

Lesson Title: Environmental Change with Dr. Seuss

Grade Levels: 5-6

Lesson Description: Using Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* as a starting and reference point, we will examine world environmental change. Students will use Google Earth to fly to every continent and observe the impact of humans on the environment. Students will also become familiar with various organizations working to preserve our environment.

Literature Connection

The Lorax
By Dr. Seuss

Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*, published in 1971, is a popular story with a deep message. The story centers on a plea for the preservation of the environment on behalf of the Lorax, the story's main character. In opposition to deforestation by the Once-ler and comrades, the Lorax speaks for the trees and advocates environmental preservation and awareness of the human impact on the environment.

Concepts and skills

- Human-Environmental Interaction

National Geography Standard

- Analyze the environmental consequences of humans changing the physical environment

Objectives: Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Utilize Google Earth to visit each continent and identify the negative impact people have had on the environment.
2. Identify and explain how global organizations are working to preserve the environment.
3. Identify destructive actions toward the earth that have occurred in the past and brainstorm ways we can work toward taking care of our planet in the future.

Google Earth Skills Needed:

- Fly to an address
- Zoom in and out
- Use street view
- Work with various global awareness layers

Teaching Procedures

1. Ask students to brainstorm with a partner why trees are important for our lives (e.g.,

building houses, furniture, kitchen utensils, firewood, paper; oxygen, soil protection, and a place for animals to live). Compile a list of reasons on the board. Ask students to then discuss with their partners what would happen if these trees were no longer available. Ask a few pairs to share their thoughts.

2. Tell students that you will read Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* and that while you read they should pay close attention to the environmental problems that arise. After the story, brainstorm environmental problems that were found in the book. Some of these problems could include pollution, animals having to move to a new home, disappearance of trees, etc. As a class, identify some of the causes of the problems in the book.
3. Tell students that they will now use Google Earth to see if our world has problems that are similar to those mentioned in *The Lorax*. As the students go through the activity, they should keep in mind that the issues they see (such as pollution or deforestation) are continuing today.
4. Pass out activity instructions for students. Have them follow the instructions and complete the prompts as they go along.
5. At the end of the activity, use the follow-up questions to have a class discussion about the environmental issues in our world today. Be sure to focus on the future and what we can do to improve our earth.

Follow-up questions:

- What environmental changes did you notice while using the layers in Google Earth? What environmental differences are there between the past and the present?
- What different organizations did you find? What are the goals of some of these organizations?
- What is wrong with the pollution and deforestation of our world? What are the consequences of some of our actions?
- How can we balance the need for land and the need for wood from trees with the importance of taking care of the environment?
- What are some wise decisions that we can make today that will have a positive impact on our future?
- Whose responsibility is it to take care of our planet? How do we make this

happen?

- How can people become aware of the problems we have regarding pollution and climate change?
6. Optional: a class debate regarding the importance of industrialization and the importance of taking care of the environment could follow.

Assessment:

Objectives will be assessed when reviewing students' completed assignments and during class discussion.