



# SANTA CRUZ SHAKESPEARE

## EDUCATION PROGRAM

### *King Lear - Week 4: Dover Cliffs*

- ACT!

In pairs, read over and rehearse this scene between Edgar and Gloucester from Act 4. In this scene, Edgar is in disguise. His father, now blind, thinks Edgar is a peasant, leading him to the cliffs of Dover, where he intends to jump over the edge. In your pair, decide how you will stage Gloucester "jumping" off a cliff that isn't there. What challenges do you come across staging this?

**Act IV, SCENE VI. Fields near Dover.**

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant*

**GLOUCESTER**  
same hill?

When shall we come to the top of that

**EDGAR**

You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks the ground is even.

**EDGAR**

Horrible steep.  
Hark, do you hear the sea?



Danny Webb as Gloucester and Luke Thompson as Edgar.  
2018 National Theatre *King Lear*.

**GLOUCESTER**

No, truly.

**EDGAR**

Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect  
By your eyes' anguish.

**GLOUCESTER**

So may it be, indeed:  
Methinks thy voice is alter'd; and thou speak'st  
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

**EDGAR**

You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed  
But in my garments.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks you're better spoken.

**EDGAR**

Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful  
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!  
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down  
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:  
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,  
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,  
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy  
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,  
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,  
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;  
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
Topple down headlong.

**GLOUCESTER**

Set me where you stand.

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand: you are now within a foot  
Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon  
Would I not leap upright.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let go my hand.  
Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods  
Prosper it with thee! Go thou farther off;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**EDGAR**

Now fare you well, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

With all my heart.

**EDGAR**

Why I do trifle thus with his despair  
Is done to cure it.

**GLOUCESTER**

[*Kneeling*] O you mighty gods!  
This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,  
Shake patiently my great affliction off:  
If I could bear it longer, and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!  
Now, fellow, fare thee well.

*He falls forward*

**EDGAR**

Gone, sir: farewell.  
And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life, when life itself  
Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,  
By this, had thought been past. Alive or dead?  
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! Speak!  
Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.  
What are you, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, and let me die.

**EDGAR**

Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fathom down precipitating,  
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;  
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.  
Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:  
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

**GLOUCESTER**


But have I fall'n, or no?

**EDGAR**

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, I have no eyes.



→ WATCH!

Use this link of [King Lear: National Theatre Live \(2018\)](#)

Watch the clip of Edgar leading Gloucester to the Cliffs of Dover from 2.13.



Danny Webb as Gloucester in the 2018 King Lear at the National Theatre in London.

→ DISCUSS!

Once Gloucester jumps, Edgar then reappears, usually with a different accent, pretending to be someone down on the beach who has seen him fall. Do you think Gloucester believes he has fallen? In an aside, Edgar tells us that he trifles with his father's despair in order to try to cure it. Do you think he has succeeded in comforting Gloucester? Look in your *King Lear* text to see what Gloucester says in the remainder of the scene to help you decide.

→ WRITE!

Write out stage notes imagining you are the director staging the scene of jumping off Dover cliff explaining how you would portray this scene. What props and costumes would you use?



### **SOCIAL JUSTICE!**

- Can you always tell if someone has a disability? What are hidden or invisible disabilities? Has there ever been a time when you met someone who has a disability you weren't immediately aware of?
- Are there any other differences in ability in *King Lear* besides Gloucester's blindness?