**The Lorax: What’s Your Ending?**

. . . Unless Someone Like You Cares an Awfully Lot

**Lesson Authors:**

* Victoria Neubert
* Kelly Johnson
* Micah Slover
* Renee Litterell
* Erin Moody
* edited by Dr. Rita Littrell

**FOCUS:**

**Overview:**

This lesson uses Dr. Seuss unique and creative writing style to teach basic economic understandings about wants, production, costs and benefits to readers of ages eight to eighteen. It emphasizes creative and critical thinking combined with writing and presentation skills. After reading parts of the original *The Lorax* story by Dr. Seuss, students are asked to work in groups to write their own ending to the story. Each group performs their ending for the class.

**Length:** Six days - 30 minutes a day

**Grade Levels:** 2 to 8

**PREPARE:**

**Materials:**

Items needed for this lesson:

1. The book, *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.
2. Props for students to use for skits.
3. Handouts of *Costs/Benefits Analysis* and *Skit Evaluation* for each student.

**TEACH:**

**Day one:**

1. Read *The Lorax* to the page where the Whisper-ma-Phone is dropped to his ear.
2. Ask students to speculate on why they think the Lorax was lifted away.
3. Show the illustrations on the first two pages. Ask students to note what they see. Hopefully, they will say that it is very grey and ugly. They will state that there are no trees or plants except Grickle-grass.
4. Ask students to generate ideas about what might have happened to the trees and plants.
5. Define natural resources ‘gifts of nature’; things that are present without human intervention. These include trees, plants, soil, minerals, sunshine, etc. Ask students to name natural resources they can think of. Keep an ongoing list where they can add things as they think of them.
6. Ask the students to think about natural resources as you read the story.

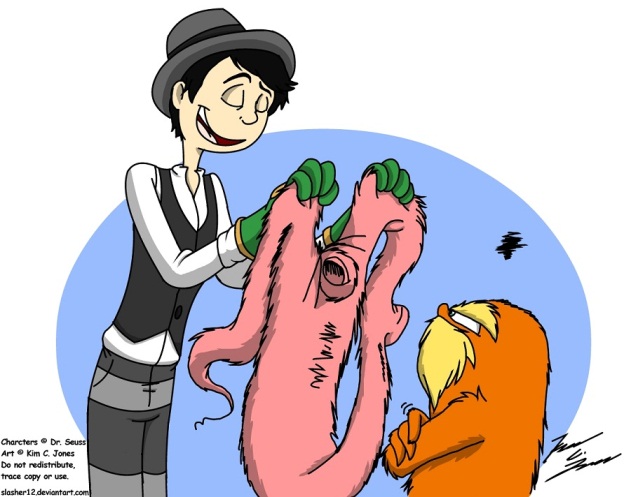
**Day two:**

1. Read the book from the beginning to the page where he sells the first Thneed for $3.98.
2. Ask a few students to describe what the Onceler saw when he first discovered the Truffala Trees. Descriptions should include pond, trees with bright-colored tufts, white clouds, Swomee-Swans, Brown Bar-ba-loots, Truffala fruits, and Humming-Fish.
3. Ask the following questions. Define natural resources. (*gifts of nature; naturally occurring resources*) Have you found any natural resources in the story? (*All the resources listed in # 11 above would be natural resources.*)
4. Describe the tufts of the Traffula Trees. *Descriptions should include softer than silk and smell of fresh butterfly milk.* Can you think of a different name for butterfly milk? This would be nectar. This is a good time to discuss writing and the interesting way authors choose to use description words. Dr. Seuss was a master at this. His writing and illustrations were very whimsical.
5. What did the Onceler do once he discovered this natural place? (*Built a small shop and chopped down a Truffala Tree to knit a Thneed.*)
6. Ask students to describe the Lorax to emphasize the fun and interesting language used by Dr. Seuss. You might ask if any of his descriptors sound like their teacher! ☺
7. For whom does the Lorax speak? (*the trees*)
8. What was made from the Truffala Tree? (a Thneed)
9. Recant the uses for the thneed. (*shirt, sock, glove, hat, carpets, pillows, sheets, curtains, bicycle seats*)
10. Was the thneed was something people wanted?
11. Define wants as desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good, service, or leisure activity. Is a thneed a want?
12. Ask the price of the thneed? (*$3.98*)
13. ****Explain that people whose wants are satisfied by using goods and services are called consumers. The person who bought the thneed is a consumer.

**Day three:**

1. Review The Lorax to the page where the Brown Bar-ba-loots migrate. It ends with ‘crummies in tummies, you know’.
2. Describe what happened after he sold the first thneed. (*Called family to come and work in the large plant he built.*)
3. Discuss the reason the family came and the factory was built. (*To earn a profit; to get rich.*)
4. Explain that people who make goods and provide services are called producers. Who in the story is a producer? (*the Onceler and his family*)
5. Explain to students that in a market economic system, profit is the motivation for an entrepreneur to take on risk and to organize the factors of production to produce goods or services. Who is the entrepreneur in the story? (*the Onceler*)
6. Is the thneed a good or service? (*Good because goods are objects that can satisfy people's wants and services are actions that can satisfy people's wants.*)
7. Explain that capital goods are goods that are produced and used to make other goods and services. For education, capital tools or goods would be the desk, chairs, building, white board, computer, etc. Ask students to identify capital goods used in the thneed production. (*factory, mule, wagon, ax, knitting sticks*)
8. Explain that productive resources are the natural resources, human resources, and capital goods available to make goods and services. Who provides the human resources in the book? (*the Onceler’s family*)
9. Challenge the students to identify something used for production that helped them to produce thneeds much faster. (Super-Axe-Hacker) Explain that this would be a new technology or capital good used in production. By producing things faster, the producer can earn more profit.
10. What goods and leisure activity did the Brown Bar-ba-loots want? (*Truffula fruits and to play in the shade of the trees*)
11. Explain that productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others. The Truffula Trees were used for fruit, shade and thneeds. People were willing to pay for the thneeds so what was produced? (*the thneed*)
12. Share that people's choices about what goods and services to buy and consume determine how resources will be used. Therefore, the Truffula Tree was used for thneeds.
13. Explain that whenever a choice is made, something is given up. Ask students what was given up when the trees were used to produce thneeds? (fruit and shade)
14. Explain that the fruit and shade are the opportunity cost of the choice to use the trees to produce thneeds. Define opportunity cost as the value of the best alternative given up.
15. Ask students if the Onceler was happy about the opportunity cost of homes for the Brown Bar-ba-loots. (*No, he had crummies in his tummy*)
16. So why did he continue to destroy the homes for the animals? (*to earn money*)
17. Assign students to individually write a page describing what they think would happen next. If they are familiar with the story, challenge them to write a new ending.

**Day four:**

1. Read The Lorax ending on page where the Onceler says he plans on BIGGERING, BIGGERING AND BIGGERING.
2. Discuss what happens to the Swomee-Swans. (*Smogulous smoke has made it where they can’t sing.*) What causes this? (*pollution*)
3. What types of pollution were experienced in the United States during the 1960s and 70s? (*water and air pollution; some rivers burned due to the large amount of pollution*)
4. Do we have similar problems today? (*yes*) What cities have the world’s worst pollution? (*California has 8 of the worst 10 cities measured by ozone according to the American Lung Association. Houston, Dallas, DC, New York, Phoenix and Las Vegas are in the top 25 ; According to the World Health Organization, cities in India, Iran, Pakistan, Botswana and Mongolia have pollution levels considered to be detrimental to health*.)
5. The factory produces Bluppity-Glupp and Scholppity-Schlopp as a by-product of Thneed production. What do they do with this stuff? (*dump it into the rivers and ponds*)
6. What must leave because of polluted water? (*Humming fish*)
7. Explain that a cost is what you give up when you decide to do something. A benefit if what satisfies your wants. In The Lorax, what satisfied their wants? (*Thneed*) What was the cost or what was given up in order to have more Thneeds? (*clean air and water*)
8. What was the message from the Lorax? (*That the Once-Ler was ruining the trees, air and water.*)
9. Put the students into groups of 4 or 5. Have them collectively write an ending for *The Lorax* story before they know the ending created by Dr. Seuss. Give students about 25 minutes to determine and summarize what they think the ending should be. Encourage creativity since many of the students may have seen the movie.

**Day Five:**

1. Read the remainder of the story.
2. Ask: What happened once the last Truffala Tree was felled? (*the family   
   left because there was no more money to be made selling Thneeds*)
3. What was left? (*Bad-smelling sky and big empty factory*)
4. What did the Lorax do? (*lifted and went away*)
5. What did the Lorax leave behind? (*rocks piled up with word ‘unless’*)
6. What does the Once-Ler finally understand? (*Unless someone like you cares an awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.*)
7. What can you do if you care? (*plant trees, recycle, buy products that are produced in ways that care for the environment or consume fewer resources*)(*find ways to consumer fewer resources or to produce things we want without consuming as many resources; examples include alternative energy sources*)
8. Give students 20 to 30 minutes to create a play depicting the ending they wrote. Encourage use of props. Skits will be performed the following day.

**Day Six:**

1. Have each group of students perform the skits.
2. Have students evaluate the stories created by the classmates using the attached form.

**Evaluation:**

Have students work independently to complete the Costs/Benefits Analysis chart at the end of the lesson. From the story, the benefits are Thneeds. The costs include clean air, water, Truffula Trees, Truffula fruit, and shade.

Optional Research Topics:

* This story was copyrighted in 1971 by Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss. Write a newspaper article telling what was happening regarding companies and pollution during the 1960s and 70s that would cause Dr. Seuss to feel the need to write this book. Do we have similar pollution problems today?
* Have students research the value of trees. What do they do for the soil, air and water? Write a news article telling about programs developed to improve our environment. An example would be to research Wangari Maathai from Kenya and to write about the Green Belt movement.

**Economic Frameworks:**

**Standard 1: Scarcity**

**Students will understand that:** Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others.

Grade 4 Benchmarks:

1) People make choices because they can't have everything they want.

2) Economic wants are desires that can be satisfied by consuming a good, service, or leisure activity.

3) Goods are objects that can satisfy people's wants.

4) Services are actions that can satisfy people's wants.

5) People's choices about what goods and services to buy and consume determine how resources will be used.

6) Whenever a choice is made, something is given up.

7) The opportunity cost of a choice is the value of the best alternative given up.

8) People whose wants are satisfied by using goods and services are called consumers.

9) Productive resources are the natural resources, human resources, and capital goods available to make goods and services.

10) Natural resources, such as land, are "gifts of nature;" they are present without human intervention.

11) Human resources are the quantity and quality of human effort directed toward producing goods and services.

12) Capital goods are goods that are produced and used to make other goods and services.

13) Human capital refers to the quality of labor resources, which can be improved through investments in education, training, and health.

14) Entrepreneurs are people who organize other productive resources to make goods and services.

15) People who make goods and provide services are called producers.

**Standard 14: Entrepreneurship**

**Students will understand that:**  Entrepreneurs take on the calculated risk of starting new businesses, either by embarking on new ventures similar to existing ones or by introducing new innovations. Entrepreneurial innovation is an important source of economic growth.

1. Entrepreneurs are individuals who are willing to take risks, to develop new products, and start new businesses. They recognize opportunities, like working for themselves, and accept challenges.
2. An invention is a new product. Innovation is the introduction of an invention into a use that has economic value.

**Skit Evaluation 3-2-1:** For each skit lists three things that you liked about their ending. List two things that you would change. List one question you have for them.

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| 1. http://abbeydufoe.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/the-lorax-movie-wallpapers-3.jpg**Skit Title: Evaluate your skit.** |

**Costs/Benefits Analysis of *The Lorax***

**Evaluate the decision made by the Once-Ler. He chose to use the Truffula Trees to produce Thneeds. Whenever a choice is made, the opportunity to use that resource for something else is given up. Determine what was given up when the Once-Ler kept producing more and more Thneeds.**

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| **Benefits** | **Costs** |
| **Thneeds** |  |