



# Lesson: Needs and Wants

**Grade:** K-3

**Subject:** Social Science, English

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- discriminate between wants and needs, quantity and quality, necessities and luxuries
- evaluate their own motives for buying things
- think about the long-term consequences of their consumption habits and draw conclusions about how their actions impact the environment

**Teaching Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (book or video); worksheets, Needs and Wants Game Pieces and instruction;

(Optional:) Oregon DEQ video, "Time's a Wasting: Garbage and Recycling in Oregon" (See Teacher Resource section for availability.)

Concept adapted from the Association of Vermont Recyclers: *AVR Teacher's Resource Guide For Solid Waste and Recycling Education* (reprinted 1999)



## Background:

We all contribute to the solid waste and other environmental problems through our daily habits of purchasing and using resources. Often, items are purchased for convenience without regard for what will happen to the item once we are through using it. By evaluating our motives, assessing the differences between wants and needs, and making conscious pre-purchase decisions to select quality, multiple-use items, we can assume our share of the responsibility for lessening our impact on the environment.

## Procedures:

Introduction:

- **What do you really need in order to live?** Write the responses on the board. (Air, water, food, shelter, love, friends, etc.) Compare these items to other items such as cars, toys, or video games, for example.
- **Would your list of basic needs be different if you were a plant or an animal?** (List these needs on the board).
- Read the book or show the video of *The Lorax*.
- **What effect did the Once-ler's business have on the Lorax?**
- **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?**
- **How many "Thneeds" (things we think we need) do each of us have?** Have students take turns naming "Thneeds" from their homes or personal belongings.
- Discuss how our "Thneeds" may be different if we were from another country, culture, for example. (You could use Native American views from the lesson as a basis for comparison).
- (Optional) Play the Needs and Wants Game--see instructions in this Lesson.

## Reflection/Response:

- Have students illustrate their needs and wants under the titles "Thneeds" and Thwants."
- Distribute the worksheet "Needs and Wants" to older students to complete in class or at home.
- **What are some benefits of reducing the amount of what we buy? Let's think about some valuable things we can get from or give to our families or friends that do not require buying new things.** (Write ideas on the board, examples are: spending time with each other, compose a poem for someone, experiencing things together like a trip to the park or the zoo, loaning books or toys to someone, etc.).
- **What is the connection between our needs and wants and the environment?** The things we buy are all made from natural resources and all cause some pollution while being made and brought to the store for us to buy. That is why we think about using wisely!

## **Extensions:**

- Plant a tree!
- Use the end part of the video Time's a Wasting: Garbage and Recycling in Oregon to show the children about making good pre-purchasing decisions.
- The Lorax spoke for trees "for the trees have no tongues." Have students choose one thing to speak for, decide what they would say and then speak for one minute on behalf of their thing which cannot speak for itself.

### **Common Curriculum Goal:**

#### **English:** Literature

- Analyze the development and treatment of themes in a literary work.

#### **Social Science:** Analysis

- Identify, analyze, and select a course of action to resolve an issue.

### **Grade 3 Benchmark:**

- Identify character, plot, and setting in a literary selection.  
Students will:
  1. identify main and supporting characters.
  2. identify events important to the development of the plot.
  3. identify setting, including place and time period of a story.
- Identify how people or other living things might be affected by an event, issue, or problem.
- Identify possible options or responses, then make a choice or express an opinion.



# Worksheet: Needs and Wants

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did the Once-ler cut down the Truffula trees? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why do the Brown Bar-ba-loots have to leave? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What kinds of problems does the thneed factory cause for the environment? Name at least three.

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4. What happens to the Once-ler when there are no more Truffula, trees? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What happens to the Lorax? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Is bigger always better? Give an example to back up your opinion. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. A "Thneed" is defined as a fine thing that everyone thinks they need. What are some examples of thneeds - things that we think we need? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Needs and Wants Game Instructions

## **Directions:**

1. Copy the Needs and Wants worksheets so that each pair of students will have a set (be sure to single-side the copies because the backs of the cards need to be blank). Cut the cards along the dotted lines and place each set of cards into an envelope. Students can help, and they can mount the cards with glue onto a thicker paper (used file folders, paper board, etc.) to make them more sturdy.
2. Divide the students into pairs. Pass out one envelope of cards to each pair. Direct them to sort their cards into piles that are alike in some way. Ask the students to explain which “rule” they used for sorting the cards. (List the rules the students used on the board). Encourage them to look for new ways to sort the objects if they can think of more.
3. Have students put the cards back into the envelopes, then discuss what is the difference between a NEED and a WANT.

Can you live without the things you need? What about the things you want?

Now tell them to resort their cards using this criteria.

Ask students to define the criteria they used to decide if something is a need or a want. Students might offer answers such as cost, parent/legal permission, personal safety, peers, etc.




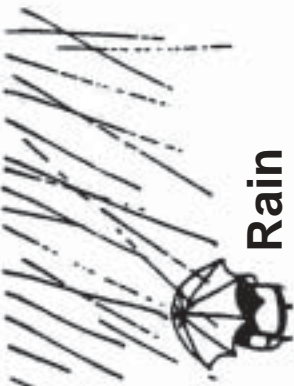








4. Lead a class discussion on basic needs for life and how that might differ from culture to culture. Teach students how affluent societies tend to have more “NEEDS” (really WANTS) because of their lifestyle, but that many of these things are not really necessary.
5. Have students make a list of things that they have recently purchased or been given. Write an N or a W next to each item. Have students reflect on the things that they personally own such as toys, electronics, clothes, recreational gear. Ask them to write down examples of things they have multiple copies of such as shoes, jackets, games, stuffed animals. Underline the items that you could do without if you had to and circle the items that you would always want to have. Discuss how students can assess whether or not they have “enough” and how they might find other ways to be happy without accumulating new things all the time and without creating more garbage. Also, you might help students think about the money they and their families can save by foregoing unnecessary purchases. By only buying what we need, we are freeing up our own monetary resources for a better use like a savings account, or the purchase of a more expensive item that will last a long time. Examples of alternatives to our “wants” are: building or creating art or toys for yourself; exchanging one toy for another with a friend or group of friends; go to the library and check out books on new subjects to learn new interests and skills, etc.





# Worksheet: Needs and Wants Game Pieces






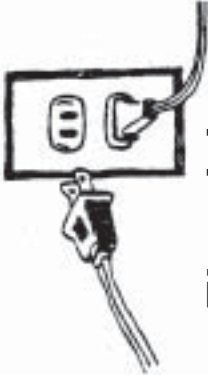






Source: California Department of Health Services Toxic Substances Control Program, *The No Waste Anthology* (1991)

 <b>Quiet</b>	 <b>Friends</b>	 <b>Sun</b>	 <b>Rain</b>
 <b>Car</b>	 <b>Warmth</b>	 <b>Parent</b>	 <b>Television</b>
 <b>Milk</b>	 <b>Home</b>	 <b>Eggs</b>	 <b>Dollars</b>
			<b>Air</b>



# Worksheet: Needs and Wants Game Pieces

Source: California Department of Health Services Toxic Substances Control Program, *The No Waste Anthology* (1991)

<p><b>Vegetables</b></p> 	<p><b>Fruit</b></p> 	<p><b>Yard</b></p> 	<p><b>Insects</b></p> 
<p><b>Clothes</b></p> 	<p><b>Electricity</b></p> 	<p><b>Water</b></p> 	<p><b>Candy</b></p> 
<p><b>Medicine</b></p> 	<p><b>Bicycle</b></p> 	<p><b>Grass</b></p> 	<p><b>Computer</b></p> 
<p><b>Nuts</b></p> 