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The Lorax Mini Analysis

The Lorax, a well known book by renowned children's author Dr Seuss, is a thinly disguised treatise on the evils of corporations being allowed to run rampant over the environment. The more interesting theme, in my opinion, is the inability of the Once-ler to recognize the destruction that his chosen path is leading to. In fact, even when confronted with near-complete devastation, he is unable or unwilling to divert from his trajectory or take any actions that could result in meaningful change.

This rigidity and inability to change is not the primary focus, but nonetheless is a critical part of the book. The book shows the Once-ler still living in the ruins of his old store, alone, distant from all others, surrounded by the wasteland that he has created. In his possession he has the last truffula seed, the one thing that can be used to reverse this situation, and he still refuses to take action. Whether he is actually unable or simply unwilling is neither stated nor implied.

While considering this aspect of the book, I originally assumed that he was merely stubborn and unwilling to make the changes, and this brought to mind the movie *Dogma*. Written by Kevin Smith, this movie follows two angels, Bartleby and Loki, who were exiled from heaven, and through a loophole, they discover a way to re-enter. A series of interactions and events are put in their way by various heavenly bodies, and these escalate in seriousness as time goes on. During one of these interactions, Bartleby is told that by exploiting this loophole, he

will prove God wrong and unmake all of existence. Despite knowing and believing this, Bartleby is so fixated on his goal, that he is absolutely unwilling to turn from his course, even if it should mean the end of everything.

This is similar to the escalating environmental damage that the Once-ler and his corporation inflict. The Once-ler is shown how his venture is damaging the trees, causing the Bar-Ba-Loots to leave. His factories and trucks are damaging the air, causing the Swomee-Swans to leave, and damaging the water, so that the Humming-Fish can no longer survive. Regardless of these escalating issues, the Once-ler is unrepentant and continues his quest to “bigger” his money.

The other possibility is that the Once-ler is not unwilling, but actually unable to turn from his path. It is possible, albeit unlikely that the Once-ler may not just suffer from greed, but instead from a mental illness or condition such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder that makes it impossible for him to voluntarily change his actions. Once I considered this possibility, I thought of the comparison to the character of Raymond Babbitt, in the 1988 film *Rain Man*. This film portrays two brothers, one of whom is an autistic savant, and who must perform the same actions, wear the same clothes, and have the same routine every day. He is unable to voluntarily change his actions, because of his disorder.

There are several lessons to be learned, and important things that children can relate to in this story. The most obvious of these is that our actions have consequences. When we choose to do things, those choices have consequences, and sometimes repercussions. The Once-ler chose to disregard the advice of the Lorax, and ended up causing destruction. Children are often given advice or guidance from parents, teachers and others, and their ability to listen to and learn from

these people can affect the outcome of their decisions. The second item that children can learn from and relate to is the ability to repair damage, and make up for mistakes. The Once-ler has the ability to make up for his mistakes and decisions, but doesn't. The Once-ler goes on to imply that in order to make things better, we must not only make the changes, but actually care about those changes.

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