## Introduction to Scene Analysis with KING LEAR

Claudia Zelevansky

## **Exercise: Given Circumstances**

If working on Shakespeare or other text, the teacher can introduce the concept of the Facts or Given Circumstances as a way to begin to understand the text. The facts have to be just that: things that are IN THE TEXT (not an opinion or an interpretation). For example, if the text says, "Peter loves candy." a fact would be just that. An opinion or interpretation would be, "Peter has cavities."

## Categories:

Who - facts about the characters in the scene (what do people say about them? What do they say about them?)

What - any facts related to the circumstances or events of the scene

Where - location, any reference to physical realities

When - time of day, time of year, time period?

Misc. - any other facts you find

The instructor can break the class into small groups and have them dig through the text for Givens. Create a comprehensive sheet of givens as a class.

## **Applying Given Circumstances to Shakespeare:**

Especially given the unfamiliarity of the language, searching for Givens in a Shakespeare play or scene can be a great way to get to engage with the text. Depending on the grade level of the students, the teacher can either assign scenes to the students in small groups or work with the whole class to dig for Givens. Here is an example below of a few lines from KING LEAR, 3.4:

Below you'll see highlighted words or phrases that capture different kinds of Givens: **characters, actions** ("you do climb up it now"), **and objects/scenic elements** (peasants clothing, staff, etc.).

Than for your lady's. Yo	u may gather more	King Lear	4.6.18
			COLUMN AND A
And when your mistress hears thus much c. 30		EDGAR You do climb up it now. Look how we labour.	
	wisdom to her	GLOUCESTER	
So fare "you" well.		Methinks the ground is even.	
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,		EDGAR Horrible steep	
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.		Hark, do you hear the sea?	
OSWALD	40	GLOUCESTER No, truly.	
Would I could meet thim What parts I do fellow	9, madam, I should show	EDGAR	
what party 1 do tonow.	and on the second	Why then, your other senses grow imperfect	;
REGAN	are thee well.	By your eyes' anguish.	Ser and a second
	Exeunt.	GLOUCESTER So may it be indeed.	
[4.6] Enter GLOUCESTER an	d EDGAR [in peasant's clothing	Methinks thy voice is altered and thou speak'st	
and m	th a staff].	In better phrase and matter than thou didst.	
GLOUCESTER		EDGAR	
When shall I come to the top of that same hill?		You're much deceived; in nothing am I changed	
when shall I come to the b	op of that same hill?	But in my garments.	
34 *gather more conjecture further. I	like Poor Tom, as Gloucester notices at	GLOUCESTER Methinks you're better spol	ken. 10
follow the pointing in F ('gather more:'); Q has no punctuation here,	7-8. They too are imagined how as	EDGAR	
and Weis inserts some to make 'gather;	somewhere near Dover. One of them has a staff or 'bat', used by Edgar to	Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand stills how	
more.", which he thinks conveys	fight Oswald at 239. The blind	fearful	
urgency. 5 this a token, or perhaps a letter. When	Gloucester might more naturally have a staff, and, if so, Edgar borrows it	And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low.	
Oswald is killed he has letters about from him to defend himself arguing		The crows and choughs that wing the midway ai	r
him (4.6.244), though only the letter from Goneril that he now withholds	Oswald's attack.	Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half-way down	
from Regan is read by Edgar	<ol> <li>hill Dover cliff. He had it on his mind at 4,1,76–81.</li> </ol>	Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade	; 15
(4.6.257-65).	1-10 In these lines Shakespeare seems	Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.	
36 thus much your report of what I have said conscious of dispet illusion and make us conscious of the trick being played on		The fishermen that walk upon the beach	
party so E Q has 'Lady', which is incongruous in relation to Oswald's	Gloucester, as he draws the attention of the audience to Edgar's deception	Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring barque	
steadfast loyalty to Goneril shown in 20-9.	of his father, in pretending to be climbing, in claiming to hear the sea	3.4.53-4 and n., and 72 below. 14 gross large	
.0.1 in staff Edgar is now wearing	and in lying about his change of	7-8 speak'st didst a change marked for the audience by the verse; as Poor used in pickles. The used in pickles.	
the clothes the Old Man has brought	speech: see 41 SD and n. In leading his	Tom, Edgar usually spoke in prose; for from the French,	'herbe de Saint
tim (see 4.1.52), looks like a <i>peasant</i> to oswald at 227, and no longer speaks	father to suicide, Edgar is playing the traditional role of the devil; see	matter = sense, compare 170, and see Pierre', St Peter's he 1.1.55 and n. dreadful fearsome	rb.
	And the second	13 choughs jackdaws, a member of the 18 barque small sailin	g vessel. 'Barke'
ther more.] F (gather more:); gather more Q; ty] F; Lady Q SD] F; Exit. Q	gather, more. Wris 41 should] F; would Q	crow family; pronounced 'chuffs' (Q, F) was a commo	n spelling.
F (Scena Quinta); not in $Q$ = 0.1 EDGAR ] F: Edmand $Q$ - in		$2$ up iil $F_i$ it vp $\mathcal{Q}_i$ 8 In [ $F_i$ Wah $\mathcal{Q}_i$ 15 samphire] Roue, $\mathcal{Q}_i$ (Simphire); sampire $\mathcal{Q}_i$ F 17 walk ) $\mathcal{Q}_i$ walk' d $F_i$ 18 youl $\mathcal{Q}_i$ youd $F$	
		327	
326			



<sup>L</sup><sub>ENT</sub> Created by Claudia Zelevansky, <u>czcoaching.com</u>
 <sup>Inspired</sup> by TFANA's 2024 NEH Institute: *Teaching Shakespeare's Plays through Scholarship & Performance*.

