

Imagined Plants

With inspiration from Dr. Seuss, create a new plant "species" and imagine its importance in an ecosystem.

**(art + literature; art + science;
art + social studies)**

"The Lorax" was written by Theodore Seuss Geisel under the pen name Dr. Seuss and first published in 1971. In the early 1970s, the environmentalist movement had just begun. Earth Day was first observed and the Environmental Protection Agency was formed.

Near his home in La Jolla, California, Geisel watched eucalyptus trees being removed for suburban development and felt angry enough to write a children's book about a mysterious creature that spoke for the trees. With a teachable story and whimsical characters that only Dr. Seuss could create, he put out a call to his young readers to be better stewards of the environment and pay attention to the danger of non-sustainable industry practices. The most famous quote from the book is "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

In "The Lorax," Dr. Seuss imagined truffula trees as colorful, beautiful, and useful plants. They were part of a well-functioning, biodiverse ecosystem that included birds, animals, fish, and presumably, fresh oxygen as a product of the truffula tufts. Once the trees were removed, the other parts of the ecosystem were affected and disappeared as well.

The story is as timely today as it was 50 years ago.

In this lesson, students will take a cue from Dr. Seuss and imagine their own plants. First, they create the plant as a small assemblage sculpture; then they imagine the ideal environment in which it would grow and thrive. Next, they design a plant stake to communicate its name and care information. Finally, students describe the function of the plant and its value to humans and other organisms. For example, the truffula tree is available in many different colors and grows in direct sunlight up to 30 ft



Materials (required)

Materials for base, one per student. Suggestions:

[Styrofoam Cube](#), 3" square (60928-1043)

[Papier Mâché Clay Pot](#), 3" x 3" (01356-1002)

Materials for stems, one per student. Suggestions:

[Creativity Street Wooden Dowel Rods](#), pkg of 12 1/4" x 12" (60448-1412)

[Twisteez](#), box of 50, 125 ft (33407-1050)

[Simply Art Skinny Sticks](#), pkg of 75 (60466-1075)

Materials for leaves. Suggestions:

[Blick Construction Paper](#), pkg of 50 sheets, 9" x 12" Dark Green or other (11409-7033); one per student

[Felt by the Yard](#), 36" wide, Kelly Green or other (63201-7336); share 1-2 yards across class

[Wescott Kids Non-Stick Scissors scratch sticks with Mibroban Protection](#), 5" (57615-5115); one per student

[Elmer's Glitter Glue](#), 6 oz, assorted colors (65304-); share 6 across class

[Pacron 2-Ply Tag Board](#), 100-sheet pkg, 9" x 12", White (13111-1003); share one across class

Optional Materials

[Blick Matte Acrylics](#), 2 oz, assorted colors (00727-)

[Blick Essentials Craft Brushes](#), assorted set of 25 (06280-1309)

[Creativity Street Pom Poms](#), pkg of 100, 1/2" Kelly Green or other (65365-7360); share one across class

[Assorted Macramé Beads](#) (60709-1000)

[Paper Accents Craft Tags](#), pkg of 25, 2-1/2" x 5-1/4" (11431-1105)

tall. It produces tasty fruit and fluffy tops that are most often used to make sneads. Truffula trees reproduce from seeds that are most commonly spread by Barb-Ba-Loots (information cited from "The Lorax").

Imagined Plants could illustrate the physical properties of existing plants or be completely new. They could reproduce with multiple versions, fill a classroom "garden," be offered at a "plant sale," or simply enjoyed as a decorative element.

GRADES K-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Create imagined plants with just about any type of art material, craft supply, recycled item, or everyday object. Have a variety of choices on hand for students to choose from.
2. Observe the unique characteristics of plants in nature. Take note of their differences and similarities.

Process

1. Plants often begin from a center stem, shoot, or trunk, which could be created from a wire, dowel, wood stick or other rigid item. Paint or color the stem with marker, if desired. Then position it in styrofoam, a cup, or small pot. Surround it tightly with paper towels or paper scraps, and drizzle white glue generously over the top to hold in place.
2. From the stem, leaves develop. Leaves transform light into energy for the plant and exchange oxygen for carbon dioxide. With thousands of species, no two plants have identical leaves. We think of leaves as being green, but the presence of other pigments can make leaves look blue, yellow, red, or even purple.
Create leaves and attach them to the stem. Flat sheets, such as paper or felt, are easy to create broad leaves from. But, leaves could be made from yarn, pom poms, or feathers, too. It's all imaginary!
3. Seeds, flowers, cones, roots, shoots, and spores are various reproductive tools, and every plant has a way to multiply itself. Imagine one or more ways that the plant creates new plants. Often, these are the most colorful and attractive part!
4. After creating an imagined plant, communicate information about it through use of a plant tag, label, or stake. Make a plant tag by writing on a piece of tag board or a pre-cut tag shape. In a plant market, this tag often includes:
 - A photo or drawing of a fully mature version of the plant
 - The plant's name and any nicknames or common names it may be known by
 - Care instructions: where to plant, how much to water, etc.
 - When to expect results in the form of fruit or flowers



Step 1: Start with a plant base and add a stem.



Step 2: Create leaves, fruit, flowers, seed pods, roots, and other plant parts.



Step 3: Design a plant stake to communicate information about the plant and its care.

Options

- Imagine the plant as part of an ecosystem. What benefits does the plant provide to humans, birds, insects, or other animals? Food? Clothing? Shelter? Something else?

For example, the plant to the right is a "Glitter Plant" that produces sap for making glitter glue (remember, it's imaginary!).

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

