



# Lesson Plan: Needs and Wants

*Adapted from Rethink Recycling: An Oregon Waste Reduction Curriculum, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality – [www.deq.state.or.us](http://www.deq.state.or.us)*

**Goal:** Students will become aware of what defines a “need” and a “want” and learn to recognize that responsible consumer choices can result in reduced waste and environmental impact.

**Assessment:** Students will be able to recognize the impact of humans on the natural system, make predictions about the impact of certain behaviors and how personal or cultural perspectives affect these behaviors, and be able to assess factors that affect consumer purchases.

**Age Group:** Grades 4-5

**Time:** 45-60 minutes

## **Materials:**

- *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (book or video)

## **Background Information for Teachers**

Solid waste disposal depletes valuable lands, habitats and natural resources, as well as, potentially causing pollution that future generations will have to clean up. We all contribute to the solid waste problem through our daily habits of purchasing and using resources. We all, therefore, are responsible for helping to solve it.

Every individual has a different idea about what defines a “need” and a “want,” depending on his or her culture, background, values, and situation. Although every person has different ideas about what is necessary to him or her, there are certain basic needs that all humans share, including biological needs (food, water, air, shelter); social needs (clothing, feelings of belonging and protection); and spiritual needs (faith, love, hope). Students can examine their own feelings about needs and wants in order to learn to make responsible consumer choices that reduce waste and save natural resources.

## **Activity**

Step 1:

- What are some of the consequences of producing lots of trash?  
Students should recall that it smells, and because everything we throw away was originally made from a natural resource, it breaks the earth’s natural cycle as these things are buried and lost forever.
- It also costs us money to get someone to come to our house and take our trash away.  
Generally, the more trash we generate the more we pay to dispose of it.

## Step 2:

- Read or watch *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - How did each step of the Once-ler's developing business destroy a piece of the ecosystem until the entire system ceased to function?
  - Why was the Super Axe Hacker invented?
  - Why did the Once-ler ignore the Lorax's warnings?
  - What happened to the Lorax?
  - What did the Lorax's message "UNLESS" mean?
  - What are some of the environmental consequences of living in a culture with a lot of wants?
- It may be helpful to suggest that some people consider environmental consequences prior to making a purchase and other choices about their lifestyle, such as how big of a car to drive (smaller cars create less air pollution) or to walk or bike instead of driving whenever possible.

## **Extensions**

- The Lorax spoke for trees "for trees have no tongues." Ask students to plan a three minute talk on something which cannot speak for itself.
- Have students create an illustrated book of needs and wants using photos from magazines or their own drawings.
- Have students reflect on their own needs and wants by writing a cinquain poem:  
Cinquain Rules:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> line: 1 word (noun) giving title or topic
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> line: 2 words (adj. /adv.) describing the title or topic
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> line: 3 words (verbs) expressing an action
  - 4<sup>th</sup> line: 4 words expressing a feeling about the topic
  - 5<sup>th</sup> line: 1 synonym for the title, or repeat the title

## **Minnesota Teaching Standards**

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Science: 4.1.2.1.1

Social Studies: 4.3.4.9.1

### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

Science: 5.3.4.1.3, 5.4.4.1.1