An Investigation into the Impact of Children's Literature Through a Review of Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*

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**ABSTRACT**

This article is a brief overview of *The Lorax*, by Dr. Seuss, the story of a repentant ex-industrialist who tells a tale of environmental degradation in the name of industrialism, progress, and profit, heedless of warnings from the Lorax— who speaks on behalf of nature. The book imparts lessons on finding a balance between ecology and industrial progress, and taking the first steps to righting the environmental errors of the past. The Lorax, positioned as an important ecological text, has resonated with generations. It is the generations that follow who inherit the earth, making it paramount humankind upholds a sense of responsibility and imparts an understanding of equivocate approaches to both nature and industry. In addition, this book review examines the importance of engaging, environmental children's literature as a tool for instilling a lifelong awareness within the formative years, as a strategy for introducing the significance of ecological cognizance.

Introduction to Dr. Seuss

Children's literature can be overlooked as an important text for ecology education. However, Baratz and Abu Haleirawich (2012) note an important point; children's literature both reflects the culture that distributes it (p. 33) and promotes cultural integration (Abstract), and as such it is an invaluable source for introducing an "ideological infrastructure that will become a way of life" (Abstract). When learning and experiencing ideas in childhood, children then take them into their adult years.

Children's author, Theodore Giesel understood the influence his stories had on a child's insight into his or her world. Children’s books “offer a wealth of examples for guiding [their] behaviour and helping them learn social skills and problem-solving strategies for handling challenging situations” (Lacina & Stetson, 2013, p. 34). When Seuss (1971) saw the need to generate awareness about conservationism, his understanding of children’s literature as a tool motivated him to write the well-known children’s ecology book, *The Lorax*.

Renowned, American children’s author and illustrator, Theodore Suess Giesel, best known by his pseudonym, Dr. Seuss, published 44 children’s books in his lifetime, including the *The Lorax*, in 1971, which is still celebrated for bringing environmental awareness to children (Net, 2010, *The Lorax and The Butter Battle Book*, para. 4). His stories, although playful and filled with nonsensical words, were intended to engage children and raise their awareness of social and societal issues.

As he wrote in his essay, “Writing for Children: A Mission”—originally published in the Los Angeles Times, November 27, 1960—“children’s reading and children’s thinking are the rock-bottom base upon which this country will rise. Or not rise. In these days of tension and confusion, writers are beginning to realize that books for children have a greater potential for good or evil than any other form of literature on earth” (Net, 2012, Flood of Treacle, para. 4, New Found Potential, para. 1). As Phil Nel explains in his review of Seuss’s work, the author “also hoped to teach [children] how to think” (Net, 2010, *The Lorax and The Butter Battle Book*, para. 1).

A grim illustration of our future and far from "the brightness and laughter" (Miller, 2012, para. 9) associated with the well-known author; the story’s opening scene is reminiscent of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*. “At the far end of town/where the Grickle-grass grows/and the wind smells sour and slow when it blows/and no birds ever sing excepting old crows. . . is the Street of the Lifted Lorax” (Seuss, 1991, p. 285). But the effect was intentional. As Seuss explains, “In *The Lorax I was out to attack what I think are evil things and let the chips fall where they might*” (Miller, 2012, para. 9).
The Once-ler, the story's narrator, comes upon a natural paradise and the plentiful resources it holds: “One morning I came to this glorious place/And I first saw the trees!/. . . . Mile after mile in the fresh morning breeze” (Seuss, 1991, p. 296). “All my life I'd been searching for trees such as these” (p. 301). And as is so often the reality, the Once-ler overlooks the natural ecology, only seeing the natural resources as a commodity he “. . . chopped down a Truffula Tree with one chop” (pp. 301-302). Finding the Truffula tufts to be a great source of profit, the Once-ler “. . . went right on biggering . . . selling more Thneeds. And I biggered my money, which everyone needs” (p. 323).

Seuss is credited for using mnemonics—a device used to assist with learning and retaining information, which he produces using anapaestic tetrameter—“a metrical foot in a line of a poem that contains three syllables wherein the first two syllables are short and unstressed followed by a third syllable that is long and stressed” (Literary Devices, 2014, para. 1). Anapaestic tetrameter is a lyrical meter that “plays a very important role in poetry and . . . the foot used in the limerick for comical effects” (Literary Devices, 2014, para. 7). Music (Carlton, 2006, para. 2) and humour (Klein, 2003, p. 125) are established tools for educating young children.

The Once-ler’s assault against the, once pristine, environment continues until, “From outside in the fields came a sickening smack/Of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the tree fall. The very last Truffula Tree of them all!” (p. 334). “. . . Now all that was left 'neath the bad-smelling sky/was my big empty factory . . . / the Lorax . . . /and I” (p. 337). Relying heavily on visual metaphor, Seuss deviated from the primary colours he consistently used in his other books. He intended “the contrast between . . . [the] bright colors depicting unspoiled nature and the grays, browns, and dark blues of the polluted landscape . . . [to emphasize] the need to take care of the environment” (Nel, 2010, The Lorax and The Butter Battle Book, para. 3). Seuss could have ended his tale there, as a warning against industrialism. But as Amy Sloane (2010) notes to simply “side with him [the Lorax] is not adequate to the task of overcoming human violence to natural life” (p. 424), and Seuss had a greater vision for his work than simply condemnation. Instead, he places impetus on action and the Once-ler has an epiphany about the importance of the child to whom he is relaying the tale. “'But now,' says the Once-ler, /'Now that you're here, /the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. /It's not’” (Seuss, 1991, p. 342).

Once again we see that Seuss has created a metaphorical link between the child character in the story and the child listening to the story being read to him or her. Johansson (2011) points out that “the message seems to be that we have to trust our children, that they are our only hope. How can we even think otherwise? Who else will take responsibility for the future of humanity?” (p. 301). This call for readers to take action appreciates that we simply borrow the earth from our children, and, therefore, it is paramount that we educate the world’s youth on how to care for their planet.
Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction

From the point of view of childhood, modern Western society shows many parallels to the Romantic Age. While the industrial economy caused rapid changes to the landscape and lives of children, forcing millions of them into labor, the informational economy is similarly having a tremendous impact on children's lives. Never before...

"Once There Were Two Towers": Describing Tragedy to Children after 9/11

The attacks of September 11th have frequently been characterized as unimaginable, capable of inflicting confusion and emotional trauma beyond the scope of other historical events. On September 12th, 2001, N.R. Kleinfield of the New York Times asserted plainly that the people of New York had "witnessed the inexpressible, the incomprehensible, the unthinkable."[1] Moreover, 9/11 has frequently been represented as a point of...

The Right and the Good: Communicating Environmental Issues

What we see is partially dependent on what we are shown. As communicators, we have a duty to inform and educate and lead. As environmental communicators we have the privilege of explaining how the various parts of our natural world work, individually, in unison, and in relationship to people. By examining two specific areas of growing...

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Bogs are one of Ireland's most notable and mysterious landscapes. As...
books have been adapted by Hollywood before – How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000) and Dr Seuss' The Cat in the Hat (2003) were live-action versions with frantically zany and

Street of the Lifted Lorax” to learn why the area is in such a run-down state. Through a “whisper-ma-phone,” the Once-ler tells the boy what happened. The Dr Seuss children’s

audio/oh-the-places-youll-go-and-the. A young boy visits a strange, isolated man called the “Once-ler”, who lives “on the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows...[on] the

The Lorax is Dr. Seuss’s 30th book. Oceanhouse Media published this book to be used as an app on iPhones, Ipod touch, Ipad and android apps. https://soundcloud.com/penguin-

The Politics of the Spectacular and the Poetics of Specularity in William Shakespeare’s Richard II

By Mohamed Anis Ferchichi

When finally... Richard dashes the mirror to the ground, there shatters not only Richard’s past and present, but every aspect of a super-world.

The features as reflected by the looking glass betray that he is stripped of his past, present, and/or the

Saracen Bodies in The Sultan of Babylon

By Claire Crow

The fifteenth-century Middle English romance "The Sultan of Babylon" partakes in the Orientalist literary tradition through the poet’s linguistic economy of the Other. The paradoxical shortages and surpluses of ethnic descriptors of East female.

Racialized Discourse and Economics of Female

Women in Literature Medieval Literature

Redemption and Reconciliation in Oedipus at Colonus and Gran Torino: A Comparative Reading

By Lingxiao (Linda) Gao

This paper presents a comparative analysis of Oedipus at Colonus, a play written by the ancient Greek tragedian Sophocles, and Gran Torino, an American film directed by Clint Eastwood. The two literary productions, although remote as they seem...

Poststructuralism and Female Identity in Sylvia Plath’s Ariel

By Lillian G. Robles

Sylvia Plath’s posthumously published collection of poetry, Ariel, is perhaps best defined by the vivid imagery that delves deep into Plath’s psyche. Throughout the collection, Plath explores dimensions of herself: her past, present, and future.

Time has always been an abstract concept in human languages. To better understand how this temporal concept is addressed in different languages, it can be explored in the context of classical times through Latin texts. In the well-known piece The...
conceited lead performances from Jim Carrey and Mike Myers respectively; both films were pretty well unwatchable. The Lorax never does anything much but raise his great cute bewhiskered face and look accusingly. Maybe the time has come for some Ned Ludd to rampage through the studios, throwing laptops out of the window and forcing animators to do some freehand drawing and make up the technical shortfall with some exceptionally good scripts. Topics. Animation in film. DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING POETRY FOR CHILDREN AND THE POSSIBLE SOLUTION: OKOLINKO (THE LORAX) Summary As a good example for changing publishing strategies, largely influenced by external, non-literary causes, this article attempts to more. It offers a short overview of the few existing translations of Dr. Seuss into Serbian, as well as an analysis of translation strategies that Dragoslav Andrić employed in Okolinko, his translation of The Lorax, and its overall assessment. Published in: Detinjstvo: časopis o književnosti za decu ISSN: 0350-5286.