

Introduction to Scene Analysis with KING LEAR

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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.).

