



Forest Around Us

Pre and Post Activities

Get the most out of your field trip by completing the pre and post activities with your group. The pre-activity will help warm up your students brains for the field experience, if they are already thinking about the topics we will be covering they will get more out of their time at Woodland Dunes. The post activity will give them time to reflect and process the new things they learned.

Pre Activity: The Lorax and The Truax

The Lorax is a children's book, written by Dr. Seuss and first published in 1971. It chronicles the plight of the environment and the Lorax (a mossy, bossy man-like creature), who speaks for the trees against the greedy Once-ler.

The book is commonly recognized as a fable concerning industrialized society, using the literary element of personification to give life to industry as the Once-ler (whose face is never shown in any of the story's illustrations or in the television special) and to the environment as the Lorax. It has become a popular metaphor for those concerned about the human impact on the environment.

The Lorax has sparked significant controversy. In 1988, a small school district in California kept the book on a reading list for second graders, though some in the town claimed the book was unfair to the logging industry. Several timber industry groups sponsored the creation of a book called *The Truax*, offering a logging-friendly perspective to an anthropomorphic tree known as the *Guardbark*. Just as in *The Lorax*, the book consists of an argument between two people. The logging industry representative emphasizes their efficiency and re-seeding efforts whereas the *Guardbark*, a personification of the environmentalist movement much as the Once-ler is for big business, refuses to listen and repeatedly lashes out.

Interesting Fact: The line "I hear things are just as bad up in Lake Erie" was removed more than fourteen years after the story was published after two research associates from the Ohio Sea Grant Program wrote to Seuss about the clean-up of Lake Erie. The line remains in the DVD release of the special.

The Lorax is an easy book to find and a quick read, you could do a read aloud for your students or have them pass the book around. Following are a list of questions to get your students thinking after the book.

- What was the land of the Lorax like before the Once-ler arrived? Did it seem like someplace you'd like to live? What parts of your own environment would you be sad to see go?
- What kind of person is the Once-ler? Why won't he listen to the Lorax? The Lorax says to the Once-ler, "You are crazy with greed." Why does the Lorax say that? Do you agree or disagree?
- Why does the Lorax speak for the trees? Why is it important to speak up for others? Have you ever spoken up for someone else? Has someone else ever spoken up for you?
- How does the Once-ler's Thneed business hurt the land of the Lorax? What happens to the Swomee-swans, the Brown Bar-ba-loots, and the Humming-fish? How could things have been different if the Once-ler listened to the Lorax?
- What do you think the boy hearing the story will do with the Truffula seed that the Once-ler tosses to him? What would you do if you were the boy?
- Do you think the Lorax and his friends will come back if new Truffula Trees grow? Where do you think they have been?
- The Once-ler says, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." What does the Once-ler mean? Can one person make a difference? Can you? What are some things you can do to better your own environment?
- How does the Once-ler feel about what his Thneed business did to the Lorax and friends?

- Dr. Seuss used bright colors on some pages of the book and dull colors on others. Did you notice this? Why do you think he did that?
- Why is *The Lorax* called a cautionary tale?

The Truax is a little harder to find, reading both books would give you a great base for discussion. Following are some questions to consider after reading The Truax.

- Why did the Guardbark want people to leave trees alone? Give at least two reasons.
- Why did Truax think it was reasonable to cut some trees? Give at least two reasons.
- Name three ways that Native Americans depended on trees. How did early American settlers use trees? Do we still need trees today?
- Make a list of a least six products we use that come from trees.
- Go back to your list. If we could not cut trees, we would have to use something else to make the products you listed. Beside each product, write down what we could use to replace the product made from trees.
- A "renewable" resource is something that can be "made new again." In other words, we can make more of the resource so that it never has to run out. What does "non-renewable" resource mean?
- On your list of replacement products, did you have some products made from oil (like plastics)? Is oil a "non-renewable" resource?
- Did you have some replacement products made from metal? Is metal a "renewable" or non-renewable resource?
- What do Truax and his friends do to make sure there are plenty of trees?
- Which story is happening more in the United States? The world? The Lorax or the Truax?
- Why is *The Lorax* called a cautionary tale?

Woodland Dunes owns copies of both books that can be checked out of our library at the Nature Center Headquarters.

Post Activity: Needs, Contains, Provide

A fun game to play with your students about forests. This game is similar to the popular game categories.

Divide your class into smaller groups. Each group will start by brainstorming what a forest **needs**. Give them a couple minutes. Call time, pencils down. When finished with the brainstorm go from group to group and have each group give one answer. If the group is the only one with a particular answer they get a point, if multiply groups have the same answer they must all cross it off and no one receives a point. For example: Group one thought of water but no one else did – Group one gets one point.

Group two thought of trees and so did Group three – neither of them get points for that answer.

Continue the game, next brainstorming what a forest **contains**, then what a forest **provides**. This game can get great discussion and debate going among teams. Let the discussions play out as long as they are staying positive. You will have to be the last word on whether a team gets a point – just use your best judgment and have fun. Small prizes – like pencils – forests provide - can be handed out to the team with the most points. Having prizes (external motivation) never hurts.

One key to playing the game is not to reveal all three categories at once, introduce the new category after each round.

Enjoy!