

The Children's Theatre Company

Building Character Onstage!

Dear Educators,

Our Building Character Study Guides have been created to enhance your students' experience of each of our performance showcases and to extend their themes into your curriculum. We know your classroom time is precious, but we hope you will find some of the included activities valuable to your students. These are simply suggested activities, and you should feel free to adapt them to best fit your grade level and curriculum.

Vocabulary Assessment

- 1) Before distributing the script, use the PRELIMINARY vocabulary test to assess the cast's vocabulary.
- 2) Then submit an unassigned script to each cast member, however, to motivate literacy, we recommend that you do not assign roles until each performer has underlined the words that they do not know subsequently ensuring that they have thoroughly read their script.
- 3) Offer a mid-season assessment to see how well the performers have learned the vocabulary and concepts and to assess what words / concepts need emphasis.
- 4) Produce this exact same preliminary vocabulary test at the end of the performance run to see how far the students have come along.
- 5) Keep records of students' literacy and growth and share the results with parents, teachers, funders and CTC New York!

It is our belief that theatre arts are basic to education. We hope that, you'll find these activities both educational and entertaining.

Sincerely,

Mehr Mansuri
Executive Director

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The Lorax by Dr. Seuss ~ Music and lyrics by Lory Lazarus

Story Summary

Bewitched by the beauty of the Truffula Trees, an enterprising villain gets greedy and chops down the wondrous Truffula trees to produce and mass-market "Thneeds." The Lorax is not only an ecological warning, but also speaks to the dark side of "free enterprise" at its most depraved and greedy state.

Characters:

Once-ler (*renamed MONEYBAGS in the Children's Theatre Company Production*)

Lorax (*Protector of the habitat and the Truffula trees*)

Swamee Swans (*Swan-like birds*)

Humming Fish (*Singing Fish*)

Brown Barbaloots (*Brown bears*)

Get Students Talking about:

1. **Social Studies Objectives** –Environmental Concerns: pollution, habitat, trees, mass-production
2. **Ethics Education:** Animal rights, consumerism, consumer culture, culture of service, corporate & entrepreneurial responsibility, philanthropy
3. **Character Education/Resilience Skills Objectives:** Moderation, Responsibility, Waste

Framing:

1. As a class, re-tell the story of the Lorax and/or
2. Side-coach students through a brief focus exercise by asking them to be very quiet and squat down in the floor. As a seed, grow taller and taller into a beautiful Truffula tree. Stand proud. Look around at the beautiful land. If you know another tree, go ahead and wave to them! Remember that Truffulas don't talk! Suddenly you feel a pain at your feet... someone is chopping you down. In slow motion, fall to the ground in pain.
3. How did you like being a Truffula tree? The trees are not the only ones that suffered from the Once-ler's business. Segue into the process section.

Process:

1. Divide students into three groups in different areas of the room. Label each group as one of the animals that used to live on the Street of the Lifted Lorax. These groups are the Brown Barbaloots, the Swomee-Swans, and the Humming-Fish.
 2. Lead students through a day in the life of that animal. Wake up, find food, eat, play, then lay down to take a nap. How do you hold your body? What kinds of quiet sounds do you make?
 3. Ask everyone to sit down in a circle. Define the center of the circle as "the land" where the animals live. Ask the Brown Barbaloots to act out, inside the circle, having a regular day. Facilitate the other call members helping chop down all the Truffula trees around the Barbaloots, and then to be seated. Side-coach the Barbaloots looking for a place to rest. There are no trees! They are forced to leave the land.
 4. Repeat step 3 with the Swomee-swans in the center and the others being pipes pumping out "smogulous smoke".
 5. Repeat step 3 with the Humming-fish in the center and the others dumping Gluppity-Glupp in the water.
- Let the drama be as "dramatic" as students wish. Older students may want to make this a melodrama, that is entirely permissible.

Reflection and Process:

1. Facilitate a grade-appropriate discussion to answer these questions.
What do you think Truffula trees would say if they could talk?
How did you feel when you had to leave the land? Did you want to leave?
Has anyone ever moved before? How does that feel?
What did the Lorax know was going to happen? Could that happen in "real life?" Is it?
Do you know of some animals that have become extinct? (ie. California Condors) Why?
How can we help protect, or save, our "land?" Can we be "Loraxes?" How?
2. Positively reinforce group participation and individual input.
3. Encourage students to write a story (if they can write), tell someone outside of class, or draw a picture later about today's drama. Thank everyone for their help in the drama.