

Dr. Seuss Goes to the Movies Again With 'The Lorax'

JUNE SIMMS:
Welcome to
AMERICAN
MOSAIC in VOA
Special English.

(MUSIC)

I'm June Simms.
On our show
today we play
new music from
Estelle ...



And we tell about an effort by college students to help people save water ...

But first, we go to the movies for a look at "The Lorax."

(MUSIC)

"The Lorax"

JUNE SIMMS: On March second, Hollywood releases a full length movie based on a well-loved children's book, "The Lorax," by Dr. Seuss. Movies based on popular children's books often face a difficult audience. Many people are offended by changes to the stories that touched them in their youth. However, change is unavoidable when a short book is turned into a ninety-minute film.

But "The Lorax" as movie is especially complex. Dr. Seuss' book is a clear appeal for enacting environmental measures on business. But the business of movies may affect the message of "The Lorax." Faith Lapidus has more.

(SOUND: "The Lorax")

FAITH LAPIDUS: A young boy lives in a polluted, treeless world. He wants to know why the environment is this way. A character called The Once-ler tells the boy the story of a once green and beautiful world and the Lorax, a creature who tried to save it. The Once-ler destroyed the world when he cut down all the trees to make a product that nobody really needed. Other victims of the destruction include all the happy creatures that depended on the trees.

Dr. Seuss wrote about the destruction of habitat in "The Lorax." It is a book about the importance of balancing the needs of nature with the needs of industry.



AP

Actor Danny DeVito and the Lorax arrive at the premiere of the animated feature film "The Lorax" in Universal City, California

The movie, "The Lorax," adds a lot to the book version. The boy now has a name, Ted. The name honors Dr. Seuss, whose real name was Theodor Geisel. Ted has a love interest not found in the book. The girl is his neighbor, Audrey, named after Geisel's wife. And Ted has an enemy in the film version. This creates the reason for many of the action scenes not found in the book.

Young star Zac Efron provides the voice for Ted. Country singer Taylor Swift plays Audrey. The Lorax is the voice of Danny DeVito. And Ed Helm is The Once-ler.

So far reviews of the movie have been mixed. Many say the film is beautiful to look at and the actors were well chosen. Some also say the political message behind the book has been weakened too much.

But, what all have noted is the seeming conflict between the book's message and the movie's ties to products. These include the home goods store, Pottery Barn Kids and the computer maker, HP. But the most surprising joint effort is between "The Lorax" movie and a Mazda sport utility vehicle.

(MUSIC)

Water Conservation Site

JUNE SIMMS: College students in Wisconsin are helping homeowners and businesses reduce the amount of water they use. As Christopher Cruise tells us, their actions might help ease water shortages in countries around the world.

CHRISTOPHER CRUISE: McGee Young is a political science professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Last year, Professor Young taught a class on water policy. His students learned about water shortages and began to think about how to deal with them.

McGEE YOUNG: "Obviously our resources were limited so we couldn't solve the problems of India, for example, but we could look in our own backyard."

Professor McGee says the students considered Waukesha, Wisconsin. The city is about thirty kilometers from Milwaukee and running out of water. He says Waukesha cannot get water from nearby Lake Michigan, so the city faces a severe crisis.

Professor Young says part of the problem has to do with water bills. These are the documents sent out by the water company to tell individuals how much they owe for water use. Professor Young says the bills do not have enough useful information.

McGEE YOUNG: "The water company tells us how many hundreds of cubic feet we've used. To me, a hundred cubic feet has no context. So if I used twenty in a quarter, was that good? Was that bad?"

So Professor Young and his students created a website called H2OScore.com. The website gives people information about how they can reduce the amount of water they use. And it takes complex information from water bills and puts it into simple terms. This information includes the number of gallons, or liters, of water used in a day. He says that permits people to compare their water use to others.

Water-use experts joined with H2OScore.com members to visit homeowners and businesses to help them learn how to use less water.

Peter Sandroni owns a restaurant in Milwaukee. He says the experts looked at every possible use of water in his business.

PETER SANDRONI: "Hand sinks in our bathroom to the dish machine in our kitchen, with everything in between, the water heater, at the bar, the ice machine, all this stuff, we looked at."

The students gave Mr. Sandroni some ideas about how to save water after they learned how it is used in his restaurant.

PETER SANDRONI: "This is where you can immediately have an impact on lowering water consumption in your restaurant: low-flow water (faucets) at hand sinks in the bathrooms. Number two was in our dish area, we have a three-

compartment sink and we have a dish machine. And we reduced the water flow coming out of those as well. Number three was asking customers if they wanted water, instead of automatically bringing water out to customers."

Professor McGee Young says residents and business owners are happy with the website and its suggestions for efficient water use. He says it is more successful than he had expected. The teacher says they are creating new programs in small communities in Wisconsin. They are also redesigning the website to make it more user-friendly.

And he says he is receiving questions from people all over the country. He says water system directors and individuals want to know how they can participate, because they want to save water, save money and make a difference in their communities.

(MUSIC)

Estelle: "All of Me"

JUNE SIMMS: The British artist Estelle just released her third studio album. "All of Me" is Estelle's first record in four years. Most critics seem to like it. One described "All of Me," as well worth the wait. Shirley Griffith has more on Estelle and her new album.

SHIRLEY GRIFFITH: Many Americans think of Estelle as a singer. And she is a very good singer. But she started out as a rap artist. Estelle told allhiphop.com that "All of Me" was like a trip back in time to when she first got in the game of music. She said she loved to perform in rap shows in her home town of London. Estelle said the energy and competition of rap excited her. On "All of Me" she raps and sings in several songs including "The Life."

(MUSIC)



Estelle has worked with lots of American rappers. She won a Grammy Award in two thousand nine for the single "American Boy," which featured Kanye West. On "All of Me" she shares the recording studio with rapper Rick Ross in "Break My Heart."

(MUSIC)

On "All of Me," Estelle also performs with American musician Janelle Monae. "Do My Thing," is about respecting the individual in everyone.

(MUSIC)

This week Estelle appeared on the American television show "Late Show with David Letterman." We leave you "Thank You," the song she performed on the program.

(MUSIC)

JUNE SIMMS: This program was written by Christopher Cruise and Caty Weaver, who was also our producer. Faiza el Masry provided additional reporting.

Keep sending us your problems to our new relationship blog. Our e-mail address is mosaic@voanews.com. Make sure to add the word "relationship" on the subject line. And please include your age, sex and country.

Join us again next week for music and more on AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.