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## The Lorax

### Comprehension

1. The Truffula Trees were scarce, because there was a limited number of them standing, and they were valuable, because Brown Bar-ba-loots relied on them for food.
2. The Once-ler chopped the first Truffula Tree to start a business, by using the tuft to knit a thneed.
3. Thneeds are something that all people need. It's clothing, an accessory, a carpet, pillows, sheets, and bicycle seats!
4. The Lorax was incorrect in thinking nobody would want a Thneed. In fact, Thneeds sold very well.
5. The Once-ler invented a Super-Axe-Hacker to chop Truffula Trees more efficiently. This helped his business by providing him with more tufts to make Thneeds out of.
6. First, the Brown Bar-ba-loots lost their food source as Truffula Trees became few; then the snog harmed the Swomee-Swans's ability to sing, so they had to leave; then the factory was poisoning the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed. They had to leave, too. Eventually, when the trees were all gone, even the people had to leave, because the land was wasted and there was no economic incentive to stay.
7. It was unwise of the Once-ler to chop all the trees. It was short sighted.
8. In the story all the trees were chopped down. I believe that, technically, it could happen here today. However, we presently have institutions such as the US Forest Service, National Park Service, and others, which have designated protected areas, and actively manage the natural resources. I believe we also have laws and regulations incentivizing firms to plant new trees to replace the trees they cut down for, say, paper products that they manufacture. Importantly, we also have many caring citizens and environmental groups who are actively involved in the political process to protect our limited resources.
9. Well, a condition that would promote the overuse of natural resources is blanket or willful ignorance of the problem by the consumers and population at large. The situation with clearing forests in the name of palm oil in Indonesia comes to mind. That is happening today right now, and I only became aware of that thanks to Leonardo DiCaprio's movie *Before the Flood*, in which he highlights the problem. As a result, I no longer buy products containing palm oil. I pop my own popcorn on the stove now. I haven't found a single brand of microwave popcorn that does NOT use palm oil. It's ridiculous.
10. Scarcity usually drives up the price of goods or services, as long as the demand is still there.
11. Initially, the Once-ler was admiring of the beautiful Truffula-trees and the ecosystem he arrived to, and he probably was only seeing dollar bills growing on trees. At the end of the story, as he's narrating this story, he expresses regret and worry. He helps by passing the seed to someone who hopefully cares an awful lot.

## Reflection

1. The Once-ler succeeded in doing whatever he wanted for as long as it was possible, which is to say, until the very last tree was chopped and used. The Lorax, on the other hand, didn't get anything that he wanted when he was asking for it. I wouldn't say that the Lorax failed completely, because he succeeded in bringing the various problems to the attention of the Once-ler, even if the Once-ler didn't initially listen or share the concern. Eventually, the Once-ler reveals that he did listen, and the Once-ler repeated the story of the Lorax to anyone who asked (for a price). In the end, the Once-ler passed on the hope of the Lorax. So, while the Once-ler succeeded in meeting his own selfish short term, short sighted goals, in the end, the Once-ler passed on the goals of the Lorax.

4. Many countries have animal rights laws, and I believe the main reason for their prevalence is that we humans believe animals can experience pain and suffering. Most people are capable of empathy, and therefore, today we have many laws protecting animals from abuse. Charles Darwin and others have highlighted the very real, familial relationship we have with other animals. Many people believe that it follows that as we have rights, so should other animals have rights as well. It is important to point out that our protection of other species is not universal. We tend to protect other mammalian species over others, or, we tend to protect life forms of similar levels of biological complexity to ours. These are laws based on morality, I believe, and so yes, I do believe this represents an acknowledgement that the animals we protect have a moral standing in their own right.

7. Unless. The Once-ler says he didn't know what it meant, until the end of his tale, which seemed hopeless. So, the Once-ler tells the story of how the environment there went to crap, and then he reads the word again, "Unless." He seems to suddenly realize that it's a total loss, unless someone comes along who cares a whole awful lot does something about it! In real life, we can support innovators who move in the direction of harvesting renewable resources. We tell our representatives that we want to support and fund conservation efforts, which includes education. We patronize those businesses who demonstrate responsible, environmentally ethical behaviors. We personally make changes in our lives, and encourage our circle of influence to also make environmentally responsible choices.

8. "If I didn't do it, someone else would," is not a satisfying explanation for a devastation of an ecosystem. It may be true or likely. But if something has to happen, then why not do it in a responsible way? Today we use paper and lumber. We are no longer cutting down giant sequoias to harvest this; instead we have tree farms. Tree farms are a sustainable, renewable practice. So, even if we have a perceived need, there are ways to fill the need in a responsible manner. Unlike the beef industry, with their clearing of rainforest for cattle operations. This, to me, is the real example of waste. I believe that is where our responsibility lies, in engineering responsible solutions to fill those needs.

9. The Lorax says he speaks for the trees, and I think that is as plain as it can get. The trees do not speak in the conventional sense, and therefore might be easy to ignore. They were easy for the Once-ler to ignore as beings with needs. The Lorax stands in protest of the abuse he perceives, and as an advocate for those affected by the Once-ler's abuse of resources. The Lorax's attitude at the end of the story is one of hope. The Lorax was nowhere to be seen by the end, nevertheless his message was finally heard: Unless...