

Module 2 Response For Our Common Home

Lesson 6

# Ecological Conversion

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

**What is ecological conversion?**

**Why is an ecological conversion necessary at this historical moment in time?**

**What is required for ecological conversion?**

## TEACHER PREPARATION

**Download and Set Up**

the accompanying PowerPoint presentation

**Print**

this lesson plan, so that you can follow the power point as directed herein

**Read**

the Teacher Pre-ample below, as preparation to teach the lesson.

**Prep**

Borrow a copy of the Dr Seuss book: The Lorax (every library should have one).

**Print/Copy**

The Lorax supporting document, one for each group of four students. PREP: Ahead of time, cut each one into its separate horizontal squares, and place in an envelope, one envelope for each group

**Print/Prep**

Print the appendix with the *placards for each of 17 (elements) characters*, and cut them out so students can attach theirs with a piece of masking tape to their shirt, so that other students can see the particular element that the student represents.

**Prep**

Social Presencing Theatre requires a large open space, with chairs circling around, one for each student. The space needs to be protected from any outside interference.

A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production... Purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic act. Today, in a word, “the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle” (Laudato Si’ 206)

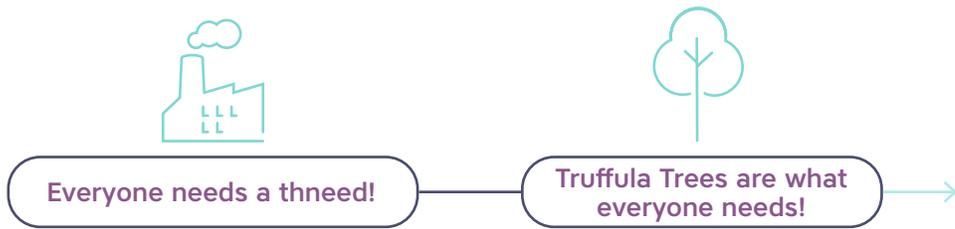
# PEDAGOGY

It is essential for the teacher to watch three short videos about **Social Presencing Theatre**, which is the primary pedagogy applied in this lesson. Videos to watch: Stuck Exercise, Part I video (6:00), paying particular attention to how the facilitator explains the process and uses the language of invitation. In 4D Mapping section; there are three videos that show how social presencing theatre works. Watch Part II (8:19) and Part III (9:52).

The precise and invitational language of the facilitator is most important in this pedagogy. The facilitator’s language is meant to intentionally call forward the energy of mindfulness to reveal embodied knowledge. It is a powerful experience for young people and has potential to actually move them into preliminary work of ecological conversion. This pedagogy is contingent upon the careful preparation and intention of the facilitator to be more invitational, less directive, and acutely observational.

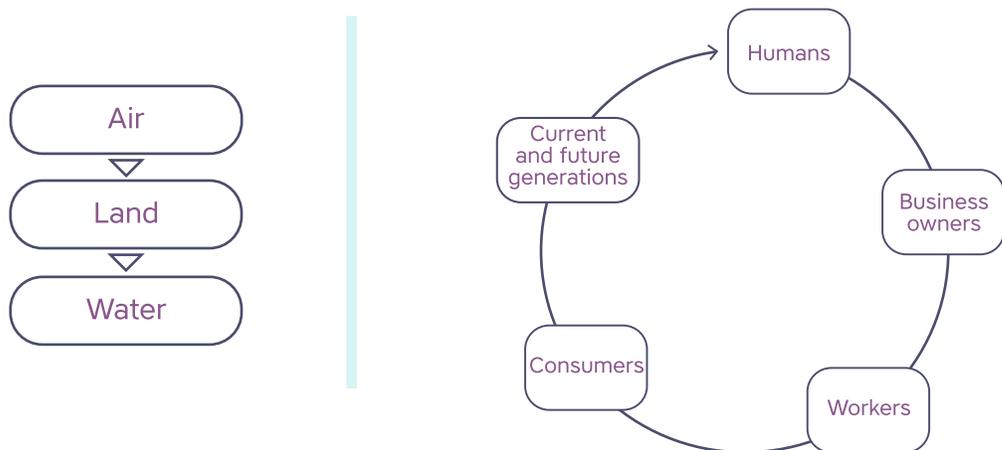
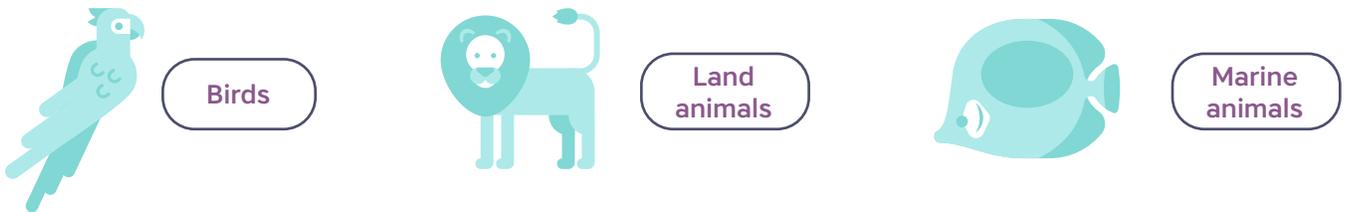
Teacher Preamble: The Lorax, Changing Paradigms in the Journey of Ecological Conversion

Dr. Seuss’s *The Lorax* compresses the last 200 years of human history into a fable of sorts – a fable of the journey from a technocratic to an ecological paradigm.



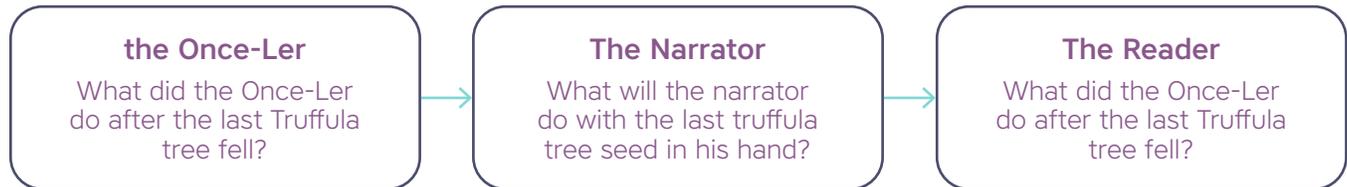
**Elements in the microcosm of the story have counterparts in the macrocosm of the world as we know it:**

Creatures of the Earth



Paradigms like to remain invisible, silently and invisibly guiding our unconscious minds and conscious choices; Seuss's fable renders the technocratic paradigm painfully visible – with new insight, readers, like the Once-Ler and the narrator, are thus positioned to renegotiate their relationship to the paradigm which has resulted in the current climate crisis.

Dr. Seuss's story actually includes 3 characters on the path of ecological conversion: the Once-Ler, the narrator, and don't forget the reader! Witnessing the Once-ler's conversion and imagining the narrator's next moves supports students to reflect upon their own beliefs, practices, and possibilities for change.



It would seem that when he wrote the book in the early 1970s, Dr. Seuss anticipated that his readers in the decades to come would, like the Once-Ler, need an experience of metanoia to convert from a technocratic to an ecological paradigm.

Arguably, Dr. Seuss hopes that this story will affect a shift in the minds of readers – tempering desires to make money and consume manufactured goods with the desire to live more modestly with less impact on the natural world.

## LESSON PLAN

### IGNITE

Project Slide 1 of power point.

#### GUIDING QUESTION

**What are rights? Does the Earth have rights?**

**Does the Earth speak? What are the ways that the Earth communicates with humanity?**

**Where do beliefs come from? How are they related to actions?**

**What causes a person or group to change their beliefs?**

**What is ecological conversion?**

Discursive strategy:

Place students in small groups. Assign one of the above question sets to each group. Give them time to discuss their ideas and form an answer to the questions. Share these with the large group, recording ideas to make students' thinking visible. Facilitate to optimize number of actively contributing students and to celebrate and further develop the thinking they share.

Project Slide 2

(1:32 video) of Archbishop Don Bolen of Regina, Saskatchewan.

Project Slide 3

as a way of synthesizing and adding to student's initial thinking.

### IMMERSE

Read the book **The Lorax** with students. To provide focus for their listening and viewing, invite them to note how the Once-ler's beliefs change, and why.

As you turn the pages, pause on each page to ask questions which require making inferences based on words and images.

#### Example:

The payment the Once-Ler demands includes "fifteen cents and a nail and the shell of a great-great-great-grandfather snail." The last item is conspicuous: Why do you think it's on the list? (*This is a good question to ask again at the end of the book, once they know that the same person who finds the snail shell receives the last truffula seed! Neither task is for the faint of heart!*)

A thinking routine to stimulate students' critical thinking as you move from page to page is *See, Think, Wonder*. (What do you see? What do you think about what you see? What do you wonder about?)

## COALESCE

**Pose the following three questions** on the board for students to see. Invite students to turn and talk to a partner. Then, share and connect ideas with the larger group.

- What are the Once-ler’s beliefs at the beginning, when he chops down the first Truffula tree and opens the Thneed factory?
- What are his beliefs as he tells his story to the narrator?
- What changed his mind?

*Note to teacher: make this chart on the board to scaffold thinking and make thinking visible.*

Belief Statement Stems	Before	After
The goal of human life is ...		
Air, land, & water and the resources they contain are ...		
Non-human forms of life are ...		

From the book to the world as we know it:

Give students the opportunity to make connections between details in the book and the world as they know it.

Hand out the Lorax supporting document envelopes which contain the manipulable horizontal squares. These manipulable squares pair elements from The Lorax with their “real world” equivalents. Challenge students in groups of four to form matching pairs with the manipulables.

When they’re done, invite students to identify any items / players / forces that exist today, yet are not represented in Seuss’s book.

Next Step: Social Presencing Theatre to represent the Current, “stuck” state and move towards the healing in an “emerging state”.

At this point, it is important for the teacher to explain how social presencing theatre works (from watching the two videos) so that students understand the importance of mindfulness and quiet participation in the process.

### **Part I: The current Stuck state**

The “stuck state” in the Lorax is at the point where the Once-Ler’s business still appears [to him] to be ‘thriving’, yet the natural world is deeply damaged.

Invite all students to sit in the circle. Some will take participating character (element) roles. Some will remain sitting as mindful observers and contributors.

Invite each student to choose one of the 17 “elements” in the system/ culture of the story, and to take a few moments to imagine what it would be like to be this element in the stuck state of the Lorax. Attach their particular name placard to their shirt with a piece of masking tape.

### The 17 roles are:

- The Lorax- the voice of the earth
- Swomee-swans- birds, creatures of the air
- Brown bar-ba-loots- animals, creatures of the land
- Humming fish – fish, creatures of the sea
- Rippulous pond – the Earth’s waters
- Truffula forest – the forests, full of life, at threat of extinction due to human choices
- Gluppity-glupp – pollutants of air, land, and water
- The Ruined landscape – the damaged Earth
- Once-ler – business, industry, advertising: industrialization that destroys the environment without regard for anything but profit
- Thneed – all the items that nobody actually needs, but “wants” (through the power of marketing) and that comes at the price of destroying some aspect of the natural world which is not just easily replaced
- Thneed factory- factories around the world
- Radio phone – communications, internet
- Thneed buyer- consumers
- Roads – transportation infrastructure
- Once-Ler’s family – workers of the world
- Super-axe hacker – technologies
- Narrator- everyday citizens, the reader

Call each element into the shared space, *one at a time*, in silence, giving the student(s) time to decide where this element fits in relation to others. Ask them to choose their location/distance, level (crouching, standing) and body language carefully.

*Example: The Once-ler might stand strong and proud in a central location while the swamee-swans languish near the ground, near the perimeter of the shared space.*

All others observe in mindful silence. There is nothing verbal at this point.

Once each has settled into a position, ask each element (character) to make a declaration that expresses what they believe, feel, experience, or do in the current state scenario. (i.e. “I am the Super Ax-hacker, the latest technology, fast, smart, and efficient; once I’m made, everyone wants me and will pay a lot of money to get me.” Or “I am gluppity-glup – pollution. I thrive in places where few environmental laws exist.”)

Once all are in place, invite participants to adjust their positions if necessary, to better represent their state and relationships.

Thus, the current/stuck state is represented – interconnections clarified.

*Invite participants to share what they notice* – what are the problems or issues in the current state? What part do they play in the current state? How does the present state help or harm them?

### **Part II: THE EMERGING/GOAL STATE (integrative ecology)**

Now, invite each participant, one at a time (as before), to quietly move from their current stuck position to a new one, one that represents what it will be like when we are all working together to care for our common home. There will be simultaneous movement in the open space and allow time for this to occur at its own pace. Some elements may adjust as other elements choose their position.

Once all participants have moved and settled into the healing emerging state, invite them to observe and feel their relationship to others in this new emerging state. Invite each to make an “I” statement that expresses what they believe, feel, experience, or do in the emerging/goal state.

Invite spaceholders that are in the perimeter circle to make an “I” statement: ‘I saw...’ or ‘I felt...’ This is non-judgemental, and absolutely observational.

Then, invite all participating elements (characters) to return to their seats. Take a moment to step out of their roles. Then invite any additional “I” statements about what a person saw or felt, to be made.

This debriefing can help students to both enlarge and consolidate their understandings, and teachers to know where their learners are in relation to the learning targets.

## CREATE

The Sequel:

The Lorax's narrator, and, in fact, the reader, are faced with a very important task – to lead the community to a new way of living – one which makes it possible for human beings and the natural world to co-exist and flourish.

Invite students to reflect on the differences between the “stuck state” and the “goal state” in their social presenting theatre exercise, then respond to the question:

*What should humans do differently to emerge from the stuck state into the goal state? What rights must be respected and protected? What responsibilities must be met? By whom? How?*

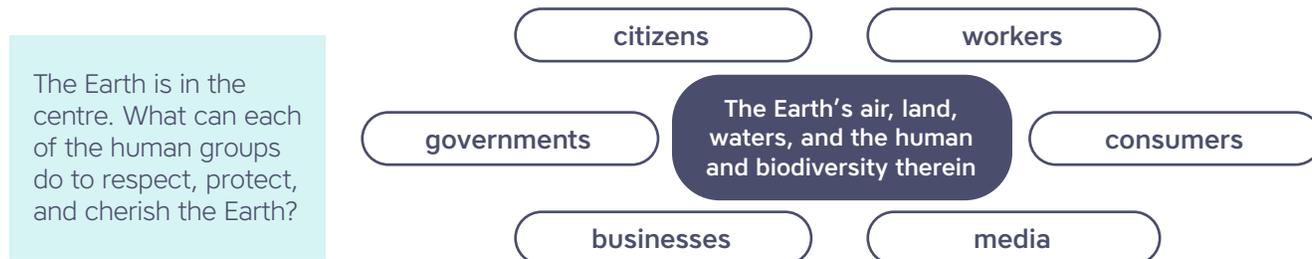
**Urge students to be precise by using the 5Ws and H:**

- Who should/must act differently?
- When?
- Where?
- How?
- Why?

**Suggestion:**

Invite pairs of students to create a recommendation together; pairs can then meet to share and provide feedback; invite pairs to share revised recommendations with the large group; record these, noting patterns. The figure below (in current or modified form) can scaffold making students' thinking visible. Students could place their recommendations within or beside the human actor(s) responsible for the recommended actions.

Finally, ask students to share the new questions that this process has raised for them. Record these and make them visible for students.



The Earth is in the centre. What can each of the human groups do to respect, protect, and cherish the Earth?

The Earth Charter asks us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: “As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning...Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.” (Laudato Si' 207)

*(embedded quote from Earth Charter, the Hague, June 29, 2000)*

Slide 6

As a culminating activity watch the intergenerational [For our Common Home](#) seeing young and the not-so-young coming together.

Slide 7

Invite students to sign the [Intergenerational Pledge](#) for our common home. See how the different generations are doing with this pledge challenge.

**Reflect**

What can I/we do in my life to speak and care for the Earth? Students can develop their response to this question in a myriad of ways, both public and private. Which would enhance your students' learning and work best within your space?

## Going Deeper

Other resources:

**The Story of Stuff:** this video, for middle years and high school students, traces the stages of extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. It illustrates and clarifies Pope Francis's description of the linear process of production.

**Anthropocene:** This documentary impresses upon viewers the immense scale of human impacts on the earth and climate; powerful appeal for cultural shift

**Guest Speakers:** Invite leaders in your province, city, and communities to share what they are doing to shift belief and practice from dominion to stewardship and kinship paradigms. Encourage students and leaders to seek ways of partnering for change.

Please consider making a donation to support our mission at Development and Peace – working with partner organizations in the Global South who promote alternatives to unfair social, political and economic structures, and educating Canadians about the causes of poverty and mobilizing towards actions for change.

## Element Role placards

**the Lorax**

**Swomee-  
swans**

**Brown  
bar-ba-loots**

**Humming  
fish**

**Rippulous  
pond**

**Truffula  
forest**

**Gluppity-  
glupp**

**Ruined  
landscape**

**Once-ler**

**Thneed**

**Narrator**

**Roads**

**Thneed  
factory**

**Once-ler's  
family**

**Radio  
phone**

**Thneed  
buyer**

**Super-axe  
hacker**

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# The Lorax Support Document

Dr. Seuss wrote this book nearly 50 years ago. Is there anything that isn't represented in the book that you think Dr. Seuss would add if he wrote the book today? (ex: Indigenous peoples, government...)

<b>LORAX</b>	Earth Ally!	<b>THNEED FACTORY</b>	Factories
<b>SWOMEES-SWANS</b>	Birds	<b>RADIO PHONE</b>	Communication technologies
<b>BROWN BAR-BA-LOOTS</b>	Mammals	<b>THNEED BUYER</b>	Consumer
<b>HUMMING FISH</b>	Fish	<b>ROADS</b>	Transportation infrastructure: roads, canals, railways etc.
<b>RIPPULOUS POND</b>	Water (ponds, lakes, oceans, rivers)	<b>WAGONS</b>	Vehicles to transport goods: trucks, trains, boats, airplanes
<b>TRUFFULA FOREST</b>	Forests	<b>WORKERS</b>	People working in factories
<b>GLUPPITY-GLUPP</b>	Pollution, waste, toxins	<b>SUPER-AXE HACKER</b>	Technologies to speed up and intensify re-source extraction and production of goods
<b>ONCE-LER</b>	People in business, industry, advertising	<b>NARRATOR</b>	Citizens who learn the truth and must decide how to respond
<b>THNEED</b>	Items that nobody actually needs but "wants" through power of marketing		