AWESOME stories

AMERICAN DEFORESTATION

0. AMERICAN DEFORESTATION - Story Preface

1. MADAGASCAR and the TREE of LIFE

2. BRAZIL and the ATLANTIC FOREST

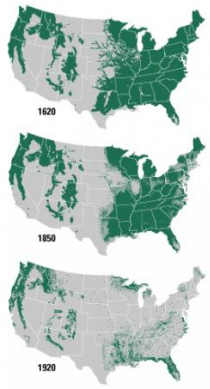
3. MOUNTAIN FORESTS of SOUTHWESTERN CHINA

4. RAIN FORESTS of INDONESIA

5. AMERICAN DEFORESTATION

6. WHAT CAN WE DO?

7. THE LORAX TAKES A TRIP



By 1926—as depicted in these illustrative maps based on the original work of William. B. Greeley (chief of the U.S. Forest Service from 1920 to 1928)—nearly all of America's virgin forest land had been cut-down. Online via the University of Michigan.

> *In America forests*
> *Used to fill-up the land;*
> *But those trees were needed*
> *To fulfill other plans.*

Centuries ago, forests covered much of North America. Native Americans (in what is now the U.S.) and the First Peoples (in what is now Canada) lived off the land. After European colonists began arriving, however, the landscape of North America began to drastically change.

- People needed the land to grow crops, so they could provide food for their families. To convert forest land to crop lands, they cut down the trees.

- People needed more land for pastures, so they could raise cattle, and sheep and goats. To do that, they cut down more trees.

- People needed the wood from trees so they could build houses and make furniture. To do that, they cut down even more trees.

People who came to America began to chop-down trees so fast that it was hardly believable. We can see how quickly the trees vanished by comparing maps from one period of time to another:

- In 1620, virgin forests covered most of the land which would become the 13 colonies;

- By 1850 - seventy-four years after the Declaration of Independence - America's virgin forests had greatly diminished, particularly along the Atlantic seacoast;

- By 1926, America's virgin forests were nearly gone.

Henry David Thoreau, an American who wanted to think about what he saw happening around him - like the ongoing loss of trees - decided to move away for awhile. * He had a cabin built in the woods, near Walden Pond. In 1845, he wrote about the beautiful forests which were being destroyed:

> *Here goes lumber from the Maine woods ... pine, spruce, cedar - first, second, third, and fourth qualities, so lately all of one quality, to wave over the bear, and moose, and caribou ...* (*The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Walden*, page 133.)

Today, America has lost most of its virgin forest land. People are creatively thinking about how to replant wide areas of trees, but in many parts of the country, it is already too late.

As Americans made progress, in growing the nation, they sacrificed some things. Some of the creatures which once thrived in American forests now have lost (or compromised) habitats. They include:

- Passenger Pigeons (now extinct);
- Florida Panthers;
- Grizzly Bears;
- Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers.

Although American deforestation caused fewer species to become extinct, than in other parts of the world, it still caused native animals to greatly decrease in numbers.

So ... is there anything we can do now, after so much damage has already been done, to lower the rates of worldwide tree-cutting - or - to reverse (or stop) all the bad side effects?

* Thoreau's actions, in moving to a cabin on Walden Pond, later inspired W.B. Years (the famous Irish poet) to pen his much-loved poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AMERICAN-DEFORESTATION-The-Lorax

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AMERICAN-DEFORESTATION-The-Lorax

Questions 2 Ponder

What Caused Massive Deforestation in North America?

Why did things change, in Canada and America, when European colonists began to settle the land?

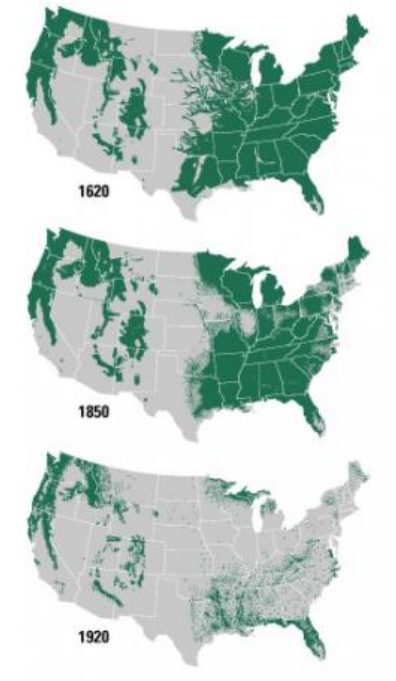
Do you think that Native Americans (in the U.S.) and First Peoples (in Canada) viewed virgin forests differently than the newly arriving colonists? If so, what might explain those differences?

Does Human Progress Justify Destruction of Virgin Forests?

Assess this statement: Americans and Canadians used-up most of their virgin forests. Why complain when others are doing the same thing in their countries?

Is there a difference between "progress" and "saving the trees?" If so, what is it? If not, why not?

Media Stream



American Deforestation

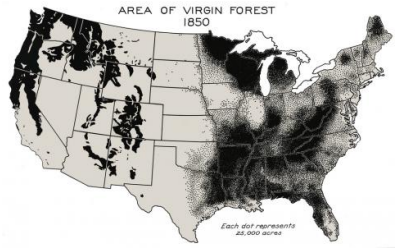
By 1926—as depicted in these illustrative maps based on the original work of William. B. Greeley (chief of the U.S. Forest Service from 1920 to 1928)—nearly all of America's virgin forest land had been cut-down.

In 1845, Henry David Thoreau was already commenting on the vast destruction of America's precious natural resource:
Here goes lumber from the Maine woods ... pine, spruce, cedar, - first, second, third, and fourth qualities, so lately all of one quality, to wave over the bear, and moose, and caribou... (See The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, Walden, page 133.)
Click on the image for a better view.
Illustrative maps based on the original work of William. B. Greeley (chief of the U.S. Forest Service from 1920 to 1928). Online via University of Michigan.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/American-Deforestation



American Forests - 1620

World Resources Institute has created this high-resolution version of the original map, described above. Online, via Flickr.
View this asset at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/American-Forests-1620



American Forests - 1850

The original of this map appeared in William B. Greeley's book, published in 1925, entitled *The Relation of Geography to Timber Supply*. World Resources Institute has created this high-resolution version of the original map. Online, via Flickr.
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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/American-Forests-1850



American Forests - 1926

The original of this map - now maintained at the U.S. National Archives - appeared in William B. Greeley's book, published in 1925, entitled *The Relation of Geography to Timber Supply*.
World Resources Institute has created this high-resolution version of the original map. Online, via Flickr.
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http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/American-Forests-1926



Walden Pond - Replica of Thoreau's Cabin

Photo by RhythmicQuietude, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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