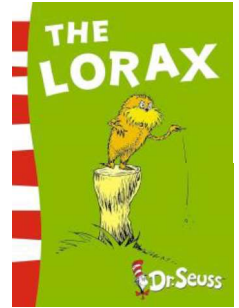


Unless: Exploring Sustainability in The Lorax

A Process Drama

'Unless' is a process drama developed for upper primary students (Year 4-6). It places the students at the centre of the narrative as both the indigenous and invasive species of the Truffula Vale. They are required to think critically about the impacts of the Onceler's actions and develop creative solutions for an imagined sustainable future. It uses drama pedagogy as an approach to explore the cross-curricular priority of Sustainability and can be connected as a transdisciplinary approach to exploring the humanities.



Pretext:

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss – Seuss (2004) *The Lorax*. HarperCollins Children's Books: London.

Focus question:

How do unsustainable practices affect culture, the economy, environment and society?

Curriculum Links

Critical and Creative Thinking

Students learn to:

- an extended range of strategies to generate new ideas and possibilities including forming a link between different information sources (VC2CC6Q03)
- ways to consider competing values and the strength of evidence when reasoning (VC2CC6R02)

Drama

Students learn to

- explore how drama can be used to communicate ideas, perspectives and dramatic meaning, drawing on works from a range of contexts, including from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (VC2ADR6E01)
- develop and document practices in expressive and performance skills, the elements of drama and design to communicate stories, narrative and dramatic meaning (VC2ADR6D01)
- create devised and scripted drama that develops story and narrative using expressive and performance skills, styles, form and design areas (VC2ADR6C01)

- rehearse and present devised and scripted drama in informal and formal settings to engage different audiences (VC2ADR6P01)

Geography

Students learn to

- how places and environments are changed and managed by people (VC2HG6K01)
- the importance of sustainability to places and environments, including the custodial responsibility Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have for Country and Place and how it influences their sustainability practices (VC2HG6K04)

Sustainability

- Sustainable patterns of living require the responsible use of resources; circular economies; maintenance of clean air, water and soils; and the restoration of healthy environments and habitats with ecological integrity. (VC2CCPSIS2)
- Economic, social, environmental and cultural systems influence the sustainability of Earth's systems. (VC2CCPSIS3)
- Worldviews are formed by different experiences at a personal, local, national and global level, and are linked to individual, community and political mandates and actions for sustainability. (VC2CCPSWV2)
- Worldviews that are based on, but not limited to, the 4 pillars of sustainable development consider the intergenerational impact of current and future actions. (VC2CCPSWV3)
- Responsible design considers unexpected consequences that might impact individuals, communities and ecological integrity in the future. Creative, empathetic and innovative design is integral to the achievement of sustainable living. (VC2CCPSRD2)
- Sustainable futures thinking is based on informed views that consider possible and desirable futures. It leads to individual, community, organisational and political action that reduces risk. (VC2CCPSFT1)
- Sustainable futures thinking creates desirable futures that value local, community, national and global equity and fairness across generations and into the future. (VC2CCPSFT2)
- Sustainable futures thinking requires individuals to think creatively, seek information, identify a variety of possibilities, reflect and evaluate actions, and collaborate with and influence others as they work towards desired futures. (VC2CCPSFT3)

Key Ideas

Sustainability

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) (2024) defines sustainability as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It

highlights that sustainability has four pillars - cultural, economic, environmental and social - and four organising ideas - interrelationships of systems, worldviews, responsible design and futures thinking (VCAA 2024). This concept of sustainability connects easily to the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goals and the workshop aims to have students think specifically about:

- Goal 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work
- Goal 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem's, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Activities

Students should have an understanding of the concept of sustainability before engaging in the following activities.

Truffula Vale Tourists

Purpose:

To explore and imagine the Truffula Vale environment in role as a tourist.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- A police style hat for the Security Guard
- 4 chairs to create the entrance and exit from the Truffula Vale
- Calm music to inspire contemplation and concentration kept at a low volume:
 - Powell, J. (2012) 'Funeral for a Tree', *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax (Original Motion Picture Score)*, <https://open.spotify.com/track/1jjsxrc8myWN7oxJFs00wn?si=94d0702a2bba44e7> OR <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq3v2-q0Dd4>
- Print out of pages 12-15.

Setup:

- Set up a space with a clear entrance and exit, which the students will enter and exit through when visiting the Truffula Vale.
- Read pages 12-16, from 'Way back in the days when the grass was still green...' to '...of fresh butterfly milk'
- Ask students to think about what visiting the Truffula Vale might be like.
- Enroll the students as tourists from Thneedville visiting the Truffula Vale and enroll yourself as the security guard looking over the vale.

- Split the class in half, having half as tourists observing the vale from the outside (audience) and the other half as tourists visiting from inside (performers).

Task:

- The performers enter the space and interact with something in the Turffula Vale – the truffula trees, the fruits, the barbaloots, the pond, the humming fish, the swamee swans, the breeze or something else they imagine might be in the vale.
- In role, admit the performers into the vale one at a time providing each student some time to explore the space – allow performers into the vale at a desired pace.
- Performers should be aware of all previous offers to the improvisation and aim not to block them or damage the vale in any way.
- In role, remove and ban any students from the vale who make disrespectful or damaging actions to the value.
- Close the vale at desired time.
- Reflect, then swap and repeat.

Reflection:

- What did you visualise in the environment?
- How were gestures and focus used to create the environment?
- Is this place worth protecting?

References:

Adapted from activity by Philippa Bell, (2013), *Unless*, Drama Victoria Conference: Melbourne

Post Card from the Truffula Vale

Purpose:

To collaboratively present an imagined vision of the Truffula Vale through movement, gesture and facial expression.

Resources:

- Camera to capture the postcard image.

Setup:

- Students stand in a large circle and the open area becomes the play space.

Task:

- Students enter the play space one by one and physically represent something from the Truffula Vale as either a frozen image or by using small repetitive movements.
- When they enter, they must say 'I am ...' filling in the blank with what they are representing.

- Ensure the pacing is limited to one student entering at a time so they can observe the post card image building over time.
- Encourage the students to explore variations of what might be in the vale.
- After the entire group has formed the image, ask all students to freeze in their most dynamic image and take a photo.

Extension: Writing a Post Card Home

Purpose:

To write in role explaining their experience of visiting the Truffula Vale and if it is worth protecting from development.

Resources:

- A postcard template for each student
- A printed copy of the Post Card Activity photo for each student
- Writing materials.

Setup:

- Students stick their photo of the Truffula Vale to the reverse side of their postcard.
- Inform the students that a business is planning on setting up shop in the Truffula Vale to take advantage of the vale's natural resources and that it may not be in the same state if they come back to visit it in the future.

Task:

- Students write a message to a real or imagined friend or family member about their experience at the Truffula Vale and if they think it should be protected from development.

Onceler Hotseat

Purpose:

To explore the Onceler's motivation for coming to the Truffula Vale.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- A chair for the hotseat
- Green Gloves for the Onceler.

Setup:

- Read pages 17-24 from 'I felt a great leaping joy...' to '...'There is no one on earth who would buy that fool Thneed!''
- Set up the hot seat and have the class positioned in front of it.

- Establish hot seat conventions of taking on the role through wearing the green gloves and then sitting on the hot seat.

Task:

- Students brainstorm questions for the Onceler with their peers and then share some with the whole group.
- Ask the students to close their eyes, put on the green gloves, sit down in the chair and then greet them as the Onceler.
- Answer their questions in role.
- Finish the improvisation when appropriate by standing and removing the gloves.
- Reflect on what the students learnt about the Onceler and his motivations.

Reflection:

- Should the Onceler be able to set up this industry in the Truffula Vale?
- Are the Onceler's reasons fair and valid?
- What other options are there for the Onceler?

Onceler Phone Calls

Purpose:

To explore how the Onceler can use voice and language to convince his family to set up the Thneed industry in the Truffula Vale.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.

Setup:

- Read pages 25 to 28 from 'But the very next minute I proved he was wrong...' to 'Sharp right at South Stitch.'
- Pair up students and get them to decide who is A and who is B in the improvisation.

Task:

- A plays the Onceler who is calling their relative (B) on the radio-phone.
- A is trying to convince B of the opportunity available to them in the Truffula Vale setting up a Thneed industry.
- B must initially be hesitant about the idea of moving to the Truffula Vale and so must be convinced by A.
- Eavesdrop on some of the conversations and hear what the Onceler is saying to convince his relatives.
- Swap roles and repeat.
- Reflect

Reflection:

- Was it difficult to convince the relative to come to the Truffula Vale?
- How was language used in the improvisation to create a convincing argument?
- How was the voice used to help convey that argument?

Meeting of the Vale

Purpose:

To explore the impact of the Onceler on the inhabitants (flora and fauna) of the Truffula Vale and how this can drive conflict in the narrative.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- A brown coat/jacket for the Lorax
- Truffula Vale role cards, approximately even numbers for each group.

Setup:

- Read pages 29 to 32 from 'And, in no time at all...' to 'He didn't show up any more.'
- Hand each student a Truffula Vale role card.

Task:

- Students mill and seethe in the space and pass their role card to each peer they pass – exchange must be quick and regular.
- When you say, 'Find your people', the students must be the first group to find all the others with the same role card and sit down.
- Repeat several times to suitably mix up the student groups and use the finale group to establish student's role in the next part of the activity.
- Students sit in their role groups and discuss the impact that the Onceler and his Thneed industry has on their specific role card character and what ideas they might have for solving that problem.
- Inform the students that the Lorax has called a meeting for all the inhabitants of the Truffula Vale and that they will be playing their role card character, and you will play the Lorax –wearing the brown coat/jacket to show when you are in role.
- Tell students that once they enter the space, they will take on their character and are to mingle amongst all the characters sharing their thoughts and solutions regarding the Onceler.
- When the students have suitably mingled enter in role as the Lorax and tell them that the Onceler refuses to shut down their industry and now we need to think about what to do.
- Prompt students to explain their characters problems and offer a solution to the issue.
- Finish the improvisation at a natural climax or when the tension significantly changes.
- Ask everyone to come out of role and reflect.

Reflection:

- What type of mood was evident in this improvisation?
- Did the mood contrast at all and what effect did this have?
- How was conflict evident in the improvisation?

Extension: The Lorax's Moment of Truth*Purpose:*

To create a short narrative demonstrating the possibilities of conflict and climax in the narrative.

Resources:

- None.

Setup:

- Use the original role groups to form students into groups of 3-5.

Task:

- Students use ideas from the Meeting of the Vale activity to create a short drama focussed on what will happen next in the story if the Lorax follows through with one or their ideas and/or solutions.
- Plan, develop and rehearse.
- Share and reflect on the created moments.

Reflection:

- How did these moments create tension?
- Did these moments lead to an appropriate climax?
- Will any of these solutions play out in the book's narrative?

The Onceler's Machines*Purpose:*

To create a representation of the Onceler's machines and their impacts using facial expression, gesture, movement and sound.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- Large print pages for stimulus of pages 29-30 (Thneed workshop), 31-32 (Super-axe-Hacker), 37-42 (Factory making smogulous smoke) and 43-46 the machine making gluppity-glupp

Setup:

- Read pages 33 to 46 from 'But the next week...' to 'I hear things are just as bad up in Lake Erie'.
- Form 4 groups of approximately 6 students and provide each group with a stimulus:
 - The Thneed workshop

- The Super-axe-Hacker
- The factory making smogulous smoke
- The machines creating Gluppity-glupp.

Task:

- Each group will create a representation of their machine and its impact on the inhabitants of the Truffula Vale.
- They should use repetitive and continuous actions using facial expression, gesture, movement and sound.
- The machine, its action and impact should be able to repeat continuously.
- Plan, develop and rehearse.
- Share and reflect on the created machines.

Reflection:

- Whose perspective was evident in each moment?
- How were the characters and their relationships conveyed through the use of expressive skills?
- How was contrast utilised to show a difference between the machines and the Truffula Vale's inhabitants?

Thneedville Gazette Headline

Purpose:

To create a range a tableau's demonstrating the impact the Onceler has had on the Truffula Vale.

Resources:

- Camera to capture the Headline images.

Setup:

- Choose one student to act as the director.
- The remaining students will become thinking clay for the director to use or audience if they are not utilised in the image.

Task:

- The director will use the thinking clay to create an image that was taken by a journalist and will be placed on the cover page of the Thneedville Gazette showing what has happened to the Truffula Vale.
- The director will place and sculpt the thinking clay into their vision through either using their voice to instruct the thinking clay on what to do or show them through representing it with their own body, or a combination of the two.
- They do not physically manipulate the thinking clay.
- When they have finished constructing their image, they need to think of a headline to go with it.

- Capture the image and the headline.
- Ask the students observing (audience) or thinking clay (performers) if any changes that might make our image clearer, impactful or dynamic, and allow a new director to make changes to better represent their vision.
- Thinking clay can be substituted in and out as needed for students to remain focussed.
- Repeat from any stage of the process.

Reflection:

- How did this process differ from collaboratively creating performance work?
- How did these representations contrast to the original image of the Truffula Vale?
- Would the Headlines change if we had those images side by side in the newspaper?

Extension: Letters to the Editor

Purpose:

To write in role as a Thneedville citizen in response to what has happened in the Truffula Vale.

Resources:

- Copies of the Thneedville Gazette Headline photos.
- Letter to the editor template
- Writing materials.

Setup:

- Each student chooses one of Thneedville Gazette Headline photos.

Task:

- Students begin their letter to the editor by creating a headline based on their chosen photo.
- They write a brief response to the editor of the newspaper sharing their views as a Thneedville citizen on what has happened in the Truffula Vale.
- They may choose to be in the same role as the person who wrote the postcard or someone different.

Unless Mime

Purpose:

To create short moments showing the economic, environmental and/or social impacts of the Onceler's Thneed industry.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.

Setup:

- Read pages 47 to 56 from 'And then I got mad...' to 'Whatever that meant, well I just couldn't guess.'
- Form groups of 3-5 students.

Task:

- Students create a short mime that shows what happens to the Truffula Vale, its inhabitants and/or the Onceler's family after the departure of the Lorax.
- Ask them to think about economic, environmental and social impacts for one or more of these environments of groups.
- They should use facial expression, gesture, movement and sound to create their mime.
- Plan, develop and rehearse.
- Share and reflect on the mimes.

Reflection:

- Which outcomes were optimistic, pessimistic and/or realistic?
- Did these reflect any ideas about the concept of sustainability?
- How effective was the use of mime in conveying these ideas?

A Ritual for Regrowth

Purpose:

To create and present a ritual that utilises conventions and elements of drama specific to this form.

Resources:

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
- Calm music to inspire contemplation and concentration kept at a low volume:
 - Powell, J. (2012) 'Funeral for a Tree', *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax (Original Motion Picture Score)*, <https://open.spotify.com/track/1jjsxrc8myWN7oxJFs00wn?si=94d0702a2bba44e7> OR <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq3v2-q0Dd4>

Setup:

- Read the book from start to finish or fill in the gaps by reading the parts missed at the start and what was not finished at the end.
- Form groups of 4-6 students.
- Discuss the importance of the concept of 'unless'.

Instructions:

- Students create a ritual or ceremony to embody the idea of 'unless' and the need for regrowth in the Truffula Vale in the future.

- The ritual or ceremony must include the use of the word ‘unless’ and a gesture or movement to symbolise the last Truffula Tree seed.
- Ask the students to explore how they can utilise rhythm, space, sound and symbol as well as the conventions associated with ritual such as exaggerated movement and heightened use of language.
- Play ‘Death of a Tree’ during the creation process.
- Plan, develop and rehearse.
- Share the rituals of ceremony’s one by one in a carousel or roulette style by having all groups each group present one after another whilst play ‘Death of a Tree’.
- Reflect.

Reflection:

- How was the idea of ‘unless’ conveyed in the ritual?
- What conventions of ritual and elements of drama had significance in the ritual?
- Does this ritual help us better understand the need for sustainability?

Extension: Unless Forum Theatre

Purpose:

To explore how responsible design and futures thinking can be applied to resolving the issues experienced in the Truffula Vale and Thneedville.

Resources:

- None

Setup:

- Form groups of 3-5 students.

Task:

- Each group chooses an issue that is evident at the end of the narrative.
- They create a moment that showcases this issue and the impact it has had on culture, economy, environment and/or society.
- Plan, develop and rehearse.
- Share and engage in a forum style exploration of the issue by allowing the audience to offer ideas for how the drama might be changed to find a resolution to the problem.
- Audience can choose to verbally offer suggestions or take the role of other performers in the original performance.
- Be aware of ‘magic’ solutions – solutions that fix the problem in a manner that over simplified or ignores established characters motivations and/or traits.
- Reflect

Reflection:

- What solutions are plausible and possible to fix these problems?
- What can we learn from this process about sustainability in the real world?
- How can we apply responsible design and futures thinking to our own sustainability issues?

List of Sources

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