Trees, Thneeds, and The Lorax’s Pleas:

The Paradoxical Nature of The Lorax

For the entire paper, use Times New Roman, 12 point font with 1” margins.

For the title page, centre the title of your paper and right justify information like your name, student number, and course code at the bottom of the page.
Dr. Seuss’s *The Lorax* is considered to be one of the greatest children’s books that takes an interest in human ecology and the environmental movement. There are more scholarly interpretations of this book than any other children’s text strictly dealing with the environmental crisis. It was published in 1971, one year after the first Earth Day, and mirrors many of the themes that revolved around that day, such as responsibilities of the crisis and solutions for it.

*The Lorax*, though, is a paradox because it is both a positive and a negative tool for the environmental movement. This paper will explore its paradoxes by looking at how the text mirrors the environmental crisis as seen around the first Earth Day as well as how this text was received and used by others. It will become clear that the text is a problematic teaching tool because of its contradictory nature.

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day took place and was marked with events and activities that occurred all across America. It started out with an idea for a teach-in by Gaylord Nelson, an American Democrat, and it evolved into various activities (rallies, marches, performances) and lectures across America that had close to 20 million participants.¹

Some people used the day to protest corporations, for example, in Denver, antinuclear activists presented the Rapist of the Year award to the Atomic Energy Commission.²

---

² Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 111.
There were also groups that used guerilla theatre techniques. One example of this was at the University of Illinois, where students went on stage and disrupted a Commonwealth Edison speaker by throwing soot at each other and coughing.\(^3\) . . .

Suess makes clear connections between capitalism, greed, and environmental degradation throughout *The Lorax*:

> I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads.
> I biggered my wagons.
> I biggered the loads of the Theends I shipped out.
> I was shipping them forth to the South! To the East!
> To the West! To the North!
> I went right on biggering...selling more Thneeds.
> And I biggered my money, which everyone needs.

Then AGAIN he came back!
I was fixing some pipes
when that old-nuisance Lorax came back
with MORE gripes.\(^4\)

For the Once-ler, the protests of the Lorax try his patience. He suggests that the Lorax’s complaints are insignificant “gripes”. The Once-ler is irritated by the constant interruptions from the Lorax because his capitalist ambitions are not consistent with the health or well-being of the Truffala trees or any of the inhabitants of the Grickle Grass. His priority is profit, and although, at first, he feels some sadness over the loss of the Bar-ba-loots and their potential as customers, he believes, “business is business/ and business must grow.”\(^5\)

---

\(^3\) Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 111.


Bibliography


Detailed instruction on footnoting and bibliographic documentation is available on the [ASC Online Documentation Guide: Footnoting/Endnoting (Chicago Style)](http://www.asc.wvu.edu/).