Do you really need a Thneed?

**Background:**

Economic development is concerned with three basic questions, sometimes referred to as the “What, How and for Whom” problem. Each society deals with these questions in some fashion. Since there are limits to resources, basic choices must be made. In both developed and developing countries, a variety of answers to these questions have been tried; some are more successful from an efficiency and fairness standpoint than others:

* **Brute Force**: This is the basic bully approach. Those who are the strongest or most powerful take what they want (need) from then weak and helpless.
* **Queuing**: This is based on the first-come, first-served idea. It is used at bakeries, ice cream parlors and gas stations. Sometimes you take a number and stand in line. As Americans learned during the Arab oil embargo during the 1970’s, waiting in a queue can be very time consuming. If this were the primary way of distributing resources, a society would be very inefficient.
* **Random Selection**:With this approach, throws of dice or lottery systems are used to make economic decisions. The incentive to produce is lost. Why work hard when your reward is determined by chance?
* **Tradition**: Those who have it, keep it. Successful businesses are passes along from one generation to another. Farms, ranches and estates are held “close to the nest”, thereby eliminating any competition for the benefits to be derived.
* **Government**: The government decides who gets what and how much. But how this is best done is not obvious. The two common approaches are “equal share” and “need”. The role of the government is very important in regulating the safety, health, and well being of those involved, as well as of the environment.
* **Market Economy**: This is the system in which anyone is allowed to produce any product and attempt to sell it to others. The producer is allowed to keep the profit and use that to maximize his/her own happiness, regardless of the effect on the resource and other members of society.

Most, if not all of the environmental problems facing the world today can be traced back to the over-development and misuse of the Earth’s natural resources, from fossil fuels to forests to soil and water. Traditionally, economic development has made it profitable to pollute. In the U.S. until the government interfered with the system, a manufacturer only had to pay the cost of the production and the side effects of that production-smoke, chemical effluent, loud noise and so on – which often had a detrimental effect on the environment downstream or downwind. Whatever, the manufacturer didn’t have to pay. The costs or benefits that were external to the actual act of production were passed over or passed on to someone else. Development simply did not recognize the absolute boundaries or limits of the ecosystem being impacted, and larger problems evolved over time.

The Lorax: Before, During and After

Complete the chart below by indicating the conditions before, during an after the Thneed Industry. Make your responses as specific as possible.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Before** | **During** | **After** |
| **Air Quality** |  |  |  |
| **Water Quality** |  |  |  |
| **Trees** |  |  |  |
| **Animals** |  |  |  |
| **Thneed Population** |  |  |  |
| **Local Economy** |  |  |  |
| **Onceler’s Profits** |  |  |  |

1. What was society’s role in the destruction of the environment?
2. What do you think was the Once-ler’s motivation for cutting down the trees?
3. Have you been a Once-ler? Explain.
4. How did things changes as a result of the Once-lers activities?

1. What could Once-ler have done to prevent the outcome seen at the end of the Lorax?
2. How did the Lorax feel after Once-ler moved in and began cutting down the Truffula trees?
3. Why do you think it was important for the Once-ler to tell the story to the young boy?
4. What were some of the problems that the Thneed industry caused?
5. What do you think was the Once-ler’s motivation for cutting down the Truffula trees?
6. Why do you think the Once-ler did not listen to the pleas of the Lorax?
7. How did the Thneed industry change from beginning to end?
8. What would you have done if you were the Once-ler? (At the end of the story)
9. Do you think of yourself as being like a Once-ler? Why?
10. By ignoring the reasoning of the Lorax, what did the Once-ler actually assure for himself?
11. Who or what do you think the Once-ler represents?
12. Have you ever done anything that you think the Lorax would have done?
13. Who or what do you think the Lorax represents?
14. Did the Lorax speak for anything or anyone other than the trees?
15. If you had to interview the Once-ler in order to write an article for the school newspaper, what questions would you have liked to ask him?
16. This video first aired in 1972, why do you think it still applies today? What do you think will finally get people’s attention to these issues?