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The Lorax

Communication is inevitable. Even in movies, there are lessons to be learned about how and why people communicate the way they do. The Lorax is a movie that has a lot of persuasive communication. The levels to successfully persuade someone will be shown. You will see that persuasion stems from beliefs and attitudes toward certain situations. In the film there will be methods of persuasion based off of many elements like emotions, credibility, and certain viewpoints. Overall, effective ways of persuasion will be demonstrated and how it will affect others.

The introduction of the film is a quick overview of Thneedville. This town has artificial trees that are battery operated. The water is contaminated and people have to buy their fresh air. O'Hare is the man that supplies all of the air and is a very powerful figure. He is able to make the citizens believe that bottled air is the best way to live. The citizens have not experienced life with trees. In order to keep the citizens buying the supplied air, O'hare keeps the town rid of trees. This way he is able to use slogans and blimps to promote his product. By offering only one source of fresh air, O'hare persuades citizens into buying his product and adapting to this lifestyle. This persuasion is done through manipulation.

An additional way to be persuasive is to establish credibility (ethos). This is done by the Once-ler. In the film Ted goes on a search to find the Once-ler. Once Ted finds him, he is eager to learn about the trees. The Once-ler then tells a detailed story. In this story, he gives background on his experience with trees and what life used to be like before artificial plants. The Once-ler is

explaining why he knows so much. Since the Once-ler is providing personal facts and why he knows so much about trees, this makes him credible in this field. Since he is credible, Ted is more likely to follow his directions/what he says. This can make persuasion easier when you have someone who trusts your experience and advice on situations. Having credibility allows you to appeal to people who are interested in what you know. This story from the Once-ler gives context for the whole movie.

Emotions play a big role in persuasion. An appeal to pathos may be the deciding factor in some cases. In this film, the Lorax tries multiple times to convince the Once-ler to stop his thneed business. This appeal to emotions was through a guilt trip. Initially the Lorax tries to explain how the forest is sacred and deserves to be protected. Once the final tree was cut down, all of the animals and the Lorax left. The Once-ler was afraid of them causing trouble. However, they left in peace and explained how they no longer had a home; and it was all because of the Once-ler. Once everyone was gone the Once-ler was left alone to ponder his actions. It was then, the emotions and guilt came flooding in and he was left with nothing. This sets the tone for the present Once-ler's emotions and resentment of his actions. Even though the Lorax could not convince him in time, the appeal to emotions eventually persuaded the Once-ler to change his thought process. This leads him to give Ted the last seed and he is encouraged to plant it and spread the news that people need to care about trees again.

The final appeal is an appeal to logic. Or in other words, logos. This was done by Ted. In order to convince everyone to be in favor of planting the tree, he must show concrete evidence that trees once consumed the town. So, he knocked down the border and showed all the stumps of the past trees. This made his attempt at persuasion successful. It is hard for people to ignore the facts that are right in front of them. When the people saw the trees they realized the betrayal

by O'Hare. This made the people eager to plant the trees and experience fresh air. Logic is something that people rarely argue with so this was Ted's best option to allow him to plant the tree. Overall each appeal is successful on their own. But, when in combination, they thrive in the act of persuasion.

Throughout the film the Once-ler has an attitude of guilt and responsibility for the extinction of trees. This is because when all the trees were finally cut down, he grew to appreciate the trees and their purpose. Except now it is too late. This attitude was learned through experience and loss. Also, through the Lorax. The Once-ler learned attitudes from the Lorax by his values and expression of love to the forest. However, the Once-ler disregarded everything that would stop his business from growing. Now that he has nothing, he must think about all he has done wrong. He has now gained knowledge of trees and how they influenced lives. Now, he is now able to share this knowledge with Ted and start the regrowth of trees. However, he has learned to evaluate situations. He had to know that he could trust Ted with the sacredness of the last seed.

The song "How bad can I Be" is sung while the Once-ler is accelerating the process of making thneeds. In order to keep up with business, he broke his promise to the Lorax and began to cut down trees. Which blatantly disregards the moral values of others. This song supports a utilitarianism view. This is because the Once-ler is not focused on his actions. Rather, he focuses on his business which is promoting happiness with his product. Whereas, deontology would be focused on the moral wrong-doing to the forest and its creatures. The Once-ler is focused on providing a product rather than a moral obligation. He sees it as doing good for all the people that are purchasing his product. Since there are more people, it is the needs of the many outweigh the few.

Each person has a different view on the environment. O'Hare believes in an artificial environment where he has to provide the fresh air to make a profit. He would be on the latitude of rejection based on the social judgment theory. This led him to be the antagonist. However, Audrey is an advocate for the trees. She is who initially sparked the interest in trees for Ted. Audrey would fall on the latitude of acceptance. At first Ted was not concerned about the environment. He had no idea what life was like with trees and did not have any thoughts about it. He was on the latitude of noncommitment. However, once he interacted with the Once-ler and heard the story, he was ready for change. He then moved to the latitude of acceptance and became the protagonist. Now for grandma. She is the one who offered advice on how to gain knowledge of trees. She was also ready to stand up against O'Hare and bring trees back into Thneedville. Once Ted actually got the seed, grandma was then on the latitude of acceptance. Each view has their own place in this film.

Ted and Audrey were both on the latitude of acceptance. However, both for a different purpose. Audrey genuinely cared for the environment and wanted to make a change. Whereas Ted did this so Audrey would be romantically interested in him. In the end, Ted seemed to want to do good by the trees. However, Audrey sparked his interest in hopes he could be her hero and she would fall for him. Even though both were interested in saving the trees, it was done with different rewards in mind.

The film, *The Lorax* offers so much insight to persuasive communication. I enjoyed getting a different perspective on persuasive skills. Whether it be through logos, pathos, and ethos or through attitudes and values, persuasion occurred through many people. There were many cases of successful persuasion and many were through different appeals. Who would have thought that a Doctor Suess movie would be so influential on communication?