Who Speaks for the Trees?

Students read (or watch!) Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* and examine the importance of the sustainable management of natural resources.

**Levels**
- Part A: Grades 2-8
- Part B: Grades 6-8
- Variation: Grades 4-6

**Subjects**
Science, Social Studies, Language Arts

**Concepts**
- Our increasing knowledge of the Earth's ecosystems influences strategies used for forest management and environmental stewardship.
- Increased public knowledge of the environment and of the need for conservation of natural resources have resulted in lifestyle changes in many cultures.

**Skills**
Discussing, Forming Concepts, Evaluating, Comparing and Contrasting, Identifying Main Ideas

**Technology Connections**
Graphic Organizer Software

**Materials**
One copy of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* (either the book or the movie)

**Time Considerations**
Preparation: 15 minutes
Activity: 50-minute period

**OBJECTIVES**
- Students will discuss and analyze a fictional story related to natural resources.
- Students will determine whether the main ideas of the story build a case for the conservation and wise use of natural resources.

**BACKGROUND**
A quick look around the home or school reveals how many items are made from wood and other forest resources. Trees are important to us whether they are used for products or left in their natural environment where they provide oxygen, soil protection, beauty, and a habitat for plants and animals.

Humans have always depended on trees for firewood, shelters, tools, paper, and many other needs. In many parts of the world, trees are removed from forested areas without being adequately replanted.

**ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES**
- Students' discussion question answers can be used to assess students' understanding of the environmental messages.
- Ask students to create a graphic organizer showing the main ideas presented.

**DOING THE ACTIVITY**

**PART A—Dr. Seuss’ The Lorax**

1. Read Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* aloud or watch the movie.

2. Ask students to list what they think the major ideas of the story are.

3. Have them think about and answer the following questions:
   - Why do you think the Once-ler did what he did?
   - What patterns of change in the environment did we observe?
   - What were environmental conditions like before the company started making "Thneed's"? What were they like afterward?
   - What was the author's message concerning what one person can do to save or destroy the environment?

**GETTING READY**
Obtain a copy of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* to read aloud to your students, or consider showing the movie. For the Variation in Part A, write each question on an index card.
Variation

1. Ask students to name things from nature (natural resources) that they use to live. Examples include trees, water, air, minerals, and so on. Read Dr. Seuss' The Lorax aloud or watch the movie.

2. Divide the class into six groups. Give each group a card with one of the sets of questions below written on it. Each group should discuss the questions, write down the answers, and be prepared to share them with the group.

   - How could the Once-ler have managed his company to protect natural resources and not run out of trees to manufacture "Thneeds"? Is it necessary to protect all trees "from axes that hack"?
   - What did the Once-ler mean by "UNLESS"? What responsibility does he seem to think "someone like you" needs to take? What kinds of things can we do today to ensure that trees will be available for all different purposes in the future?
   - Compare the Once-ler's attitude toward the environment at the beginning of the story with his attitude at the end.

3. Have students prepare a sequence for the key events in both Dr. Seuss' The Lorax and their sequel. Then, have students draw a diagram or flow chart showing the connections between characters in the story (Swomee-Swans, Bar-ba-loats, Lorax) and the natural resources (Truffula trees, clean air, clean water). Do any new characters or natural resources emerge in the sequel? If so, how do they affect the outcome of the original story?

PART B—The Sequel

1. Either alone or in small groups, have students write and illustrate a sequel to Dr. Seuss' The Lorax. The sequel might explain how the Truffula tree made a comeback through replanting and proper care. The sequel could say what the new managers of the Truffula Tree Company are going to do to maintain environmental quality and at the same time make Thneeds.

2. After the sequels are finished, ask students to consider the following questions:

   - Does either the original Dr. Seuss story or your sequel accurately portray industry?
   - Which version, the original or your sequel, appears to best describe people's attitudes in the region you live?
   - What social and economic implications will the actions suggested in your sequel have for ensuring a quality environment? For example, who will pay for the environmental protection?
   - Who will pay for the damage to the environment if these actions prove unsuccessful?
   - Who will provide Thneeds if the Truffula Tree Company doesn't?

Reading Connections


What can your class do?

Ideas for Earth Day and every day

GETTING STARTED

• Start a class discussion about Earth Day. What does the day mean to your students? Why is it important to take care of the Earth all year round? What is our commitment to future generations?

• Share articles and news clips about global warming. Why is this issue so important today and why is education about it so necessary? What can we do to help?

• Brainstorm a list of simple Earth-friendly actions that people can do every day, such as changing to energy-efficient light bulbs, carpooling, picking up litter, and using both the front and the back of scrap paper.

• Have students research Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Rachel Carson, and other naturalists. What can we learn from these individuals?

YOUR SCHOOL

• Start a schoolwide Earth Day campaign! Decorate your classroom and the hallways with posters that have students’ environmental slogans. Have your class sign the pledge on the front of this poster.

• Have students share pro-environment ideas or a cheer for Earth Day over the loudspeaker or on your school’s radio or television station.

• Clean up your school's playground or a local park. Give students free time afterwards to play games and enjoy the clean space they have created.

• Challenge students to a game of Earth Day Jeopardy. Create your own or use the one on the Education World Web site: www.education-world.com/a_lesson/daily.lp/daily.lp075.shtml

• Write poems for the Earth. Encourage students to try their hand at haiku, acrostic poems, or shape poems.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

• Have students bring in recyclable items and sort them according to your state’s recycling regulations. Keep a running count of how many items have been collected in each category. You may want to make it even more interesting by having classes compete to see who recycles the most material.

• Make creations from recyclable materials, such as tire swings or pinecone bird feeders for the playground.

• Decorate old t-shirts and make them new again.

YOUR COMMUNITY

• Invite park rangers, environmentalists, or government officials to speak with students about local policies and volunteering opportunities.

• Decorate trash bags with Earth Day messages for use at a local supermarket.

• Spread the word . . . have each student share a tip for helping the environment with 10 friends or family members in person, on the phone, or via e-mail. Discuss how much impact can be made by sharing knowledge and using our voices and minds.

• Learn about the environment you live in and have the class do research specific to your region. Create materials to share with residents on the beauty of the region and how to keep it safe.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Environmental Protective Agency Kids Club
www.epa.gov/kids

This site helps children explore their environment and learn how to protect it.

Center for Environmental Education Online
www.ceeonline.org

This site is a dynamic resource for educators and students, founded by Jayni and Chevy Chase.
More super titles for Earth Day and every day!

**GRADES PREK–3**

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* Listening Library audiobooks available
The path to recycling

Directions: Solve the maze and help these reusable objects make their way to the recycling bin.

To read all of Dr. Seuss's books, visit your local library or bookstore.

EDUCATORS: Please make copies of this activity sheet for your students.
A tree planting campaign

Directions: Count up the number of trees there would be if...

I planted one tree...

and told two friends to plant a tree...

...then __________ trees were planted because of me!

To read all of Dr. Seuss's books, visit your local library or bookstore.

EDUCATORS: Please make copies of this activity sheet for your students.
Directions: Write a letter to Mother Earth stating what you will do to help preserve her.

Dear Mother Earth,

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

I speak for you.

Yours truly,

(Your signature)

To read all of Dr. Seuss’s books, visit your local library or bookstore.

EDUCATORS: Please make copies of this activity sheet for your students.
ABOUT THE BOOK

Long before saving the earth became a global concern, Dr. Seuss, speaking through his character the Lorax, warned against mindless progress and the danger it posed to the earth's natural beauty.

"The big, colorful pictures and the fun images, wordplays and rhymes make this an amusing exposition of the ecology crisis."

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

- What was the land of the Lorax like before the Once-l'er arrived? Did it seem like someplace you'd like to live? What parts of your own environment would you be sad to see go?

- What kind of person is the Once-l'er? Why won't he listen to the Lorax? The Lorax says to the Once-l'er, "You are crazy with greed." Why does the Lorax say that? Do you agree or disagree?

- Why does the Lorax speak for the trees? Why is it important to speak up for others? Have you ever spoken up for someone else? Has someone else ever spoken up for you?

- How does the Once-l'er's Thneed business hurt the land of the Lorax? What happens to the Swomee-swans, the Brown Bar-ba-loots, and the Humming-fish? How could things have been different if the Once-l'er listened to the Lorax?

- What do you think the boy hearing the story will do with the Truffula seed that the Once-l'er tosses to him? What would you do if you were the boy?

- Do you think the Lorax and his friends will come back if new Truffula Trees grow? Where do you think they have been?

- The Once-l'er says, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." What does the Once-l'er mean? Can one person make a difference? Can you? What are some things you can do to better your own environment?

- How does the Once-l'er feel about what his Thneed business did to the Lorax and friends?

- Dr. Seuss used bright colors on some pages of the book and dull colors on others. Did you notice this? Why do you think he did that?

- Why is THE LORAX called a cautionary tale?