



# Lesson: Needs and Wants

**Grade:** 4-5

**Subject:** Social Science, English

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- recognize the impact of humans on natural systems
- make predictions about the impact of certain behaviors and how personal or cultural perspectives affect these behaviors
- assess factors that affect consumer purchases
- recognize that responsible consumer choices can result in reduced waste and environmental impact

**Teaching Time:** 45 to 55 minutes

**Materials:** *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (book or video); Instructions, Needs and Wants Game; Needs and Wants activity cards-- photocopy to make one set per pair of students; one envelope to hold each set of activity cards; scissors

(Continued...)

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



## Background:

The amount of municipal solid waste disposed in Oregon in 1999 was 2.8 million tons or 1,690 pounds per person per year (about 3/4 of a ton). This translates to 4.5 pounds of municipal solid waste disposed per person per day. Solid waste disposal depletes Oregon of 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.

## Procedures:

Part I: Introductory Discussion

- **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Students should recall that it smells, and because everything we throw away was originally made from a natural resource, it breaks the earth's natural cycle because these things are buried and lost forever.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.

Part II:

- Read or watch *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss.
- Discuss the following questions in the reflection section and include the Game Wants and Needs into the discussion. Have the students complete the worksheet.

## Reflection/Response:

- **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?** You might use the Lesson on Native American Culture to help students understand that not all cultures have as many wants as people in the U.S. Also, suggest that some

people consider environmental consequences when considering purchases 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.

- (Optional) Play the Wants and Needs Game--see instructions in this lesson.

### **Extensions:**

- Read and discuss the play the Throwaway Three. **Do different people have different ideas about what they need? Is there something that you consider a need that someone 100 years ago or in a third world country today might consider a want?**
- 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

Samples:

WATER

Wonderfully wet

Trickling, roaring, moving

It feels so cool

Wetness

TELEVISION

Loud, constant

Blaring the news

It makes me crazy

TV

WIND

Waving, blowing

Moving rain clouds

Nice on my face

Breath

#### **Oregon Common Curriculum Goal:**

**English:** Writing, Reading

- Use a variety of written forms (e.g., journals, essays, short stories, poems, research papers, business and technical writing) to express ideas appropriate to audience and purpose
- Demonstrate literal comprehension of a variety of printed materials.

**Social Science:** Analysis

- Explain various perspectives on an event or issue and the reasoning behind them
- Identify, analyze, and select a course of action to resolve an issue.

#### **Grade 5 Benchmark:**

- Write in a variety of modes (e.g., narrative, imaginative, expository, persuasive) and forms (e.g., essays, stories, reports) appropriate to audience and purpose.
- Identify sequence of events, main ideas, facts, supporting details, and opinions in literary, informative, and practical selections.
- Identify and study two or more points of view on an event, issue, or problem.
- Explain characteristics of an event, issue, or problem, suggesting possible causes and results.

(Optional:) Play,  
Throwaway Three



# 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 make single-sided copies, as the backs of the cards must 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.




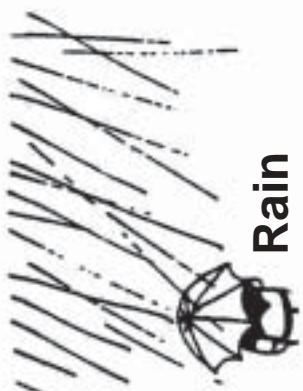





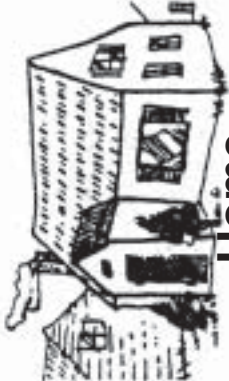


4. Lead a class discussion on basic needs for life and how that might differ from culture to culture. Teach students how affluent societies tend to have more “NEEDS” (really WANTS) because of their lifestyle, but that many of these things are not really necessary.
5. Have students make a list of things 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.





# Needs and Wants Game Pieces








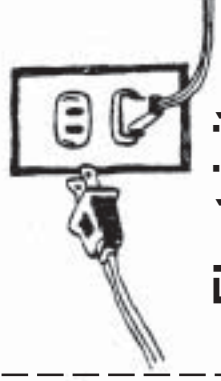


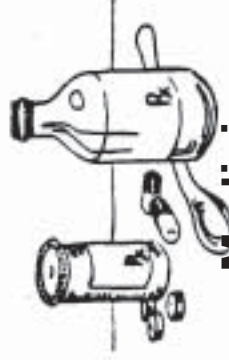
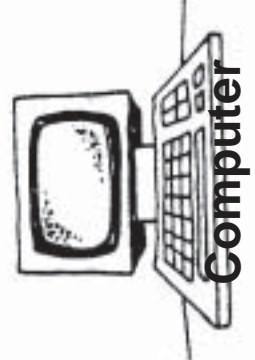

Source: California Department of Health Services Toxic Substances Control Program  
*The No Waste Anthology* (1991)

 <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>



# Needs and Wants Game Pieces

Source: California Department of Health Services Toxic Substances Control Program  
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 <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>Water</b></p>	 <p><b>Candy</b></p>	 <p><b>Electricity</b></p>	 <p><b>Bicycle</b></p>	 <p><b>Grass</b></p>	 <p><b>Medicine</b></p>	 <p><b>Computer</b></p>	 <p><b>Nuts</b></p>
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