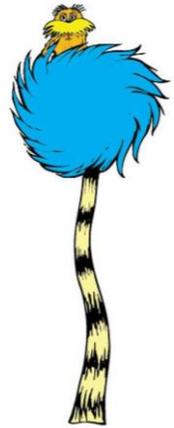


Guiding Questions for *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss: Questions for Thoughtful Analysis for Big Kids

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The Lorax was written by Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel), and published in 1971 – about 50 years ago! Its clear environmental message is even more important today. Although written for very young children, the story can be used with older students (all the way up through high school) to encourage critical thinking in an engaging way that will inspire children to think about the interconnectedness of nature, and the importance of sustainable development.

- 1) Provide students with the YouTube link below to the video version of *The Lorax*.
- 2) Give one of the assignments below (or the choice of several).
- 3) Arrange for an opportunity for partner/small group/whole group share.

The Lorax (Original) by Universal Studios <https://youtu.be/8V06ZOQuo0k> (25 minutes)

Story by Dr. Seuss, songs added by Universal.

Science

- How does *The Lorax* story show the interconnectedness of the biosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and geosphere? Give a real-life example that is similar to the story. Explain the similarities and differences.
- Draw a Cause-and-Effect flow chart from the time The Once-ler arrives to the time The Lorax leaves. Color the arrows all the same color. Now show realistic alternatives that could have changed the course of action at any point in the chain of events so there would be a happier ending. Color these

arrows a different color from those of the original storyline. Which is the best alternative? Be prepared to explain to a partner.

- What are the environmental messages that Dr. Seuss is trying to get across in this simple story? The story was written ~50 years ago. Is it still relevant? Explain. Connect your ideas with what you've been studying in class.
- We often hear the term "sustainable development". What does it mean? How does *The Lorax* demonstrate why sustainable development is important? Give a real-world example of sustainable development.
- Define the word "extinction"? What causes it? How does it impact ecosystems on Earth? How does it affect people? How does this concept of extinction relate to *The Lorax*? Explain.
- How can we help the environment? What can individuals do? Why does it matter? How can we individuals encourage others to care for the environment, thereby magnifying our positive actions?

ELA

- The Lorax is mocked and called a "Nature Boy". He is disparaged as a complainer. He is chastised for seemingly not wanting what's best for people and the economy. Are there correlations with how environmentalists, ecologists and climatologists are treated today? Explain. Research one environmentalist/ecologist/climatologist who works for a major university. What has this scientist spent her/his career researching? What would s/he want you to know if s/he met you today? What's her/his evidence? How does s/he know what s/he knows?
- When the Humming Fish lake is so polluted the fish can no longer survive in it, one says, "I hear things are just as bad up in Lake Erie". Research the history of Lake Erie. Why does the fish say this? Why was this line removed from later versions of *The Lorax*? Give specific and detailed information about the changes in Lake Erie and how they came to happen.

- Although this is a simple story for young children, the author uses several clever writing techniques to make the story more engaging. Give examples from the story to show his use of flashback, point-of-view, descriptive language, persuasion, symbolism, moral. Which one do you think he uses most effectively? Explain your reason.
- What is the moral of the story? Provide evidence to prove your logical conclusion. Do you agree with Dr. Seuss? Explain your reasoning.
- I've seen coffee cups, t-shirts, posters, etc., with just one word: UNLESS. It is a quote from this story. What is the rest of the sentence? What is it trying to convey? Explain. Do you agree? Explain.
- Use Dr. Seuss's writing style, and rhythm and rhyming patterns, to create a story for children, teenagers, or adults about climate change. Not much was known by the general public about climate change in the 1970s. Now we know a lot. What do people need to know about the causes and effects of climate change? How do you communicate a concern, and a lesson, without scaring young children? Making it seem cool to teenagers? Making adults pay attention? Be sure to give your story a title and appropriate age for the reader.
- Re-play/Re-read the beginning and the ending of *The Lorax*. Does the opening of the story grab your attention? If yes, how does Dr. Seuss create interest? If no, what would be a better way to begin? Is the conclusion of the story satisfying? If yes, how does Dr. Seuss provide a satisfying ending? If no, what would be a better way to end the story? How does this thought process help your own writing techniques?

Art

- Compare the colors used to show The Lorax's world at the beginning of the story with those of The Lorax's world when he is forced to leave the area. How do they differ? Why? What moods do they evoke?

- Look outside at a natural environment (not manmade) that makes you feel happy, or content, or at peace. It could be your yard, a local park, a forest, field, desert, or seaside. Draw/color/paint what you see. You can make it very realistic, romanticized, or abstract. As you capture the scene on paper or canvas, think about why it brings you a sense of calm and well-being.

Music

- Create a song, or a musical composition, that tells the story of *The Lorax*. Begin with a beautiful world; move toward a destroyed environment; and end with hope for the future. How do you capture the mood of each in music?

For additional discussion questions, see [Teaching Children Philosophy: The Lorax](#).

