

Name _____



The Last Hope

In *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, the Once-ler's decision to tell his story has a powerful effect on the young boy who listens. At first, the boy only sees a strange, lonely man living in a broken-down house. The area around him is nothing but a wasteland—gray, empty, and lifeless. The boy is curious about what happened to the land and why the Once-ler is the only one left.

The Once-ler, filled with regret, decides to tell the boy the tragic story of how he destroyed the beautiful Truffula Forest. He explains how the land was once full of colorful Truffula Trees, playful Bar-ba-loots, singing Swomee-Swans, and happy Humming-Fish. But when he discovered that Truffula Trees could be used to make Thneeds, he became greedy. He ignored the Lorax's warnings and cut down every last tree, polluting the air and water. The animals were forced to leave, and soon, his business collapsed. Now, the Once-ler is left with nothing but memories of what was lost.

As the boy listens, he begins to understand the importance of the Once-ler's story. He sees that the Once-ler's mistakes have led to a ruined world, but he also realizes that there is still hope. Before the Once-ler finishes, he gives the boy the very last Truffula seed—the last chance to bring back the forest.

The word UNLESS is carved into a rock outside the Once-ler's home. He explains that "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." This message inspires the boy. He now understands that one person can make a difference. If he plants the seed, takes care of it, and encourages others to help, the Truffula Trees may return, and the land can be beautiful again.

The Once-ler's decision to share his story teaches an important lesson. It shows that mistakes can lead to terrible consequences, but they can also serve as warnings for the future. Because of the Once-ler's story, the boy now has the knowledge and responsibility to change things for the better. The future of the Truffula Trees—and the world—rests in his hands.