

## **THE LORAX MODEL LESSON (50 min)**

**Non-Arts Content:** 3rd Grade/5th Grade Science & ELA

**Arts Content:** 3rd Grade/5th Grade Theatre

**Essential Question:** How can we explore and critically examine multiple perspectives around humans' impact on the environment and consider ways to care for our environment?

### **Objectives:**

- Students will identify the effects of human activity on animals' habitats.
- Students will identify the effects of changes in animals' habitats.
- Students will use and respond to persuasive verbal tactics.
- Students will use details provided in the story to justify their opinions and arguments.
- Students will explore and perform a character other than themselves.
- Students will consider situations in their communities that parallel those of the story, and brainstorm action steps they might take toward conservation.

### **TEKS:**

#### **3rd Grade Science:**

- (b)(9)(A) observe and describe the physical characteristics of environments and how they support populations and communities within an ecosystem;
- (B) identify and describe the flow of energy in a food chain and predict how changes in a food chain affect the ecosystem such as removal of frogs from a pond or bees from a field; and
- (C) describe environmental changes such as floods and droughts where some organisms thrive and others perish or move to new locations.

#### **3rd Grade English/Language Arts:**

- (b)(8) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:
  - (A) sequence and summarize the plot's main events and explain their influence on future events;
  - (B) describe the interaction of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo; and
  - (C) identify whether the narrator or speaker of a story is first or third person.
- (b)(21) Writing/Persuasive Texts. Students write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues. Students are expected to write persuasive essays for appropriate audiences that establish a position and use supporting details.

#### **3rd Grade Theatre:**

- (b)(2) Creative expression: performance. The student interprets characters using the voice and body expressively and creates dramatizations. The student is expected to:
  - (A) demonstrate safe use of movement and voice;

- (B) participate in a variety of roles in real life or imaginative situations through narrative pantomime, dramatic play, or story dramatization.

### **5th Grade Science:**

- (b)(9) Organisms and environments. The student knows that there are relationships, systems, and cycles within environments. The student is expected to:
- (A) observe the way organisms live and survive in their ecosystem by interacting with the living and non-living elements; and
- (C) predict the effects of changes in ecosystems caused by living organisms, including humans, such as the overpopulation of grazers or the building of highways.

### **5th Grade ELA/Language Arts:**

- (b)(6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:
  - (A) describe incidents that advance the story or novel, explaining how each incident gives rise to or foreshadows future events;
  - (B) explain the roles and functions of characters in various plots, including their relationships and conflicts.

### **5th Grade Theatre:**

- (b)(1) Foundations: inquiry and understanding. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment using elements of drama and conventions of theatre. The student is expected to:
  - (A) develop characterization using sensory and emotional recall;
  - (B) develop body awareness and spatial perceptions using pantomime;
  - (D) express emotions and relate ideas using interpretive and planned movement and dialogue;
  - (E) integrate life experiences in dramatic play; and
  - (F) portray environment, character, and actions
- (b)(2) Creative expression: performance. The student interprets characters using the voice and body expressively and creates dramatizations. The student is expected to:
  - (B) describe characters, their relationships, and their surroundings in detail;
  - (C) create movements and portray a character using dialogue appropriately;
  - (D) dramatize literary selections in unison, pairs, or groups, demonstrating a logical connection of events and describing the characters, their relationships, and their surroundings.

### **Materials and Preparation:**

- Truffula seed (could be a pom pom, a peach seed, a walnut, clay, etc.)
- Paper and markers for Role on the Wall
- Index cards or slips of paper and pencils for brainstorming dialogue
- Facilitator in role costume/prop pieces (could be a scarf, hat, microphone, etc.)

## **ENGAGE:**

### **ARTIFACT (5 minutes):**

#### **Object: Truffula seed**

Group: Semi circle

Today, we are going to explore a story you might know or it might be new to you. I'm going to pass this object around and let's see if we can use our skills of observation to figure out what it is and how it relates to our story. Let's begin by describing the physical characteristics of this object, the shape, the color, the texture etc. So for example, if I were to describe this clipboard (or any other object sitting around) I wouldn't say, "It's a clipboard!" I'd say, "It's blue, it's hard, it's a rectangle, etc." So with that in mind, let's start describing this object.

Pass object around circle, allowing 4-6 participants to give descriptions.

Excellent. Let's analyze what all these observations might mean. We've noticed that this object is [repeat their observations]. What might this mean? What might this object be used for? Where might it have come from? How old do you think it might be?

Take 4-6 answers to these questions.

We're going to look at a story today that this object might relate to. I am going to put this object to the side. As I read our story, see if you can connect this object to our story today.

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## **EXPLORE:**

### **SHARING THE STORY (10 minutes):**

Facilitator will read from the text of *The Lorax*, "Way back in the days when the grass was still green" to "And he sent them away."

Quickly describe what happened to the other animals: Swomee-Swans smogged out, the humming fish gills were gummed. All were sent away.

- Can anyone summarize what happened in the few pages we just read?
  - How are the choices the Once-ler has made so far impacting the other animals?
- What might this object be in connection with our story?

### **ROLE ON THE WALL (10 minutes):**

We are going to use another activity to think about the choices that the Once-ler needs to make. This figure represents the character of the Once-ler. First, let's think about what is going on around the Once-ler.

- Which characters from the story might be in communication with the Once-ler about what

is going on in the environment? Who might have an opinion about what is going on with the Thneed factory? (make a list of characters on the side to assist students remembering, connect to messages explicitly, one color for each character)

- What messages do you think the Once-ler is receiving from these characters in the story? (Have participants translate these messages into quotes or statements that could be made into dialogue. Categorize into pro/con for closing the factory. **Use a specific color for each character.**)

Now that we have thought about the messages the Once-ler is hearing from his community, let's think about the ways these messages might be affecting him.

- How might these outside messages influence make the Once-ler feel? [Translate into lines of dialogue].
- What are some of the goals or motivations the Once-ler might have for himself? What does the Once-ler want?

**Transition:** Thank you for thinking about all of those ideas. There's a lot going on inside the mind of the Once-ler. And his actions impact all of the characters we listed! Let's think about what these characters might be thinking and feeling.

#### **PAIRED IMPROV (10 minutes):**

Even though the Once-ler kept on cutting down trees to make thneeds, the warnings from the Lorax were never far from his mind. He could see how his factory was affecting the world around him, but he didn't know how he could just stop making thneeds either. He was faced with a choice that he didn't know how to make.

Today, we are going to step into the role of some of the characters impacted by the Once-ler. Later on, we're going to have a Town Hall to talk about the impact of Once-ler and the factory on our community.

In a moment you will get into pairs. One of you is going to take on the role of the Once-ler. The other is going to take on the role of someone who might be impacted by the Once-ler's factory. Please pair up. Now decide between the two of you who is going to be the Once-ler and who is going to be another character from our story. Once-lers raise your hand. Other character raise your hand. Excellent! You will be having a conversation about how the Once-ler's factories are impacting the Truffula Valley.

Before we begin conversing with each other, let's take a few minutes to think about the character you will be playing.

On the notecards passed out, please write down the name of the character you are playing and what species you are - a person, swomme swan, barbaloot, humming fish? As I ask the following questions, please jot down answers to help you brainstorm aspects of your character. You can draw from information stated in the book as well as make some creative and imaginative choices that you think would fit with the world of the story. [Ask each question one at a time, allowing students time to write their answer before moving to the next one].

- Where do you live/what is your environment? What do you need to live in your environment?
- What do you do? (profession or job)
- What is your opinion about the Once-ler's factory? Do you own a thneed?
- How might the Once-ler's factory might affect your species, habitat and ecosystem?

Extra questions:

- What do you all think the Once-ler should do? Why do you think that?
- Is it the Once-ler's responsibility to take care of the environment over his business interests? Why do you believe what you believe?

Before we become our characters, let's brainstorm how we might start this conversation. The character that is not the Once-ler will start with the first line. What might you say to the Once-ler to begin a conversation about the impact the Thneed factories is having on your life and the Truffula Valley? [Scribe]

Let's take a moment to think about how your character might be different from yourself. For instance, if I was a Swomee Swan, I might consider changing my posture or vocal pitch in this way [model this to give students an example of possible character choices].

Now I invite you to close your eyes or focus your eyes at a point on the floor and silently think about some character choices you might make. How might you change your body shape or energy to become the character you are playing? Think about what you know or can guess about the character you are taking on. How do they stand, walk, talk?

After you have thought about your character, please open your eyes. We are going to begin when I have all eyes on me.

Once this is done, those who are playing the Once-ler will find a place in our room to sit and work at their desk. Once-ler, you are going over figures for your factory. The second character will enter and offer the first line to start the scene. I encourage you to use some of the dialogue we brainstormed during our Role on the Wall.

You will carry out your improvised conversations until I clap my hands. When I do so, please pause your conversations and give me your attention. I will do this several times during the improvisation. Once-lers, please move to a spot in the room and other characters, please find yourself near the Once-ler ready to enter the scene.

[The improvisation is facilitated through parallel play with all the scenes unfolding at the same time. The facilitator freezes the action and "spotlights" certain groups' conversation then asks all the groups to resume their conversation]. **CLAP**

As I move around the room, if I come near your pair and clap, please continue your conversation until I clap again. Once I clap again, that means that all pairs resume their conversations. If I have not chosen to highlight your pair, please pause your conversation to listen to the chosen pair's conversation.

**Transition:** Sounds like there are a lot of passionate feelings about the Once-ler and his factory! Let's return to our seats. In a moment, we're going to voice our opinions in a community Town Hall.

### **TOWN HALL (10 minutes):**

In a moment I'm going to step into role as the assistant to the Mayor of the Truffula Valley, Vivian Vunderhoof. She will be interviewing the characters we just explored to hear what they have to say. During the Town Hall, you will be in role as those same characters. Let's split the group in half with Once-lers on one side and the other characters on the other. Now that we're ready, I will hop into role. You will know I am playing Vivian Vunderhoof when I put on this scarf and turn back around to face you in 3-2-1.

*As Vivian:* Hello, hello! My name is Vivian Vunderhoof. I'm the assistant to the Mayor of the Truffula Valley. The Mayor was telling me that our community has had some concerns about the Once-ler's Thneed factory in town and would like to bring those concerns to the table. We have a group of Once-lers in attendance as well as some other folks. I will help facilitate this dialogue so we can hear from all the different members of our community and I can report those back to our Mayor. Let's find out who has joined us today!

[Vivian makes her way to each of the non-Once-ler characters so they can introduce themselves. Visit one character at a time and ask them the following questions. Invite each character to introduce themselves before they talk]. Questions:

- Who are you and why did you decide to go talk to the Once-ler?
- How is the Once-ler's factory impacting your life?
- You had some time to have a one-on-one conversation with the Once-ler before our show. How did the conversation go? Did you get what you wanted? Why or why not?
- What do you think will happen to you if the Once-ler's factory continues to produce thneeds? (Predict how changes in ecosystem affect habitats, etc.)

Extra questions:

- What do you all think the Once-ler should do next? Why do you think that?
- What is the Once-lers' responsibility to the environment? What is their responsibility to their thneed factory and business?

[Thank the characters and discuss/scribe some of key information we learned].

[Transition to interviewing the Once-lers]. Questions:

- How do you see the environment of the Truffula Valley changing?
- I hear that a lot of people have come to see you in regards to these changes in the Valley. Who has come to see you and what did they have to say?
- How have the visitors affected your choices with your factory?

- What concerns do you have for the environment in Truffula Valley? What concerns do you have about your threed factory and business?

[Scribe some of the key information we learned about the character on the board].

Thank you all for being here to discuss this important issue. I look forward to reporting back to the Mayor so we can take the necessary next steps for our community.

**Transition:** We will all step out of characters now as I count down 3-2-1. You are yourself again, and so am I! Let's return to our seats and reflect on all the exploration we did today as participants. The community with the Truffula trees didn't get a chance to have this kind of talk show. The Once-ler's factory kept growing and growing until it was too late. All of the truffula trees were chopped down like it was their fate. One single truffula seed remained.

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**REFLECT (5 minutes):**

**D:** How was your experience participating as a character in this community? How did it feel to take on the character you did? How did you decide what to say?

**A:** How did the characters' environmental needs affect their views on the situation? How did the characters' jobs or place in the community affect their views on the situation?

**R:** Where do you see similar effects as the ones described in the book happening in our community and greater world? What actions might help lessen those effects? How can we take responsibility for preserving our environment?

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PAUSE MODEL LESSON HERE. Talk through the writing activity below.

**WRITING ACTIVITY - Letters to City Council Members:**

After our exploration today, we are going to write a letter to the Council Members of the Truffula Valley, imagining that we could go back in time to before the Once-ler's factory destroyed all the land. You can choose a character from the story, *other than the Once-Ler and his family*, and you will write *as though you were that character*. Your job is to persuade your council member (you can make up their name!) to take action to prevent the effects on the environment that we noticed in the book. You might think about some of the suggestions you just made for our world, too; how would those have helped the Truffula Valley?

Make sure to include *at least three reasons* WHY they should take action, and what action you think they should take.

Make sure to use correct formal letter formatting and persuasive writing techniques.

NOTE: For a more elongated version of this writing activity, students could also research the environmental challenges they noted in their own community and write letters to their Austin City Council Members.