Use Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* to Explore Environmental Issues  
With the help of *The Lorax*, students learn about the environment and letter writing too!

<table>
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<th>National Geography Standards</th>
<th>Arizona Geography Strand</th>
<th>Other Arizona Standards</th>
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| **ELEMENT FIVE: ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY**  
14. How human actions modify the physical environment.  
15. How physical systems affect human systems.  
16. The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources. | **Grade 6**  
**Strand 4 Geography**  
**Concept 5 Environment and Society**  
PO 1 Describe ways that human dependence on natural resources influences economic development, settlement, trade and migration.  
PO 2 Describe the intended and unintended consequences of human modification (e.g., irrigation, aqueducts, canals) on the environment.  
PO 3 Explain how changes in the natural environment (e.g., flooding of the Nile) can increase or diminish its capacity to support human activities. | **Reading Standards for 6-8 for Literacy in History/Social Studies**  
**Key Ideas and Details**  
6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.  
**Writing Standards for 6-8 for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects**  
**Text Types and Purposes**  
6-8.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.  
a. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.  
b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.  
c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.  
d. Establish and maintain a formal style.  
e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.  
**Production and Distribution of Writing**  
6-8.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.  
a. Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., formal letters, envelopes, procedures, labels, timelines, graphs/tables, experiments, maps, captions, charts, diagrams) in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to
Dr. Seuss's The Lorax

(e.g., canals, dams, farming techniques, industrialization) often leads to changes in other locations.

Grade 8
Strand 4 Geography
Concept 5 Environment and Society
PO 1 Describe how humans modify ecosystems (e.g., deforestation and desertification).
PO 2 Describe why humans modify ecosystems (e.g., resources, economic livelihood).
PO 3 Explain how changes in the natural environment can increase or diminish its capacity to support human activities (e.g., global warming, pollution, mining, natural disasters, water table).
PO 4 Explain how technology affects the environment (e.g., the effects of chemical wastes on ecosystems; effects of modern waste disposal methods on ecosystems).

Overview

Literature is a rich source of geographic information and concepts. Integrating the two is a painless way to reinforce many skills and concepts. Using The Lorax by Dr. Seuss, students will explore the concept of resource consumption and how people can make wiser use of resources.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will analyze the actions of a fictional character on his environment and suggest possible ways that the character could have made a less harmful impact on his environment.

Materials

- One copy of The Lorax by Dr. Seuss
- Copy of Questions to Guide Your Listening on transparency or enough copies for each student
- Checklist for Letter

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. identify the renewable and nonrenewable resources in the story.
2. state the impact of the Onceler's actions on the environment.
3. devise ways the Onceler could have lessened his impact on the environment.

Procedures

A prerequisite for this lesson is that students know business letter format.

SESSION ONE
Dr. Seuss’s The Lorax

Explain renewable and nonrenewable resources. A renewable resource is one that nature can replace within a reasonable time, such as plants and animals. A nonrenewable resource is one that nature cannot replace within a reasonable time, such as metals and fossil fuels.

2. Read The Lorax to the class. Place a transparency of "Questions to Guide Your Listening" on the overhead or give students each a copy. Students will answer the questions as the teacher reads.

3. After reading, discuss the questions as a class.

SESSION TWO

1. Review business letter format.

2. Have the students write a letter to the Onceler pointing out the problems he created and ways he could have avoided them.

Assessment

The students will compose a business letter to the Onceler pointing out the problems he created and ways he could have avoided them. This letter should contain the proper format for a business letter (heading, inside address, greeting, body, closing), statement of three problems and solutions, and correct mechanics of writing. The letters may be scored with the Checklist for Letter sheet. Mastery will be considered 80 points or higher.

If you choose, grade according to the Six-Trait Writing Rubric with an emphasis on the trait of Ideas and Content and Conventions. Mastery will be considered a score of 4 or higher.

Extensions

Students could re-write The Lorax making the Onceler more environmentally correct.

Students could write a sequel where the Onceler undoes his damage.

Students could create their own “Seuss-like books.” On the left side they could illustrate a cause (chopping down the trees) and on the right side illustrate the effect (no food for the animals). They could do this for three cause/effects in the book. Then the last two pages would be the Onceler comes to Arizona. What does he do now?

Sources

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss. ISBN 0394823370