

LEVEL: Part A: Grades 2-12;
Variation 1: Grades 5-8; Variation
2: Grades 6-12; Part B: Grades 6-
8

SUBJECTS: Science, Social
Studies, Language Arts.

PROCESS: By reading fables
such as *The Lorax*, *Dr. Seuss* or
The Man Who Planted Trees, Jean
Giono, students examine the
importance of conserving natural
resources.

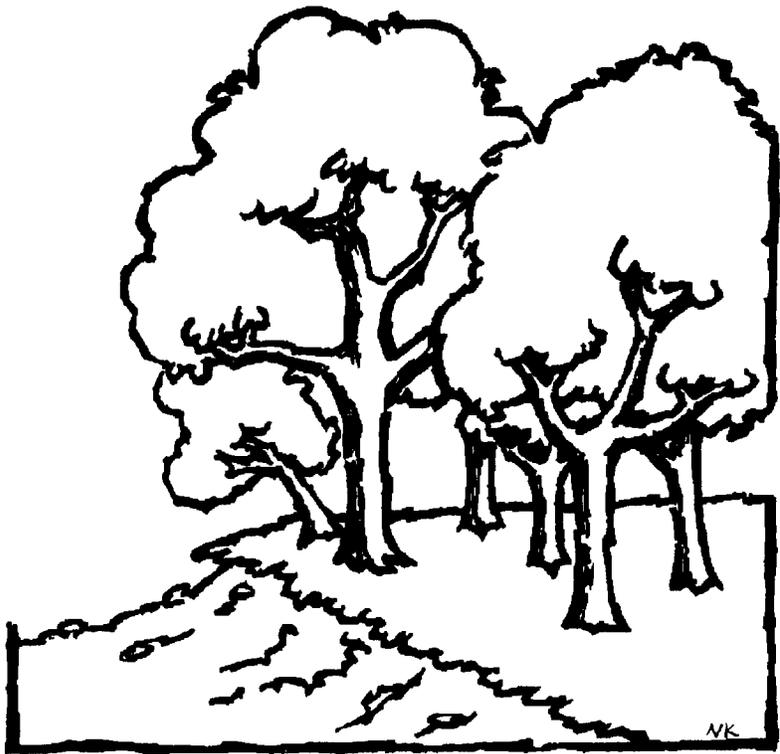
OBJECTIVES: The student will
Discuss and analyze a fictional
story relating to the proper and
improper use of natural resources.

TIMEFRAME: Preparation: 15
minutes. Activity: Part A: 50
minutes; Part B: 50 minutes; Part
C: 2 50-minute periods.

SKILLS: Analyzing, comparing
and contrasting, discussing,
evaluating, forming concepts,
identifying main ideas, speaking,
writing.

MATERIALS: Paper, pencils, *The
Lorax*, *Dr. Seuss*, *The Man Who
Planted Trees*, Jean Giono.
(Extensions: Crayons, markers,
posterboard.)

VOCABULARY: Deforestation,
natural resources.



TREES FOR MANY REASONS

OVERVIEW: 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 protec-
tion, beauty, and a habitat for
plants and animals.

Humans have always de-
pended 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 ad-
equately replanted. This process of
deforestation can have severe
environmental consequences on a
regional and global scale.

PROCEDURE:

PRE-ACTIVITY:

1. Obtain a copy of *The
Lorax* or *The Man Who Planted
Trees* to read aloud to your stu-
dents. Motion pictures or videos of
both stories are also available.

2. For the Variation in Part
A, write each question on an index
card. Do the same for the ques-
tions in Part B.

ACTIVITY: GRADES 2-12

PART A: THE LORAX

1. Read *The Lorax* aloud or
watch the video.
2. Ask students to list what
they think are the major ideas of
the story.
3. Ask:

**-Why do you think the
Once-ler did what he did?**

**-What patterns of change in
the environment did we ob-
serve?**

**-What were environmental
conditions like before the com-
pany started making Thneeds?
What were they like afterward?**

-What was the author's message concerning what one person can do to save or destroy the environment?

VARIATION 1: GRADES 5-8

1. Read *The Lorax* aloud or watch the video.
2. Divide the class into six groups. Give each group a card with one of the following questions written on it.

Each group discusses its question, writes down the answers, and prepares to read their answers to the entire 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 "UN-LESS"? 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.

-The Once-ler explains his actions by saying, "If I didn't do it, someone else would." Is this a good excuse for doing what he did?

-The Lorax says he speaks for the trees. What does this mean to you? What is the Lorax's attitude at the end of the story?

-What seems to be the author's purpose in writing this fable? (A fable is a fictional story that teaches a lesson.)

4. After groups have had time for discussion, each group reads their questions and answers to the class. Students can agree, disagree, or add to the answers given by their classmates.

VARIATION 2: GRADES 9-12

1. Read *The Lorax* aloud or watch the video. Analyze the story and present oral or written answers to the following questions. Develop each response carefully, sighting specific examples from the story.

-What seems to be the author's intent in writing the book? To what age group is it directed? Why?

-Are any of the situations presented in the story similar to real situations in present-day society? If so, describe which resources and which groups of people are involved.

-What values appear to be important to the characters in the story? Who might these characters represent in real life? Are any of their values in apparent conflict? Which ones? For what reasons?

2. Write and illustrate a children's book on another environmental topic. The text can be in poetry or story form and need not be extremely wordy. Illustrate with drawings, pictures from magazines, etc.

PART B: GRADES 6-8 THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES

1. Read *The Man Who Planted Trees* aloud, make copies of the story available for students to read ahead of time, or show the video. Ask students to list what they think are the major ideas. After listing their ideas on the chalkboard, discuss the following questions with the entire group:

-Why do you think Elzeard did what he did?

-What changes did the narrator notice between his visits?

-What were the environmental conditions like before Elzeard planted the trees? What were they like afterward?

-What was the author's message about the difference one person can make?

2. Divide the class into six groups. Give each group an index card with one of the following six statements on it. Each group decides if students agree or disagree with the statement.

If they agree, they give three reasons why, and then give an example from real life of how this statement is true. If they disagree, they state why and modify it into a statement they agree with.

-The balance of nature is important to all life on Earth and can easily be destroyed.

-Humans cannot place themselves apart from nature in making decisions about natural resources.

-Actions taken without thought or planning can have disastrous consequences.

-Natural resources are not limitless and can be used up if they are not managed carefully for the long run.

-Each person has a responsibility to help conserve resources and protect the environment.

-Consumers should demand that manufacturers produce products in an environmentally-sound manner.

3. After students have had time for discussion, have each group read its statement and then present the results of its discussion. The group leading the discussion should encourage classmates to say whether they agree, disagree, or have ideas to add.

ASSESSMENT:

1. Use students' answers to the questions at the end of each story to assess students' understanding of the environmental messages contained in the stories.

2. Have each student write a summary of the main environmental points in each story.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Either alone or in small groups, students write and illustrate a sequel to *The Lorax*. The sequel might explain how the Truffula tree made a come-back 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.

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

-Does either the original Lorax 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?

-What does the Truffula Tree Company provide to the local economy?

-Who will provide Thneeds if the Truffula Tree Company doesn't?

2. Have students prepare a sequence to the key events in *The Lorax*. Then, have them draw a diagram or flow chart showing the connections between characters in the story (Swomee-Swans, Bar-ba-loots, Lorax) and the natural resources (Truffula trees, clean air, clean water).

RESOURCES:

Johnny Appleseed, Steven Kellog, New York, William Morrow and Co., 1988.

Just a Dream, Chris Van Allsburg, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990.

Kenju's Forest, Yukno Morimoto, Australia, Collins Publishers, 1989.

Song of the Trees, Mildred D. Taylor, Bantam-Skylark.

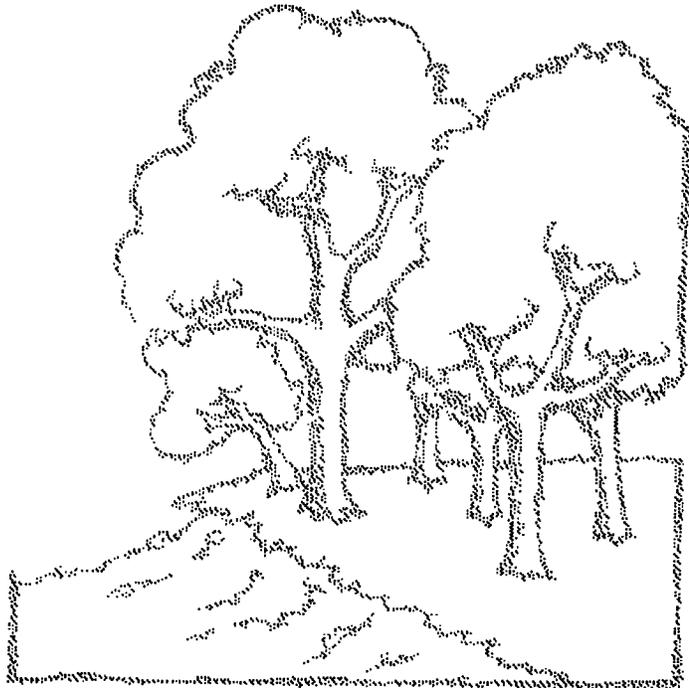
The Grandpa Tree, Mike Donahue, Boulder, CO, Robert Rinehart, 1988.

The Lorax, Dr. Seuss, New York, Random House, 1971 (also available on video tape).

The Man Who Planted Trees, Jean Giono, Chelsea Green Publishing Co., 1985 (also available on video tape).

The Tree in the Moon (and Other Legends of Trees and Plants), Rosalind Kerven, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press Syndicate, 1989.

Credit: *Project Learning Tree Environmental Education Activity Guide: Pre K-8* © American Forest Foundation, 1993-1994.



4. Arrange the "Critter Tokens" neatly around the edge of the Ecosystem Map. There should be at least three of each different "Critter Token." They don't need to be in any particular sequence.

5. Shuffle and stack the 12 "Ecosystem Cards" face down beside the Ecosystem Map. One student draws a card and reads it aloud to the group. Each student examines his or her own "Critter Cards" to determine if those animals or plants could help solve the ecosystem problem described. If so, students explain how to the group. If the group agrees, a "Critter Token" of that plant or animal is placed on the map ecosystem. Remember more than one plant or animal **may** be used to solve the problem. There may be several unused "Critter Tokens" at the end of the activity.

6. When all the "Ecosystem Cards" have been drawn and all the ecosystem problems solved, have the groups compare their results with the other groups' results.

7. Discuss and ask:

-Could any of these solutions backfire? In other words could the plants or animals used to help solve certain problems end up being a problem themselves?

-Are there other wild plants or animals (not identified in this activity) that could have been used to help solve the ecosystem problems?

-The gambusia fish is not native to many states. Is it okay to introduce "foreign species" to help with an ecosystem problem? What are the benefits? What are the risks?

-How could the location of the 12 ecosystems on the map be redesigned to reduce some of the environmental problems?

-Are there ways that animals, plants, and humans could work together to solve environmental problems?

-In what ways is this activity realistic? Unrealistic?

ASSESSMENT:

Have students:

1. Summarize five or more of the ecosystem problems described in this activity and explain how a wild animal or plant was helpful in solving those problems.

2. Define "niche." Give examples of the niches held by the animals and plants described in this activity.

3. Think of one ecosystem problem (not used in this activity) and describe how wild plants and animals might be used to help solve the problem.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Students may research more information about the animals or plants on the "Critter Cards."

2. Survey the neighborhood or study the newspapers and news articles for local environmental problems. Could they be solved by using wild animal or plant managers? Have students make their own maps of the community highlighting environmental issues.



PASTE ECOSYSTEM CARDS ON THE BACK OF 3"x5" INDEX CARDS