

The Lorax



Directed by: Chris Renaud, Kyle Balda

Certificate: U

Country: USA

Running time: 86 mins

Year: 2012

Suitable for: primary literacy, science, geography (sustainable development)

Key words: environment, industry, sustainability, photosynthesis, Dr. Seuss

SYNOPSIS

The story is set in Thneed-Ville, a walled city where everything is manufactured – there are no plants growing and even the air is bottled and sold to Thneed-Ville’s inhabitants. Ted, a twelve-year-old boy, wants to impress his friend, Audrey, by fulfilling her dream of seeing a real tree. His grandma tells him to find out ‘The Once-ler’, who lives outside the city walls.

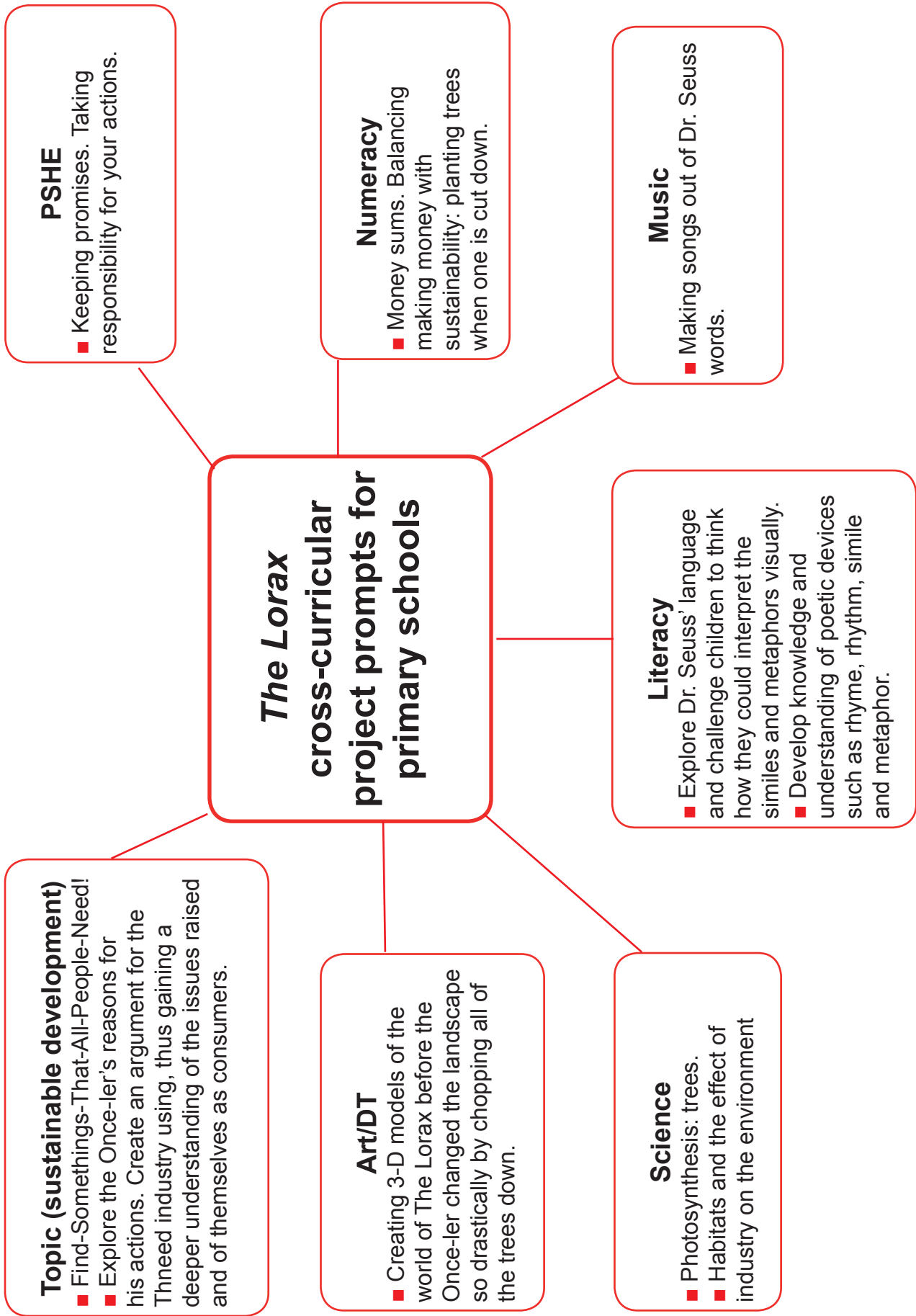
The Once-ler turns out to be a grumpy ex-businessman who has become a hermit. He tells Ted that he will tell him where to find a tree, but that he has to listen to his story first. Ted begrudgingly agrees to listen.

It turns out that the Once-ler was the inventor of the ‘Thneed’ – a fine something that all people need! The trouble was, to make Thneeds, you needed Truffula trees, and the Once-ler didn’t think twice about cutting the trees down, despite the fact that this summoned up the spirit of the forest, the Lorax who warned him of the devastating effect on the environment and the animals who lived there.

As Ted listens to the Once-ler’s story, it inspires him to take action to change things in Thneed-Ville. The trouble is he has to deal with Aloysius O’Hare, the Mayor, who has made his money selling bottled air to the local people. He is determined to stop Ted and Audrey from spreading the word about photosynthesis and the free air that trees produce naturally and for free.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The most challenging problem that the animators faced when creating *The Lorax* was transforming Dr. Seuss’ famous drawings and 20- minute story into a 90-minute 3D animated movie. 350 artists were hired to do the job.
- Artists created drawings of the characters and background first. Then models were created of the characters, the models were then designed in a computer programme, where they were made mobile.
- The movie version of *The Lorax* came about when film producer Christopher Meledandri started to think about what happened in the story before we reach page one of the book, and also what happens after the last page. The story in the book wasn’t altered, and appears in the movie through the Once-ler’s narrative. The added-on bits are an extension of the story.
- The scriptwriting process took six months – and everyday, the writers checked that what they had written was true to Dr. Seuss’ style.
- Of all the books that Dr. Seuss wrote, ‘*The Lorax*’ was his favourite. It was first published in 1971.
- Whilst it is clear that the film has a clear environmental message, Dr. Seuss always said that the story was really about taking responsibility and being accountable for your actions.



BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

CONTEXT

Sustainable development

The Thneed factory: look at the pros and cons of big industry on the environment. Factories bring employment and growth to an area, but they can also bring pollution. What is the solution?

Dr. Seuss

“At the far end of town
where the Grickle-grass grows
and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows
and no birds ever sing excepting old crows
is the street of the Lifted Lorax...”

Read the book to the class and discuss its themes and style. Children could research Dr. Seuss to find out more about him and his books.

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

‘Smogulous Smoke and Gluppity Glup’ – how have these words from Dr. Seuss’ book been translated into images?

Describe how:

- cutting down the Truffula Trees affected the food supply of the Bar-ba-Loots
- the exhaust fumes of the delivery trucks affected the health of the Swomee Swans
- making the Thneed produced ‘shloppity shlop’ that, when dumped into the pond, harmed the Humming Fish and
- the felling of the last Truffula tree and created a wasteland.

‘Unless...’

Adopt the voice of the Lorax to create a ‘call to action’ for sustainable development. Is there a way the Once-ler could run his business without harming the environment?

TEACHERS' NOTES

Shot, pair, share

Explore and analyse the two images on the next page as a way of critically evaluating the film.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The frame

Describe what you can see in the shot.

Colour / light

How is the scene lit? Are there contrasts between light and shadow? Why is it lit this way? What are the key colours in the scene? Do any colours stand out more than any others? Why? What does this tell us about the mood of the scene and the character?

Mise en scène

This means, 'everything in the frame', or the way information is communicated through a single shot. Describe the props, furniture, body language and facial expressions. Look at the details of the shot. Describe how each detail gives us information about the character and the scene's place in the film's narrative.

METHODOLOGY

Shot

Discuss each shot as a class. Ask for pupils' initial reactions: what does each shot tell us about the film?

Pair

Ask the children to annotate one or both of the shots in pairs, focusing on framing; colour and light or mise en scène (or all three).

Share

Each pair should then share one or two key observations about the shot.

15-MINUTE WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Shot one

Explain how the Once-ler came to be a hermit. Why has he boarded up his window?

Shot two

Create a 'Let it Grow' poem that will convince the Once-ler to grow trees rather than chop them down.

Written by Julie Green

Shot One



Shot Two

