

## Art as Activism: Language Arts, Visual Storytelling Dr. Seuss, Beverly Joubert

- How does high quality art increase awareness around an issue, idea, place, person etc.?
- How does art tell a story?

### LESSON OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

March 2nd marks the birthday of Dr. Seuss. In line with his birthday, the work of Beverly Joubert, artist, photographer, and explorer in residence with National Geographic, students will focus on art as activism, language arts and environmental issues. Teachers will read all or part of Seuss' book *The Lorax* to students to prompt discussions about environmental issues. Students will learn about Beverly and Dereck Joubert and their fight to save the rhinos, cats and elephants from distinction. Beverly's photography is her unique call to action, to have others become aware of these animals through their beauty and their stories. Students will illustrate an image to depict either messages from *The Lorax* or an environmental issue such as endangered animals, air pollution etc. Their art will tell the story. Descriptive language may complement the poster.

### KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements (3rd Grade)

**Standard 1 (Making): The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes.**

**Objective 1: Explore a variety of art materials while learning new techniques and processes.**

- Practice using skills for beginning drawings.
- Use simplified forms, such as cones, spheres, and cubes, to begin drawing more complex form.
- Establish more natural size relationships among objects in drawings.
- Explore the design possibilities of a 3-D object by examining views of it from many angles.

**Objective 3: Handle art materials in a safe and responsible manner.**

- Ventilate the room to avoid inhaling fumes from art materials.
- Dispose and/or recycle waste art materials properly.
- Clean and put back to order art making areas after projects.
- Respect other students' artworks as well as one's own.

**Standard 2 (Perceiving): The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.**

**Objective 1: Analyze and reflect on works of art by their elements and principles**

- Determine how artists create dominance in their work; e.g., size, repetition, and contrast.
- Examine significant works of art and point out how the artists have created an illusion or feeling of depth.

**Objective 2: Create works of art using the elements and principles.**

- Group some significant works of art by a common element or visual characteristic.
- Discover how an artist has thoughtfully used all of the space within an artwork.
- Create a work of art that uses all of the space on the paper.
- Create a work of art that uses contrast to create a focal point. Use that to convey the most important idea or part of the work.

**Standard 3 (Expressing): The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes.**

**Objective 1: Explore possible content and purposes in significant works of art.**

- a. Explain possible meanings or interpretations of some significant works of art.
- b. Invent possible stories that may explain what is going on in these same works of art

**Objective 2: Discuss, evaluate, and choose symbols, ideas, subject matter, meanings, and purposes for their own artworks.**

- a. Group significant works of art according to theme or subject matter.
- b. Judge which works of art most clearly communicate through the use of symbols.
- c. Create symbols in art that express individual or group interests.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

**Students will:**

- Understand how high quality art can increase awareness around an issue, idea, place, person, etc.
- Understand art as activism.
- Understand how visual art can inform language art and vice versa
- Learn about endangered species and environments
- Learn about Dr. Seuss
- Learn about the work of Beverly and Dereck Joubert
- Create an image that visually informs, tells a story, and/or increases awareness

## **SUPPLIES**

- The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss
- Information about Beverly and Dereck Joubert's work and photographs
- Magazines
- White Art Paper
- Photographs of animals, landscapes, environmental issues such as pollution, water usage etc.
- Pencils
- Markers
- Erasers
- Scratch paper for drawing initial ideas
- Writing Paper
- Descriptive lines or phrases from The Lorax
- Scissors

## VOCABULARY

**Icon** - A picture or image that represents something.

**Activism** - Is taking action to effect social change; this can occur in a myriad of ways and in a variety of forms. Often it is concerned with 'how to change the world' through social, political, economic or environmental change.

**Visual Storytelling** - Is the art of conveying a message with the visual images of a story. Visuals help us tell our stories quickly with impact and emotion. They have to be the right visuals to be powerful and impactful.

**Endangered Species** - Is a species of wild animal or plant that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

**Environmental issues** - Are defined as problems with the planet's systems (air, water, soil, etc.) that have developed as a result of human interference or mistreatment of the planet.

**Composition** - In the visual arts—in particular painting, graphic design, photography, and sculpture—composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject of a work.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

### Lesson Introduction:

In advance of the lesson ask teachers to read all or part of *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss to students. Use the book to prompt discussions about recycling, air pollution, endangered species, and other environmental issues. Discuss how his illustrations tell much of the story.

Introduce students to the idea that art can be activism: They can use visual artwork as a way of advocating for what they believe in. Explain that they will be learning about two activists who use their strengths as artists to fight for the rhinos, cats and elephants who are in crisis. They do so with their engaging photographs that increase awareness of their cause by celebrating the beauty and power of these amazing animals in their habitats. Ask students to share any examples they already know of artists that fight for social justice, or of local activism of any sort. Chart student responses (optional).

Before beginning the lesson, show images of both *The Lorax* and of the Jouberts' artwork. Talk about the stories and messages the images offer. Think about what comes next in the stories of these animals. Give them a few minutes to respond to the images. Encourage comparisons and contrasting statements as well as descriptions of what they see.

### About The Lorax

*The Lorax* is a fairly grim tale compared to *Green Eggs and Ham* or *The Cat in the Hat*. But it reflects the era in which it was written. In 1971, when the book was released, the United States was embroiled in environmental issues left over from the 1960s. The deforestation of the Pacific Northwest was chief among them; logging companies were cutting down trees at alarming rates. Needless to say, the logging industry was not happy about *The Lorax*. The book was banned from many schools and libraries near thriving timber communities. Timber industry groups even sponsored a rebuttal book, called *The Truax*, which helped kids understand the necessity of harvesting timber.

At no point does *The Lorax* say "don't cut down trees"; a world without industry is no better an option than a world without trees. The book simply attempts to increase awareness of the possible extreme should industry go unchecked. Seuss thinks society needs to strike a balance. Let's not forget that the books he sold — millions of them — were all printed on paper from, you guessed it, trees. As the *Lorax* puts it, "they say I'm old-fashioned, and live in the past, but sometimes I think progress progresses too fast!"

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

The Lorax remains a staple of children's reading lists for its whimsical characters and wonderful, Seussical wordplay. But its cautionary message is as important today as it ever was. Respect for the environment and all living creatures will help us preserve the planet for ourselves and future generations. And that respect can live in harmony with economic progress. Source: <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/09/the-environmental-message-behind-the-lorax/>

### About the Artist

"Every single image I take is for conservation. I want to move the viewer so much that they will want to do something about the ever-increasing threat to these wild animals."

- Beverly Joubert

Beverly Joubert's work is a call to action. Big cats, rhinoceros, and elephants are in crisis, facing extinction after years of rampant poaching and habitat loss. As artists, conservationists, and National Geographic Explorers-in-Residence, Beverly and her husband, Dereck Joubert, have spent decades fighting for these beloved creatures.

Primarily known for their award-winning wildlife films, their days frequently involve living in a tented camp, waking before dawn, spending 16-18 hours in their vehicle, and searching and waiting for the right moment. To date, they have made more than 25 productions for National Geographic and other major international broadcasters. Films like *Eternal Enemies* and *The Last Lions* have each reached hundreds of millions of people around the world, and have earned the Jouberts numerous awards, including multiple Emmys, a Peabody, and Wildscreen Panda Awards.

As a photographer, Beverly is equally passionate about making an image that tells a more complete story in one instant, one frame. Her photographs demonstrate the artist's deep compassion for her subjects, and aim to elicit the same from the viewer. It is her own brand of photographic activism, in which her celebration of beauty is meant to spark a long-lasting passion in others to fight for the survival of these animals. Her work has been presented in National Geographic, in more than 10 books, and thousands of articles around the world.

### Lesson

- Start by referring to The Lorax illustrations and the Joubert photographs. Talk about the messages or stories these illustrations and photographs tell. Highlight that their quality and impact is what is so important in the art.
- Talk to students about environmental issues important to them such as pollution, endangered species etc.
- On copy/scratch paper, have students draw some ideas of images that would tell their story. Have magazines and reference materials on hand for inspiration.
- Another option is to have descriptive phrases or paragraphs from The Lorax that the students could illustrate.
- When ready, give students their art paper to create their poster. Talk about composition and how the image should be placed and created to be the focal point of the poster. Remind students that their art is to increase awareness around their topic.
- Invite students to write a caption, title and/or description about their art on their poster. Use mediums available for students to illustrate their images
- Save time for students to share their work and their topic with one another.

Sample Beverly Joubert Images



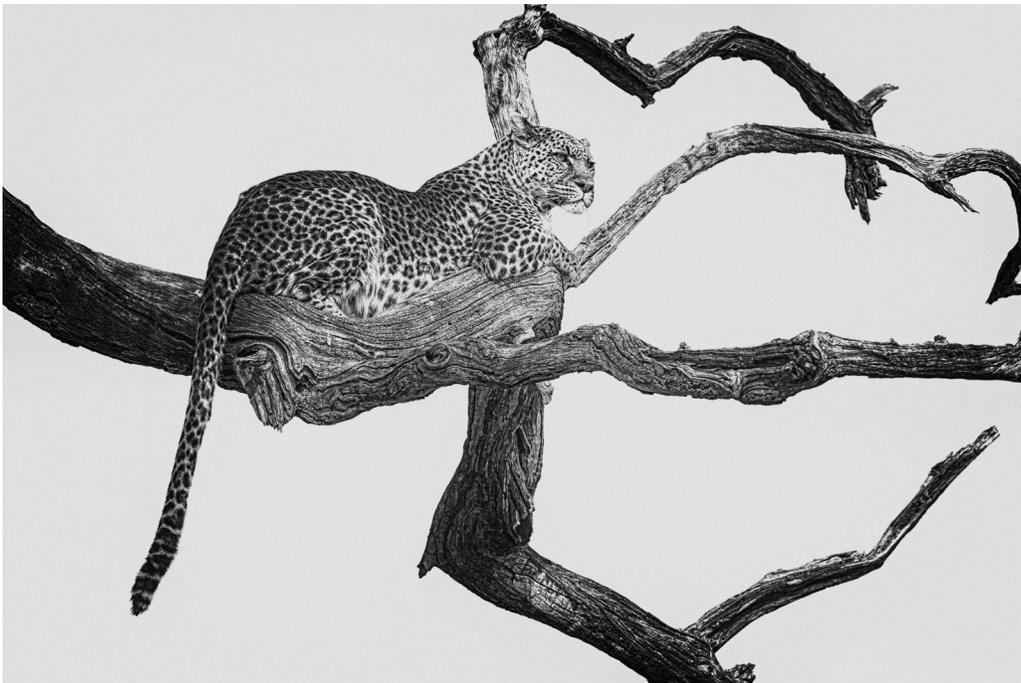
Wild Supreme



Natural End

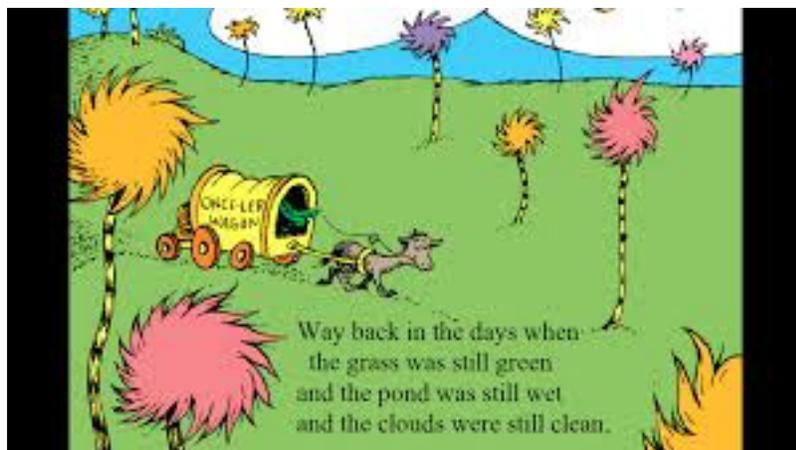
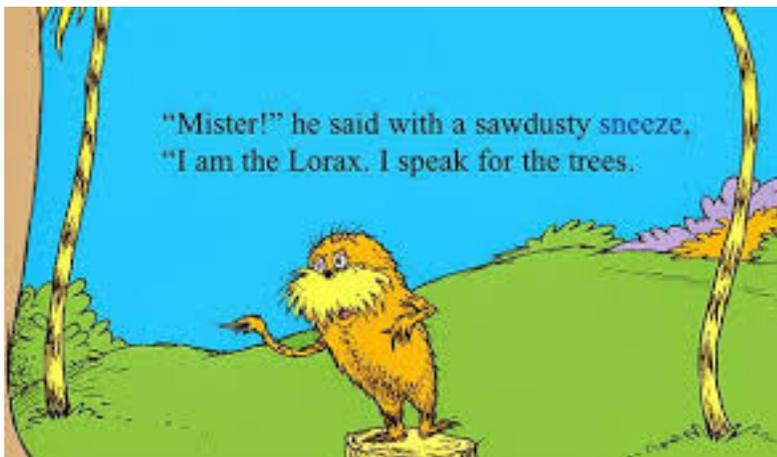
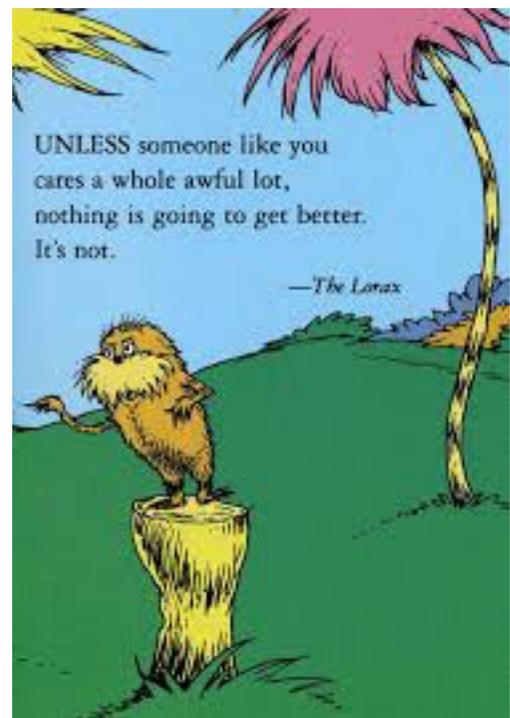
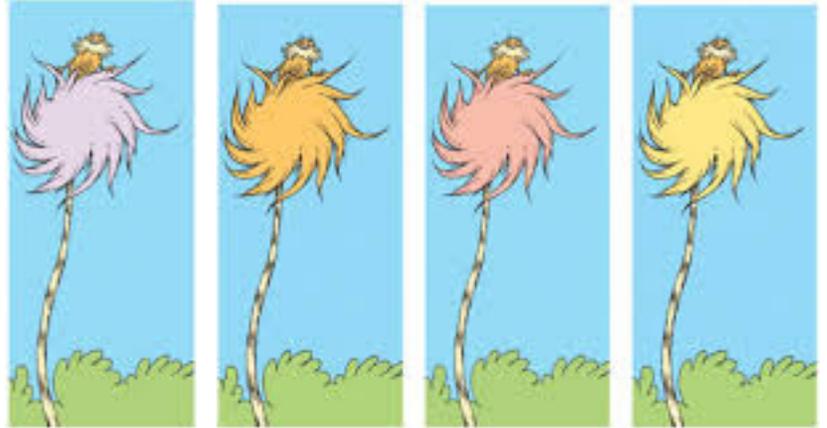
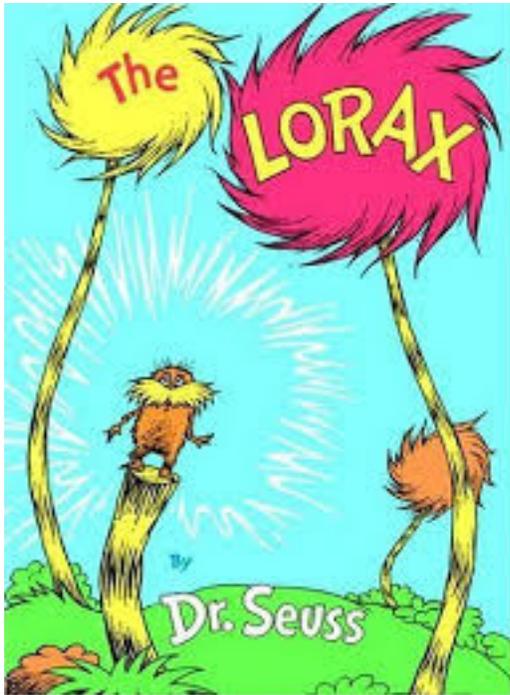


Elephant Palms



Graphic Repose

Images from Dr. Seuss' The Lorax



### **Additional Resources:**

[www.wildlifefilms.com](http://www.wildlifefilms.com)

[www.causeanuproar.org](http://www.causeanuproar.org)

[www.ted.com/talks/beverly\\_dereck\\_joubert\\_life\\_lessons\\_from\\_big\\_cats](http://www.ted.com/talks/beverly_dereck_joubert_life_lessons_from_big_cats)

Great Plains Conservation

[www.bigcatinitiative.com](http://www.bigcatinitiative.com)

[www.greenmuseum.org](http://www.greenmuseum.org)

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2012/04/09/the-environmental-message-behind-the-lorax/>

<http://thefw.com/things-you-didnt-know-about-dr-seuss/>