

UNIT 6 | PEOPLE AND RESOURCE USE

LESSONS FROM THE LORAX

METHOD

As a class, students listen to *The Lorax* and discuss lessons from the book.

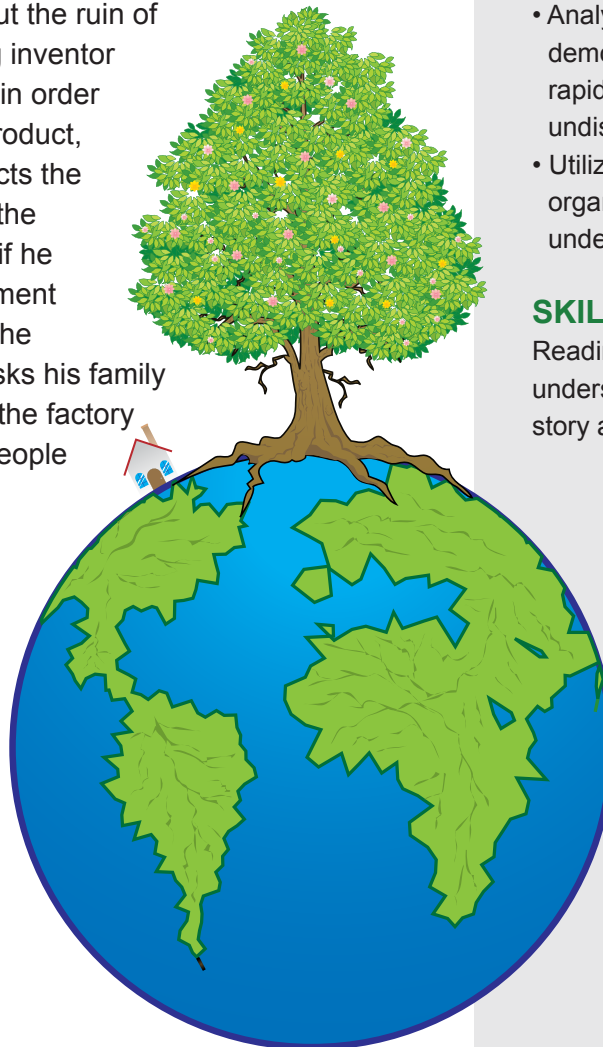
MATERIALS

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss*
Student Worksheet

*available in libraries, bookstores, and at online retailers

INTRODUCTION

The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss (Random House, ©1971), is a story told to a young boy about the ruin of a forest community when a young inventor uses up all the forest's resources in order to fulfill the demand for his new product, the thneed. The Lorax, who protects the forest, warns the young inventor, the Once-ler, about what will happen if he does not take care of the environment but the Once-ler ignores him. As the Once-ler's business booms, he asks his family to move to the forest and work in the factory with him. Soon, more and more people move to the forest. Increased population pressures and excessive use of the resources have a devastating result on the forest.



CONCEPT

Economic demands and population growth can lead to excessive use of natural resources, adding to environmental stress.

GRADE LEVEL

Lower and upper elementary

SUBJECTS

Language Arts, Social Studies, Science

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the interdependencies demonstrated in a fictional story of rapid development in a formerly undisturbed environment.
- Utilize a cause and effect graphic organizer to help cement understanding of the book.

SKILLS

Reading comprehension, understanding cause and effect, story analysis

PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the story, *The Lorax*. Take a moment to let students observe the illustrations throughout the book. Ask students to predict what they think will happen in the story, and talk about who the characters are and what kinds of problems they might face as you read the story.
2. Read *The Lorax* with your class and have students fill out the cause and effect graphic organizer on the Student Worksheet, while listening to the story. Stop along the way and ask for predictions about what might happen next. Encourage students to listen for clues in the story to help them find the effects of the causes that are listed on the organizer. With younger students, you may want to complete the graphic organizer as a class.
3. Discuss the following questions with your students after reading the story. You'll want to keep the book on hand to re-read portions or look at the illustrations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Once-ler need to make so many thneeds?

The Once-ler had a lot of demand for his thneeds – everyone wanted one, and he was making a lot of money.

2. What was the Lorax trying to tell the Once-ler? Why did they disagree?

The Lorax, who speaks for the trees, was trying to warn the Once-ler that in his rush to make thneeds, he wasn't taking care of the environment or the animals that lived there. He asked the Once-ler to please think about the harm he was causing by making his thneeds. They disagreed because the Once-ler wanted to make more thneeds and wasn't going to let the Lorax stop him.

3. Why did so many more Once-lers move to the area?

Because the business got too big for just the original Once-ler to handle on his own, so he called his family for help.

4. How were the animals and birds affected when more Truffula trees were cut down?

The trees were homes and food sources for the birds and animals in the forest. When the Truffula trees were cut down, their habitat was lost. They were no longer there to provide shade and fruit. The pollution from the factories also hurt the animals and as a result they left to find another place to call home.

5. How did the rapid population increase of the whole Once-ler family affect the environment?

The Once-lers all needed places to live, roads to drive their cars, and a bigger factory to make thneeds. The Once-lers didn't care enough about the environment while they were developing the area, and because all of the rapid changes happened faster than the environment could renew itself, it became very dirty and polluted.

6. What could the other Once-lers who moved there have done to keep it a nice place to live?

Answers will vary but may include: cleaning up after themselves and recycling their trash; they could have been mindful about their resource use and development, etc. If they had kept it a nice place to live, then the animals and birds wouldn't have had to leave their homes.

7. Is it possible that the Once-ler could have kept producing thneeds and making a profit without hurting the environment? What could he have done?

Answers will vary but may include: the Once-ler could have replanted Truffula trees as he cut them down; cut down the Truffula trees at a sustainable rate; built a factory that didn't create smog, etc.

8. What did the Lorax mean when he left the message "Unless" for the Once-ler?

The Lorax meant that unless someone cares about a situation, nothing will improve. The Once-ler didn't care about harming the land, birds, water, and animals while cutting down the Truffula trees. And as a result, he cut them all down and destroyed the environment.

9. In the beginning of the book, the Once-ler claimed that thneeds were something everyone needed. Do you think that they were really something that everyone needed? Why or why not? Did the Once-ler change his mind about the thneed being the thing that everyone needs at the end of the book?

A thneed was something that everyone wanted, even though they probably didn't really need it. At the end of the book, The Once-ler tells the boy that the Truffula trees are really the things that everyone needs, and that they are the most important thing.

10. Think about the imaginary land in *The Lorax* as it was before the Once-ler arrived. Did it remind you of any real place you have seen? Now think about how it looked after the population explosion changed the environment. Did it remind you of any real place you have seen?

Answers will vary. Explain urban sprawl as the outward spreading of a city and, if possible, provide an example of somewhere within your community. Urban sprawl results in the loss of green space, an increased dependence on cars, more pollution, and a less efficient use of land resources.

MEASURING LEARNING

Monitor student conversation during Discussion Questions. Collect the graphic organizer to gauge understanding.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. After students have read the book and discussed the questions, watch the film, *The Lorax*. A new version of the film came out in 2012. It follows the main concept of the book, but there are a few added story lines and additional characters (86 minutes). The 1971 television version is available on Amazon.com or available for free on the Google Video website by searching "The Lorax." This animated version follows the book exactly and includes catchy sing-along tunes (25 minutes).

2. If your students enjoy *The Lorax*, recommend that they read *The Wump World* by Bill Peet (Houghton Mifflin Co., ©1970). The Wumps lead a peaceful existence in the grassy meadows of Wump World until the Pollutians from Pollutus land on their world and begin changing their environment. This is a classic appropriate for all ages.
3. For more of a challenge, instruct students to reflect on the idea of the Once-ler's economic expansion but also the Once-lers disregard of the environmental implications. Once students have determined how they feel about either side, have students debate the arguments of their sides, and then propose the question: Can you have both environmental stewardship and economic expansion at the same time?

THE LORAX

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Name: _____

Date: _____

Cause	Effect
The Once-ler needed to produce more theeds.	
The Once-ler's family arrived to help him make more theeds. (Hint: Keep in mind the Brown Bar-ba-loots, the Swomee Swans, and the Humming Fish.)	
The very last Truffula tree was cut down.	
The Once-ler gives the boy the last Truffula tree seed.	