



CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITY: DO YOU REALLY NEED A THNEED?

The Lorax, written by Dr. Seuss in 1971, focuses on environmentalism and the consequences of increasing industrialization. Seuss personifies big enterprise as an entrepreneur, the Once-ler, and the stereotypical environmentalist in the Lorax. The Lorax is a mysterious character that attempts to protect animals' habitats from the Once-ler's destructive and greedy actions. The message that Seuss portrays about the detrimental effects of irresponsible development and environmental apathy is one that resounds strongly in today's world with the ever-looming prospects of global warming.

Prerequisite Knowledge: To teach this lesson, it is important to have a basic understanding of what sustainable development is. **Sustainable development (SD)** is an idea that has gained popularity and momentum worldwide. In short, SD describes planning and conducting human activities in a way that preserves the environment and the climate. There are four basic elements that are all interconnected and need to be considered whenever teaching SD. First, there are **humans' basic needs**. These include water, food, shelter, income, clothing, safety and health. Some consider education and spiritual components as basic human needs. Second, there are **economic needs**. It is necessary to note that most individuals and nations continually seek to improve their economic status so that they have more money available to purchase more goods and services. Third, there are **technological needs**- the tools, methods, and/or systems that humans use. Technology is used to help meet economic needs, but at times will harm the environment and/or the climate. So, there is a need for the invention of new technologies that are pollution free and that use renewable energy. Fourth and finally, there are **environmental needs**- the protection, preservation, and conservation of living and non-living resources in the natural world. Maintaining a healthy environment is vital in meeting humans' basic and economic needs. Each of these needs are very complicated but it is important to understand the relationship and interconnections each shares with one another.

Sustainable development will be a difficult idea to make a reality. Economic development around the world remains a priority, and convincing individuals, companies, and countries to implement sustainable technologies while there are other cheaper alternatives can be tricky. This is a conflict that can only be resolved in one of two ways- either sustainable technology drops in price to compete with unsustainable and polluting technologies, or decision makers around the world recognize the long-term benefits and necessity of technological and economic development that sustains the environment.

Note: Activity adapted from www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/resources/activities/lorax.phtml

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- ✓ Understand the 3 basic parts of sustainable development;
- ✓ Understand the relationship between the 3 parts of SD and be able to identify conflicts;
- ✓ Draw parallels between environmental events that take place in **THE LORAX** and some that take place in society;
- ✓ Present possible solutions regarding technology and how it can work without harming the environment;

MATERIALS:

- ✚ Copy of **THE LORAX**, one book per group
- ✚ DVD of **THE LORAX** (1978 version)
- ✚ Copy of student worksheet, one per student
- ✚ **THREE PARTS OF SUSTAINABILITY: TWO INTERPRETATIONS** figure

PREPARATION:

1. Use the information in the **Prerequisite Knowledge** section to initiate discuss the need for a change in the economic value systems that exist in society.

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide students into pairs or small groups and ask them to read the book aloud together. Or you may show the movie to the entire class and then provide each group with a copy of the book to use while completing the worksheet.

2. Instruct students to complete the accompanying table and then the **STUDENT WORKSHEET** after reading the book (or watching the movie) by referring to the text and the pictures in the story.
3. Once students have completed the worksheet, guide them into a discussion that will enable them to discover a definition of sustainability by explaining how the economy, society, and the environment are connected.
 - a. In the story, how did the Thneed industry affect the physical environment?
 - b. How did these environmental conditions affect local plants and animals?
 - c. How did Thneed production affect Once-lers and people (employees, neighbors, etc.)
 - d. Based on your observations from this story, was this method of manufacturing Thneeds sustainable?
 - e. How would you define the phrase "sustainable development?"
4. Use the **THREE PARTS OF SUSTAINABILITY: TWO INTERPRETATIONS** figure to prompt a discussion about which visual provides a better model of sustainability.
 - + Conclude this discussion by offering a definition of sustainability and describing its three components (environment, economy, society).
5. Conclude this activity by discussing the following questions:
 - a. How could the Once-ler have manufactured Thneeds in a more sustainable manner?
 - b. Whose responsibility is it to protect the environment and ensure sustainable practices?
 - c. What federal, state, and local agencies exist to protect the environment?

ASSESSMENTS/ EXTENSIONS

In addition to the activities already completed, consider the following for possible inclusion in the lesson:

- ✚ Create task cards of the possible choices shown below and ask students to create a journal entry based on the following:

TASK CARD 1

Throughout the story Dr. Seuss only lets us see parts of the Once-ler (his eyes and hands). Why do you think he does that? What do you think the rest of the Once-ler looks like? Brainstorm some ideas, and then draw a picture of the Once-ler.

TASK CARD 2

Imagine how the story of **THE LORAX** would have been different if the Once-ler had practiced sustainable development from the beginning. Rewrite a new version of the story. Your plan for the production of Thneeds should eliminate the negative social and environmental effects described in the original story. Try to include all 3 parts of sustainable development.

TASK CARD 3

You have inherited the Once-ler's company and the last Truffula seed. A group of people would like to put money into a project that practices sustainable development. Prepare a presentation to demonstrate how you will deal with their concerns. Your proposal should be one that will eliminate the negative social and environmental effects described in the story. Try to include the 3 parts of sustainable development.

TASK CARD 4

Build a three-dimensional model of the Thneed factory and the environment around it. The factory should be one that will eliminate the negative social and environmental impacts found in the story. Try to include the three parts of sustainable development in your plan.

TASK CARD 5

Interview the different groups of characters in the story (Brown Bar-ba-loots, Humming- Fish, Swomee-Swans, Once-ler) who were negatively affected by the Thneed factory. Each group wants the factory to remain, but they want the negative effects removed. Each group should express how they were affected and propose a solution that would remove the negative effects from the environment and allow the factory to continue production. Each groups plan should include a plan for the manufacture of Thneeds that eliminates the negative social and environmental impacts directly related to them.

TASK CARD 6

Imagine that you are the Once-ler at the end of the story of **THE LORAX**. Write a diary entry describing how you would have run your business differently if you had known what you know now about the way things turned out. As the Once-ler, do you think development is a problem, progress or a promise?

TASK CARD 7

When the Once-ler realized that there was money to be made he organized a system to manufacture and distribute his product. Use the picture and the text to describe each part of the process below. Then give a real life example of each component of the production process. Create a diagram showing the flow of material(s) and energy used to produce a Thneed.

TASK CARD 8

Living and nonliving things are interdependent (they rely on one another) in different ecosystems around the world. Can you think of an example or two of time the Lorax interrupted an interdependent relationship found in nature? Illustrate the relationship with a diagram showing the interconnections and explain it.

TASK CARD 9

As the production of Thneeds increased, a "domino effect" was created. Think of as many real-life examples that can be compared to events in The Lorax. Do some research if necessary. Describe how each event caused another reaction, creating a "domino effect." Use the format below:

The _____ is similar to _____ because _____ and it caused _____.

TASK CARD 11

The Once-ler, like other humans in business, organized a system to manufacture and distribute his product. Listed below are several parts of a manufacturing process. Create a chart/table showing if and how each of the following was used in the story.

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|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. raw materials | b. product design |
| c. labor (workers) | d. assembly line |
| e. energy | f. shipping, transportation |
| g. communication | h. profits/ losses |

THREE PARTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TWO INTERPRETATIONS

