

## ***Teaching Activity: Do You Really Need a Thneed?***

**BACKGROUND:** Economic development is concerned with three basic questions, sometimes referred to as the "What, How and for Whom" problem. Each society deals with these questions in some fashion. Since there are limits to resources, basic choices must be made. In both developed and developing countries, a variety of answers to these questions have been tried; some are more successful from an efficiency and fairness standpoint than others:

- **Brute Force:** This is the basic bully approach. Those who are the strongest or most powerful take what they want (need) from the weak and helpless. This system, used under various conditions throughout history, has been the reason behind many wars;
- **Queuing:** This is based on the first - come, first- served idea. It is used at bakeries, ice cream parlors and gas stations. Sometimes you take a number and stand in line. As Americans learned during the Arab oil embargo during the 1970s, waiting in a queue can be very time-consuming. If this were the primary way of distributing resources, a society would be very inefficient.
- **Random Selection:** With this approach, throws of dice or lottery systems are used to make economic decisions. The incentive to produce is lost. Why work hard when your reward is determined by chance?
- **Tradition:** Those who have it, keep it. Successful businesses are passed along from one generation to another. Farms, ranches and estates are held "close to the nest", thereby eliminating any competition for the benefits to be derived.
- **Government:** The government decides who get what and how much. But how this is best done is not obvious. The two common approaches are "equal share" and "need". The role of the government is very important in regulating the safety, health and well being of those involved, as well as of the environment.
- **Market Economy:** This is the system in which anyone is allowed to produce any product and attempt to sell it to others. The producer is allowed to keep the profit and use that to maximize his/her own happiness, regardless of the effect on the resource and other members of society.

Most, if not all of the environmental problems facing the world today can be traced back to the over-development and misuse of the Earth's natural resources, from fossil fuels to forests to soil and water. Traditionally, economic development has made it profitable to pollute. In the U.S. until the government interfered with the system, a manufacturer only had to pay the cost of production and the side effects of that production - smoke, chemical effluent, loud noise and so on --- which often had a detrimental effect on the environment downstream or downwind. Whatever, the manufacturer didn't have to pay. The costs or benefits that were external to the actual act of production were passed over or passed on to someone else. Development simply did not recognize the absolute boundaries or limits of the ecosystem being impacted, and larger problems evolved over time.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To identify the demands of society on development and technology;
- To identify the positive and negative impacts of development and technology on society and the environment;

**Notes:** Encourage students to analyze the various economic value systems which exist in society. They should develop an understanding and appreciation of opposing systems and points of view, that each of those points of view feel perfectly justified in the stand they have taken and that dealing with any issue, all points of view must be addressed.

### **OPTIONS:**

- #1. Simulation/role play of video characters involving a news reporter's interview of those characters;
- #2. Simulation/role play activity involving persuasive presentations at a mock city council meeting;
- #3. Group activity involving identification/ examination of commonly owned **gadgets** in regard to need vs. want;

### **PREPARATION:**

- Days prior to Lesson: Preview book or video **The Lorax**.
- Day of Lesson: Reproduce necessary number of worksheets.

### **MATERIALS:**

For all options:

- Seuss, Dr. (Ted Geisel) (1971) **The Lorax**. New York, Random House  
(Also available in video format)

For Option #1:

For each student:

1. **The Lorax: Before, During and After** worksheet

For news reporters:

1. **News Reporter's Questions** worksheet

For Option #2:

1. **The Lorax Worksheet (Option #2)**

For Option #3:

1. **The Lorax Worksheet (Option #3)**

## PROCEDURE:

### Option #1: Day #1 (40 minutes):

1. Show video/ read book: The Lorax. (See Day 2: You may want to assign parts to students before viewing the video.)
2. Have students complete: The Lorax: Before, During and After Worksheet.
3. Discuss responses in class discussion.

### Option #1: Day #2 (40 minutes):

1. Divide class into groups of 5.
2. Use simulation/role playing cooperative technique and assign each student in the group one of the following roles:

- Onceler
- The Lorax
- Barbaloot/Swammy Swan/Hummy Fish/ Truffula Tree  
(Representing all living things)
- Little Boy
- Reporter from local newspaper

3. The reporter in each group will interview the characters using the **News Reporter's Question Sheet**.
4. Have reporters share their interviews with the class. (Give the students the option of writing up the interviews for a class newspaper such as the "Whoville Times")
5. Discuss the interviews. As a result of this discussion, have students recommend a compromise that could have averted the disastrous results in The Lorax.

### Option #2: Day #1 (40 minutes)

1. Show video/read book: The Lorax. (See Day #2: You may want to assign parts to students before viewing the video.)
2. Have students respond to the questions on **The Lorax Worksheet (Option 2)**.
3. Have students share their responses in a class discussion.
4. Have students write what they think will happen next in the story.

**Option #2: Day #2 (40 minutes)**

1. Hold a mock city council meeting to resolve the environmental issues created by the Thneed industry.
2. Divide the class into groups representing the following characters:

City Council	Once-ler
The Lorax	Swammy Swans
Barbaloots	Hummy Fish
Truffula Trees	Once-ler Family
3. Give each of the points of view 5 minutes to present their opinions to the City Council.
4. Give the City Council a 10 minute time limit in which they must come up with a problem resolution based upon the arguments given.

**Option #3: Day #1 (40 minutes)**

1. Show video/ read book: The Lorax.
2. Have students respond to the questions on The Lorax Worksheet (Option 3).
3. Have students share their responses in a class discussion.

**Option #3: Day #2 (40 minutes)**

1. Divide the class into groups of 4-5.
2. Have students work in cooperative groups to list all the current gadgets existing in our society today that we really don't need.
3. Have students share their list in a class discussion. Encourage them how to discuss how a task might be completed other than utilizing the gadget and also how Man and the environment might benefit from the elimination of the gadget.

**ASSESSMENT/PORTFOLIO**

In addition to the assessments already included, journal entries could also be included, based on the following:

- Why doesn't the Once-ler have a face?
- If you could be invisible for a day, what would you do?
- Because we are the most intelligent beings on the planet, our needs should take priority over all living things.
- Have you ever been a Once-ler?

# THE LORAX: Before, During and After (1)



Complete the chart below by indicating the conditions before, during and after the Thneed Industry. Make your responses as specific as possible.

	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
AIR QUALITY			
WATER QUALITY			
TREES			
ANIMALS			
THNEED POPULATION			
LOCAL ECONOMY			
ONCELER'S PROFITS			



## The Lorax: Before, During and After (2)

1. What was society's role in the destruction of the environment? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What do you think was the Once-ler's motivation for cutting down the trees? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Have you ever been a Onceler? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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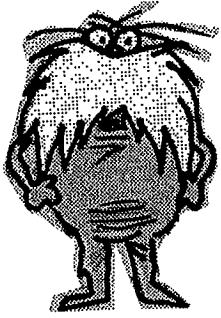
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## NEWS REPORTER'S QUESTIONS (Option 1)

You are a reporter for a local newspaper. Use the questions below to complete your interview. After asking these questions, feel free to add a few of your own.

For the Barbaloots/Swammy Swans/ Hummy Fish/Truffula Tree:

1. How did it feel when the Once-ler moved in and began cutting down the trees?
2. What problems did the Thneed industry create for you and your fellow animal and plant friends?

For the Little Boy:

1. Do you think it was important for the Once-ler to tell you the story, and why?
2. How did you feel when the last truffula seed was given to you? What do you plan to do with it?

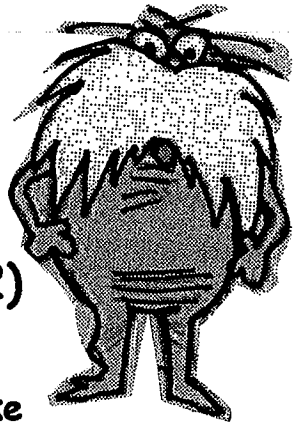
For the Once-ler:

1. Why didn't you listen to the Lorax?
2. What could you have done to prevent what ultimately happened?

For the Lorax:

1. Was there something more you could have done for your friends?
2. What are your feelings toward the Once-ler right now?

## THE LORAX WORKSHEET (Option 2)



What were the technologies used by the Once-ler to make more and more Thneeds?

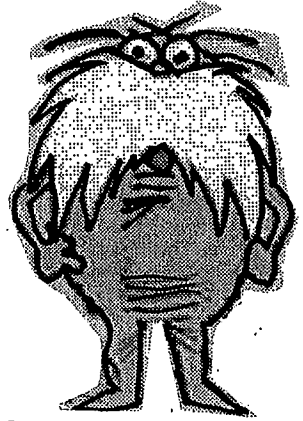
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

What was society's role in the destruction of the environment?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_



## THE LORAX WORKSHEET (OPTION 3)



1. How did things change as a result of the Once-ler's activities?
2. What could Once-ler have done to prevent the outcome seen at the end of the Lorax?
3. How did the Lorax feel after Once-ler moved in and began cutting down the Truffula trees?
4. Why do you think it was important for the Once-ler to tell the story to the young boy?
5. What were some of the problems that the Thneed industry caused?
6. What do you think was the Once-ler's motivation for cutting down the Truffula trees?
7. Why do you think Once-ler did not listen to the pleas of the Lorax?
8. How did the Thneed industry change from beginning to end?
9. What would you have done if you were the Once-ler? (At the end of the story)
10. Do you think of yourself as being like a Once-ler? Why?



## THE LORAX WORKSHEET (Option 3)

11. By ignoring the reasoning of the Lorax, what did the Once-ler actually assure for himself?
12. Who or what do you think the Once-ler represents?
13. Have you ever done anything that you think the Lorax would have done?
14. Who or what do you think the Lorax represents?
15. Did the Lorax speak for anything or anyone other than the trees?
16. If you had to interview the Once-ler in order to write an article for the school newspaper, what questions would you have liked to ask him?
17. What is the message this video/book is trying to teach?
18. Besides using a cartoon video or book, what other ways could this message be shared with other people in the community?