this drama is the third drama in a four drama cycle, but we still know what happened due to the characters speaking their thoughts and through dialogue with other characters)</li> <li>• Even though the story is chronological, the retelling of the events in the past, adds drama to existing situations, as well as gives another layer of meaning.</li> <li>• Plot of this story could be compared to Sleeping Beauty.</li> </ul>
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## HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHICAL CRITICISM

<b>Basic idea/ What the theorists using this theory do</b>	<b>Application and questions to discuss in <i>Siegfried</i></b>
<p>Basic idea: Meaning is contextual, with the interpretation of the work based on an understanding of its context. The context includes information about the author, the historical moment and the systems of meaning available at the time of writing. The work is seen as a reflection of the writer and his/her times or the lives and time of the characters in the story.</p> <p>What historical biographical critics do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research the life of the author and relate it to the work.</li> <li>2. Research the writer's time (political, artistic, intellectual, economic, etc. history), relating it to the story.</li> <li>3. Research the audience for which the writer was writing and any political connotations in the society of the audience the work was intended for.</li> </ol>	<p>Topics of importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This theory would look at biographical information of the author, and the history in which this story takes place.</li> <li>• Some of the ideas that could be discussed are: political turmoil of the German people, Mime's desire to rule the world vs. Wagner's idea of creation of the 'total art work,' political un-stability, the father-son relationship between <i>Siegfried</i> and Mime as contrasted to Wagner's relationship with his step-father (who was Jewish), the unification of the German people (German Ultrationalism) etc.</li> <li>• Discuss some of the social and political issues that were happening around the time Wagner presented this work.</li> <li>• How might Wagner's attitudes and behavior toward the women in his life be projected in the work?</li> <li>• Quotes could be analyzed and compared with historical facts of either Wagner's life, the time the work was presented, or some of the important facts in history from the period – whether these elements are political, economic, etc.</li> </ul>

## PSYCHOANALYTICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

Basic idea/ What the theorists using this theory do	Application and questions to discuss in <i>Siegfried</i>
<p>Basic idea: The motivations of characters or the writer/author of the work are analyzed, often using Freudian ideas, investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements.</p> <p>A Freudian approach often includes pinpointing the influences of a character's <b>id</b> (the instinctual, pleasure seeking part of the mind), <b>superego</b> (the part of the mind that represses the id's impulses) and the <b>ego</b> (the part of the mind that controls but does not repress the id's impulses, releasing them in a healthy way). Freudian critics like to point out the sexual implications of symbols and imagery, since Freud's believed that all human behavior is motivated by sexuality. They tend to see <b>concave</b> images, such as ponds, flowers, cups, and caves as female symbols; whereas objects that are longer than they are wide are usually seen as <b>phallic symbols</b>. (<a href="http://www.literatureclassics.com/ancientpaths/litcrit.html">http://www.literatureclassics.com/ancientpaths/litcrit.html</a> )</p> <p>What psychological critics do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make a division between the 'overt' (surface) and 'covert' (hidden) content of a literary work.</li> <li>2. The main importance is given to the distinction of the conscious and unconscious mind.</li> <li>3. Close attention is given to the unconscious motives and feelings, whether these are of the author or of the characters depicted in the work.</li> <li>4. The idea is to identify a 'psychic' context for the literary work, which is considered more important than the social or historical context. Therefore, the preference of criticism is given to the individual 'psycho-drama' above the 'social drama' of class conflict. Ex. The conflicts between generations, or competing desires inside an individual are more important than a conflict between social classes.</li> <li>5. Identify the <b>Anima</b> - feminine aspect - the inner feminine part of the male personality or a man's image of a woman.</li> <li>6. <b>Animus</b> - male aspect - an inner masculine part of the female personality or a woman's image of a man.</li> <li>7. <b>Define the Collective Unconscious</b> – subconscious primal memories common to the humans</li> <li>8. Find and define <b>Shadow</b> – a hidden dark element of person's psyche (unconscious or deliberate)</li> </ol>	<p>Some of the main ideas that could be discussed are Siegfried's wish to understand the nature of love (id), the fact that he keeps returning to Mime (superego), his decision to leave Mime to pursue his destiny (ego). Some of the symbols: sword=definition of manhood, phallic symbol. Another important fact: the discovery of a woman. Siegfried, who knows no fear, feels fear when he finds Brünnhilde.</p> <p>Topics and ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Siegfried's desire: love vs. power.</li> <li>• Competing desire: ring or power vs. love.</li> <li>• Primary ideas of the drama: power vs. redemptive love / Siegfried follows his predestined path / even though Siegfried seems to be looking for fear, he is actually looking for a mate- he finds fear when he sees Brünnhilde – his predestined mate- and is able to overcome fear, winning 'Brünnhilde' as a mate.</li> <li>• Examine the conflicting desires- within individuals such as Mime, Wanderer, Siegfried, and Brünnhilde.</li> <li>• The sword has a name, Nothung, meaning need. What could the sword symbolize? What about the Wanderer's staff? Both could be argued to be phallic symbols. Siegfried breaks Wanderer's staff</li> </ul>

	<p>with his sword. Considering that Wanderer is Siegfried's grandfather, what could this act mean?</p>
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## MYTHOLOGICAL/ARCHETYPAL/SYMBOLIC CRITICISM

Basic idea/ What the theorists using this theory do	Application and questions to discuss in <i>Siegfried</i>
<p>Basic idea: Close reading of the text, assumes that there is a collection of symbols, images, characters and motifs (archetypes) that cause the same response in all people.</p> <p>“According to the psychologist Carl <b>Jung</b>, mankind possesses a "<b>collective unconscious</b>" that contains these archetypes and that is common to all of humanity. Myth critics identify these archetypal patterns and discuss how they function in the works. They believe that these archetypes are the source of much of literature's power.” (<a href="http://www.literatureclassics.com/ancientpaths/litcrit.html">http://www.literatureclassics.com/ancientpaths/litcrit.html</a>)</p> <p>What mythological/archetypal/symbolic critics do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Look and identify <b>archetypes</b> in literature – a recurring image, theme, character, etc. Ex. Hero archetype – an individual on a quest, that causes him/her to overcome obstacles and experience initiation (separation, transformation and return), then he/she dies to atone.</li> <li>2. Identify reason(s) why particular literature may survive the test of time.</li> <li>3. Identify the <b>Anima</b> - feminine aspect - the inner feminine part of the male personality or a man's image of a woman.</li> <li>4. <b>Animus</b> - male aspect - an inner masculine part of the female personality or a woman's image of a man.</li> <li>5. <b>Define the Collective Unconscious</b> – subconscious primal memories common to humans.</li> <li>6. Find and define <b>Shadow</b> – a hidden dark element of person's psyche (unconscious or deliberate)</li> </ol> <p><b>Examples of Some possible symbols:</b>  red - blood, sacrifice, passion, disorder  black - chaos, death, evil  green - growth, fertility  serpent - evil, sensuality, mystery, wisdom, destruction  water - creation, birth-death-resurrection, purification, redemption, fertility, growth</p>	<p>Using this theory, analyze the archetypes as well as symbols.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does fire around the sleeping Brünnhilde means?</li> <li>• What does it mean when Siegfried repairs his father's sword?</li> <li>• Is Siegfried the hero of this story? What kind of obstacles does overcome?</li> <li>• What elements in this story are similar to popular television stories of today?</li> <li>• What are the archetypes of women: dead mother of Siegfried vs. sleeping mother of Brünnhilde, and Brünnhilde herself?</li> <li>• What is the meaning of serpent/dragon?</li> <li>• Can the blood of the serpent give special powers?</li> <li>• Who is the wise old man by the name of Wanderer?</li> <li>• The sword has a name, Nothung, meaning need. Symbolically, what could the sword mean? What about the Wanderer's staff? Siegfried breaks Wanderer's staff with his sword. Considering that Wanderer is Siegfried's grandfather, what could this act mean?</li> <li>• What does Siegfried's time spent in the forest tell us (he is growing, maturing, etc.)</li> <li>• What kind of features signify the 'bad' character of Mime?</li> <li>• Compare <i>Siegfried</i> to <i>Lord of the Rings</i>.</li> </ul>

## FEMINISM AND FEMINIST CRITICISM LITERARY THEORY

See also Lesbian/gay criticism

Basic idea/

What the theorists using this theory do

The history of this literary theory has roots in the ‘women’s movement’ of 1960s and realizes the significance of the images of women depicted in literature, and seeks to combat those images as well as question their authority.

The idea that women’s representation in literature constructing an acceptable version of the ‘feminine’ ideal lead to an effort, especially evident in 1970s and 80s, in exposing the patriarchy which sees as “natural” the dominance and superiority of men over women.

There exist some differences of ideas between American feminist criticism as well as European, for example French. The language itself as well as the culture can be argued as the reason. This is further explored with the question of whether a form of a language that is purely feminine exists. This theory uses fragments of other theories, especially psychoanalysis, to investigate the text.

What feminist critics do:

1. Examine representations of women in literature, revaluing those representations, as well as the power relations.
2. Examine the role of language in construction of the ‘feminine’ ideal, and explore whether there is such a thing as a ‘female’ language, and whether this is applicable to men.
3. ‘Re-analyze’ psychoanalysis to further explore the issues of female and male identity.
4. Clarify the ideologic ‘neutral’ in the literary interpretations.

Application and questions to discuss in *Siegfried*

- The depiction of Brunnhilde, her role in the story, the way she is portrayed are all very important. When do we meet her? What do we know about her?
- Idea of her being predestined for Siegfried.
- Brunnhilde wakes up when Siegfried kisses her.
- Brunnhilde is the only **human** woman in this drama—the almost unattainable goal-- at the top of the mountain surrounded by a circle of fire.
- The other woman, Erda – a.k.a. Mother Earth – is Brunnhilde’s mother. Contrast between these two females and their spoken lines.
- Siegfried, at one point, calls Brunnhilde his ‘inheritance.’ What does it mean?
- Brunnhilde is at a point where she realizes that earthly love must end her immortality. Does that portrayal remind you of the immortal virgin, or Saint Mary, or Mother Theresa?

## LESBIAN/GAY CRITICISM LITERARY THEORY

See Feminism Theory

**Basic idea/**

**What the theorists using this theory do**

**Application and questions to discuss in *Siegfried***

History: Surfacing in 1990s, this theory stems from the feminist criticism theory, and is not of exclusive interest to gays and lesbians. However, if idea of the feminist criticism asserts that gender is not “essential” to identity, then lesbian/gay criticism questions the socially constructed nature of sexual identity, or rejecting the ideal that the sexual identity of characters and their acts is defined by society.

The social and political aims of this movement are to uncover the fear and prejudice against homosexuality and to claim equality between individuals no matter what their sexual orientation.

What lesbian/gay critics do:

1. Identify lesbian/gay episodes in typical work and discuss them as such, rather than reading same-sex pairing in non-specific ways, for instance, as symbolizing two aspects of the same character.
2. Analyze the literature or ideas in literature that influenced the ideals of masculinity or femininity.
3. Expose ‘homophobia’ in popular literature, and identify the boundaries that make something homosexual/heterosexual.
4. Foreground homosexual aspects of mainstream literature that have previously gone ‘un-noticed.’
5. Example: the idea that ‘same-sex’ love in literature is superior to men’s love for women; or women’s love for men. (David and Jonathan in the Bible)

Topics to discuss:

- Siegfried has never seen a woman before his encounter with Brünnhilde. He even thinks it might be a ‘he’ at first. What are the feminine/masculine aspects of Brünnhilde?
- How does Brünnhilde, a former Valkyrie, become a mortal woman?
- Does Siegfried have anything to do with her womanhood when he takes off the breast-plate?
- What kind of ‘love’ does Mime feel towards Siegfried? What about Alberich?
- What are the feminine characteristics of Mime vs. masculine?
- What defines the Wanderer as a man? As a God? Why do we assume the ‘God’ to be a patriarch?

## MODERNISM AND/OR POSTMODERNISM LITERARY THEORY

Basic idea/ What the theorists using this theory do	Application and questions to discuss in <i>Siegfried</i>
<p>History: Postmodernism evolved from modernism, a theory that brought down the structure of traditional forms in painting, literature, music and architecture at the turn of the twentieth-century. In modernism, like postmodernism, fragmentation was an important factor which favored of abstraction. In painting this movement was associated with Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism and Surrealism. In literature, the rejection of traditional form (chronological plots, continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators, etc) and adaptation of experimental forms was important.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity: how we see rather than what we see.</li> <li>2. Blurring between genres (poems become more documentary and prose-like)</li> <li>3. Literary works raise issues concerning their own nature, status and role.</li> </ol> <p>The difference between modernism and postmodernism is the attitude and approach. Even though both emphasize fragmentation, leaving behind the traditional forms and moving toward innovation, but with different mood. Modernism is nostalgic of the past times- it approaches and grasps the new, but holds what is past in high regards, while postmodernism revels in these new liberating ideas, finding the escape from traditional form exciting, embracing it and relishing in it. Postmodernism celebrates chaos. Modernism mourns the loss of a coherent world.</p> <p>What postmodernism theory critics do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discover postmodernist themes and attitudes within literature and explore their meanings.</li> <li>2. “They examine the notion of the ‘disappearance of the real’, in which shifting postmodern identities are seen, for example, in the mixing of literary genres (the thriller, the myth saga, and the realist psychological novel, etc.)” (Beginning Theory, Peter Barry, pg 91)</li> <li>3. They pay attention to ‘intertextual elements’ in literature, such as parody, allusion, etc, in which there is a major degree of reference between one text and another, rather than between the text and a safe external reality.</li> <li>4. Confront the division between the low and high culture.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topics to discuss:</li> <li>• Notice the prose like structure of the libretto. Good examples of this theory would be the way the story is told.</li> <li>• How do we see Siegfried? What is the class division between Siegfried and Mime (low vs. high culture)? Between Siegfried and the Wonderer?</li> <li>• How does the structure of this story differ from other stories told in traditional forms? (ex. Continuous new elements added to the story with each additional dialogue. Chronological plot with continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators - the story seems to come together in a mosaic structure.)</li> <li>• Are the main characters similar/different to the characters that are common in our popular culture?</li> <li>• The work raises the issue of love: Siegfried and Brünnhilde are actually nephew and aunt. This act directly contradicts our society’s structure. How do we justify their union? What kind of symbolic message does this send?</li> </ul>

**Additional sources:**

Kristi Siegel website: <http://www.kristisiegel.com/theory.htm> - an excellent source and overview, also has additional links to more information.

Overview of some of the major theories: <http://www.literatureclassics.com/ancientpaths/litcrit.html>

Narratology: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/narratology/>

**Beginning Theory**, Peter Barry. A digital copy is available as a 'read-only' on [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com)

Galilean Library: <http://www.galilean-library.org/manuscript.php?postid=43790>

## Worksheet B

### Using Literary Theories in the Field

You are a journalist, and your assignment is to write an article about *Siegfried*. You find out that there is an upcoming LA Opera performance of *Siegfried*. There is a lot of excitement about this because it is a new production, and it is the first time it will be performed in Los Angeles. In addition to this, you find out that there are several organizations in U.S.A. as well as Europe that are choosing to perform *Siegfried* this up-coming season. Several magazines are looking for theoretical articles about *Siegfried* and its importance to the culture and community. Pick a magazine (you may use the list below) and pick a theory that you feel will give your article 'edge' and speak to the readers of the magazine. (You might want to look up the magazines to see an example of stylistic choices that magazine editors prefer)

Write an article using your magazine of choice. Here are the magazines that are currently seeking articles for their upcoming issues:

1. Vanity Fair - a cultural catalyst that drives the popular dialogue globally
2. The Journal of Applied Psychology - emphasizes the publication of original investigations that contribute new knowledge and understanding to fields of applied psychology
3. Feminist Review- first appeared in 1979 it described itself as a socialist and feminist journal, a vehicle to unite research and theory with political practice, and contribute to the development of both.
4. Art Forum - art magazine discussing current art, artists, as well as art movements of the past.
5. APERÇU - a monthly overview of the most important and most interesting new writing, gathered together from a number of fields including philosophy, cultural studies, literary theory, politics, sociology, anthropology, geography, history, theology, law and psychoanalysis.
6. Qualitative Sociology Review - publishes empirical, theoretical and methodological articles applicable to all fields and specializations within social sciences. It is especially interested in theories of society becoming, construction of meanings, intersubjectivity, social knowledge and experience
7. Body & Society - concerns itself with debates in feminism, technology, ecology, postmodernism, medicine, ethics and consumerism which take the body as the central analytic issue in the questioning of established paradigms
8. Businessweek - latest international **business** news & stock market news
9. Wall Street Journal - coverage of breaking news and current headlines from the US and around the world
10. People - Breaking news, celebrity photos, fashion
11. Esquire - helps to define and reflect what it means to be a man today