

THE LORAX

The Introduction

The Lorax is a story about a man who abused the environment and about what he learned. The story begins in the most run-down part of a dull, gray town. A small boy asks the Once-ler to share the secret of the Lorax and how he was taken away. Thus, the story is told as a "flashback" as the Once-ler talks about the Lorax and past events.

The Characters:

The Once-ler, a businessman

The Lorax, a leader of the plants and animals

The Once-ler's Story: The Beginning

The Once-ler moved across the land in his wagon. He came upon a new land with an important natural resource. (A natural resource is a plant, animal or mineral that can be used by people.)

1. What was this natural resource the Once-ler found?

Setting Up Shop

The Once-ler used the land's natural resource to start a business which made and sold a product. The Lorax appeared at this point and asked the Once-ler some angry questions.

2. What was the product?
3. How was it used by buyers?
4. What did the Lorax want to know of the Once-ler?
5. How did the Once-ler answer?

Using Technology

Businessmen like the Once-ler sometimes try to make more money by increasing the number of products they can sell. Often new machines and other systems are invented to do this. Other people use machines to make work faster, easier, and more accurate. For example, students, engineers, and others use calculators. Robots are sometimes used to weld cars. Sometimes machines are used to work humans can not do. All these machines are examples of "Technology". Often the word "technology" means complicated sets of machines, like those found working together in an automobile plant assembly line. Sometimes "technology" refers to a simple machine like a pencil.

6. Name an example of technology that YOU can use at home.
7. Name an example of technology that YOU can use at school.
8. Name an example of technology that an adult might use at their work.

Now back to the story.

The use of technology requires the use of natural resources. The use of resources often has an effect on the environment. Certain animals depended on the truffula trees. Often, technology makes waste byproducts. For

example, a waste byproduct of sawing wood is sawdust. Sometimes the byproducts of technology are unwanted or dangerous (for example, poisonous chemicals). Sometimes waste byproducts are useful. (For example, wood chips can be used to make particle board.) Name two byproducts that resulted from making thneeds. The fish and swans were affected by the byproducts of making thneeds. The Lorax complained to the Once-ler. Then he left.

9. What technology did the Once-ler use to increase the production of thneeds?
10. How did the production of threads affect the key natural resource, truffula trees?
11. Name the animals.
12. Explain why these animals needed truffula trees.
13. Waste Byproduct-1?
14. Waste Byproduct-2?
15. Were the waste byproducts that resulted from the making of thneeds harmful or helpful to the environment?
16. Explain how the byproducts of making thneeds affected these animals.
17. Did the Once-ler try to prevent or stop the environmental effects of producing thneeds?
18. Explain.
19. Why did he leave?

Going Broke

The Once-ler's business failed. The Once-ler started business in a small shop. As more and more thneeds were made and sold, more workers were needed. That is how a town grew up around the thneed factory.

20. What happened to cause the failure of this business?
21. What happened to the workers and the town after the factory closed?

Lessons to Be Learned

The Once-ler learned that he had made a mistake.

22. What was his mistake?
23. What makes you think that the Once-ler's ideas about the use of natural resources changed?

24. Explain what must happen for the Lorax and his animals to return.

Going in depth :

25. What analogies and parallels can be made when comparing this story with real life situations? (Which county do you think Dr. Suess was trying to copy?)

IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Environmental Problems:

You probably noticed changes in the environment as the Once-ler went about the business of making thneeds. You might, for example, remember that the Lorax complained about the "smoggy air" caused by the Once-ler's factory. The smoggy air is an environmental problem. An environmental problem occurs when the condition of something or someone in the natural environment is threatened by a change. The air was clean and fresh before the Once-ler's activities; but pollution made it dirty and smelly. That is, the condition of the air was threatened, and that was a problem! Environmental problems arise when the conditions of both living things (plants and animals) and/or nonliving things (air, water, soil, etc.) are threatened with changes that might decrease their natural quality. Let's go back to The Lorax. You now know what environmental problems are. The Once-ler's activities caused several environmental problems (besides the smoggy air discussed above).

26. Describe two environmental problems with living things:

27. Describe two environmental problems with nonliving things:

Other Problems

The Lorax features environmental problems. The examples you provided above are environmental problems. But not all problems in the world are environmental. There are political problems, social problems, health problems, economic problems, educational problems, religious problems, etc. Consider the following examples. Cigarette smoking threatens the status of human health; it's a problem. Drunken drivers place themselves and others at risk; that's a problem. Unemployed, homeless people are common in American cities; that's a problem. The point is this: problems of all kinds arise when the status of someone or something is at risk.

28. Please describe at least two non-environmental problems that you know about.

Problems and Issues

People tend to have opinions about problems and about how to solve them. A problem becomes an issue if two or more people (or groups of people) disagree about the problem and/or solution. Let's look at an example. Remember that the number of black rhinos in Africa is decreasing. Many wildlife experts consider that species to be "endangered" and want to further protect the rhino and its habitat. Some Africans want to kill the rhino for its horn. The rhino horn, when used as a medicine, is considered to have healing power in some cultures. Some people want products (medicines and other decorative items) made from the horns. Rhino horns are so valuable that poachers risk death in order to hunt rhinos. Because people have different opinions about the black rhino, there is an issue. Communicating an issue is a tricky skill. it requires stating what the issue is ... as clearly as possible. Perhaps, the black rhino issue could be communicated in the following manner: should the endangered black rhinoceros be protected from hunting? Think again about the problems you identified in The Lorax. The Once-ler had one point of view; the Lorax had another.

29. Communicate an issue presented in The Lorax.

ISSUE PLAYERS AND THEIR POSITIONS

Issues can become complicated. Typically, issues contain players. Players are the individuals, groups, or organizations involved in an issue. Poachers and wildlife experts are some of the players in the black rhino issue. Environmentalists and farmers are some of the players in the contaminated ground water issue. Each of the players has a specific idea about what should be done about the issue. This idea is called the players position. Take the black rhino issue. The wildlife experts think that black rhino hunting should be banned. That is their position concerning that issue. The poachers position is that black rhino hunting should not be banned. (Please note that this issue has been simplified for discussion here.) The chart below summarizes what you have learned about events, problems, issues, players, and positions in the black rhino issue. Please study it carefully. The Lorax contains problems, issues, and players who have positions about those issues.

30. Analyze The Lorax to find these components and complete the chart.

<u>Issue Components</u>	<u>The Rhino Example</u>	<u>The Lorax</u>
The Event	Hunting black rhinos	
The Environmental Problem	The rhino population is declining and endangered	
The Environmental Issue	Should black rhinos be hunted or protected?	
The Players	(1) Wildlife Experts, (2) Poachers	
Player (1) Position	Black rhinos should not be hunted and killed	
Player (2) Position	Black rhinos should be hunted and killed	

ISSUE ANALYSIS

All environmental issues (and all other issues) contain players who have opposing positions. The article, "Over Six Million Sold" below has been adapted to provide more practice in identifying problems, issues, players, and their positions. This issue will deal with packaging and solid waste.

Over Six Million Sold

After school today you might stop at the local fast food franchise for a quick burger and cola. The girl behind the counter grabs a burger from the shelf and puts it in a bag. She sets the bag in a cardboard tray along with the cola so that you can easily carry it to a table. At the table you take the foam sandwich box from the bag and remove the sandwich. Because of the insulated foam, the burger is still warm although it was made twenty minutes ago. A foam or waxed paper cup helps keep the cola cold. Aren't synthetic products like styrofoam and plastics great? Or are they? Have you ever thought about the amount of packaging needed for that fast food meal? Have you ever thought about what happens to all that packaging after it has been placed in the garbage? The state of New York has recently spent a great deal of time talking about trash. There is a lot of concern about the amount of garbage produced. In New York State, trash must be taken to approved landfills where it is covered with dirt and allowed to decay. But New York, like many other states, is running out of space to bury its waste. The problem is complicated by the fact that some trash, like plastic and foam containers, breaks down so slowly that it will be around for a long time. And, landowners are increasingly reluctant to approve land near them to be used for new landfills. They have a "NIMBY" attitude: Not In My Backyard. Community officials in one New York town believe that part of the answer to the trash problem is to decrease the amount of foam and plastic food packaging containers in their solid waste. For this reason they have banned the use of all foam containers in their town. Food vendors and store owners are upset. Many of the food products they buy are already prepackaged in foam cartons and boxes. They don't know how to deal with the problem because they cannot force the food manufacturers to make special packaging arrangements for food shipped just to their stores. Owners of small businesses believe they will lose money because they can't use the plastic containers they already have on hand. Consumers will probably have to pay higher prices because of this ban on plastics, and burgers won't be as warm after 20 minutes on the shelf. Environmentalists think

that the community officials did the right thing for several reasons. Plastics and foam are made from petroleum, a limited natural resource. Cutting back on plastic and foam containers should save this fossil fuel for other more important uses. They also believe that using less of this type of packaging will result in less solid waste. Because of this, existing landfills will last longer and fewer new landfills will be needed. Finally, many environmentalists believe that certain foam and plastic products might be harmful to wildlife. The ban would help reduce those types of risks.

31. What is the environmental problem stated in the article "Over Six Million Sold" ?

32. What is the environmental issue in the article?

33. Identify three players in the article and summarize their positions regarding the issue.

Beliefs and Values

You have become familiar with a number of new terms and their definitions. A problem is a situation or condition in which something or someone is at risk or threatened. An issue is a problem about which two or more people or groups of people disagree. Players are those persons or groups who have a role in an issue or its solution. A position is the stand or posture taken by the player in regard to the issue or its solution. A belief is an idea that a person holds. The person thinks or believes that the idea is true. In reality, it might or might not be, but the person believes that it is. Often a person's beliefs are strongly related to his or her values. Values are specific ideas which help an individual decide what is important or worthy. A value is the comparative worth a person places on something. Each individual has personal values which develop in response to past experiences. These values might involve money, status, beauty, religion, or a number of other characteristics. A skilled observer can identify a player's values by carefully listening to a player's belief statements and analyzing them. Read the following two statements about recycling.

- A. I recycle soda cans because I am really annoyed by all the unsightly litter on streets and highways.
B. It's easier for me to just pitch soda cans out the car window. Let someone else pick them up!

Statement A reflects an aesthetic value. The individual seems to be concerned about the physical appearance of the environment. **Statement B** reflects an egocentric value. The individual is concerned about his or her personal comfort and convenience. By analyzing what players say and do, you can get an idea about what values the players are using to make decisions in an issue. Issues arise because different people think different things are important. Let's practice identifying the values reflected in a player's belief statements. Below is a list of value descriptors. Read through them and then continue on.

Value Descriptors

The descriptions below attempt to name and define values that might be held by individuals. These definitions, as well as the list itself, are incomplete.*

- Political:** the activities, function, and policies of governments and their agents.
Economic: the use and exchange of money and materials.
Religious: the use of belief systems based on faith or dogma.
Ecological: the maintenance of the integrity of natural systems.
Scientific: concerning empirical research; knowledge gained by systematic study.
Cultural: pertaining to the continuation or preservation of human knowledge, beliefs, values, art, customs, etc.
Educational: concerning the accumulation, use, and communication of knowledge.
Aesthetic: the appreciation of form, composition, and color through the senses.
Social: pertaining to shared human empathy, feelings, and status.
Recreational: pertaining to leisure activities.
Egocentric: pertaining to a focus on individual self-satisfaction and fulfillment.

Ethnocentric: pertaining to a focus on the fulfillment of ethnic/cultural goals.

Health: the maintenance of positive human physiological conditions.

Ethical/Moral: pertaining to present and future responsibilities, fights and wrongs, and ethical standards.

Belief Statements in The Lorax

Again, lets return to The Lorax. Statements made by the Once-ler and the Lorax have been supplied below and should give you an idea about what the player thinks is in important or worthy. Use the "Value Descriptors" list as a guide to identify the value reflected in each of the statements. Remember, interpreting values is a tricky business, and therefore, your interpretation might not be absolute or precise. Just be sure you can explain your answer.

What the Once-ler said ...

34. "But ... business is business! And business must grow..."

35. "And biggered my money, which everyone needs."

36. "Plant new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air."

37. "Well, I have my rights, Sir, and I'm telling you I intend to go on doing just what I do!"

What the Lorax said ...

38. "You're gumming the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed!"

39. "No one can sing who has smog in his throat."

40. "Sir, you're crazy with greed. There is no one on Earth who will buy that fool thneed!"

Value Summary:

41. What value(s) appear to influence the Once-ler's statement ?

42. What value(s) appear to be influencing the Lorax's statements?

Value Statements in The Lorax

(Read each statement and determine the value position reflected by that statement)

43. A forest of Truffula trees can make you rich.

44. There are laws preventing the cutting of Truffula trees in state parks.

45. I really enjoyed being with my friends as we watched Brown Bar-ba-loots frisk about.

46. Brown Bar-ba-loots are part of the Truffula tree food chain.

47. Truffula tree leaves are so beautiful.

48. I don't care what anyone says! I'm going to chop Truffula trees.

49. I had a lot of fun watching Swomee-Swans swimming in the lake.

50. Brown-bar-loots should not be treated that way.

51. Students can learn a lot about nature by studying Bar-ba-loots.

52. A medicine made from Truffula tree leaves helps prevent heart attacks.

53. Lots of workers earn their livelihood in the Once-lers factory.

54. Truffula trees were important to early settlers, becoming part of ancestors' customs/songs/dances in the region.

55. God made all the animals in the Truffula Forest.

56. My best friend was a Brown Bar-ba-loot; he was part of the family.

57. Truffula Trees are a valuable natural resource.

58. It's not right to let Brown Bar-ba-loots starve.

59. Brown Bar-ba-loots migrated because their food source, Truffula trees had been destroyed.

60. Humans have a responsibility to protect the Brown Bar-ba-loots and keep them from becoming extinct.