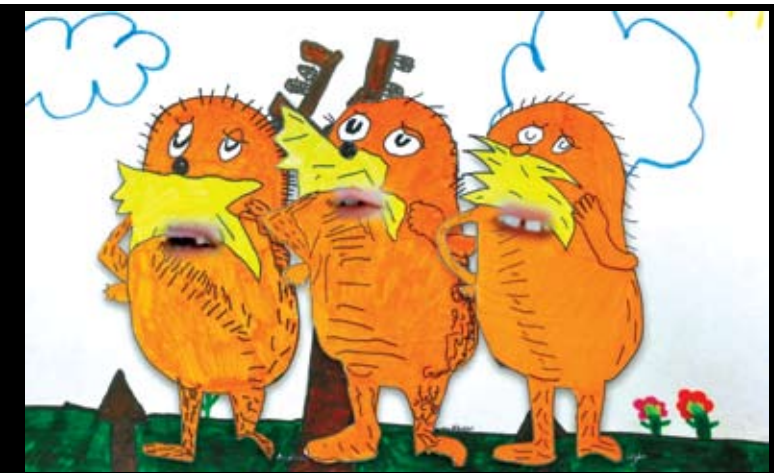


# The Art Speaks for Itself

Left to right: Audrey, Logan, and Matt working on the background image for the movie; Azan recording his voice; screenshot from the animation showing the layers; screenshot from the movie.



## Tricia Fuglestad

Very often I'm approached in my early elementary art classes by a student asking, "Is it okay if I add a speech bubble to my artwork?" It is empowering to tell stories with images but not every piece is improved by adding a speech bubble.

Since I don't want my young artists to feel stifled, I offer a few other options such as written artist's statements or an opportunity to share stories orally in class. This compromise has been working well; my students' art isn't cluttered with speech bubbles full of misspelled words, and their desire to connect a story to the artwork is satisfied.

This past spring I offered a new option to a group of second graders for telling their stories through their artwork: I had them literally speak through their art in a class movie-making project.

### The Voice of the Lorax

During the month of March, I introduced my students to my favorite earth-friendly character, the Lorax, created by Dr. Seuss. We watched the animated video and discussed the Lorax's earth-friendly messages as students drew their own illustrations. Finished images were then given a voice (and lips) by each student so he or she could speak out for the environment in our class movie. Here is how it worked:

All Lorax illustrations were digitally photographed and uploaded to my computer. They were designed to have a clean white background so that I could easily erase it using the "instant alpha" button in preview software on a Mac. This can be accomplished using the magic wand button in Adobe Photoshop as well. The images were then saved with transparent backgrounds.

### Developing a Theme

Students were asked to develop a sentence or a phrase that would promote good environmental practices for our worldwide audience. These thoughts were then pieced together into a Dr. Seuss-style poem based on the themes that emerged: the trees, the air, the parks, and the oceans. Each student spoke one part of the poem in the movie as the voice of his or her Lorax.

I divided students into groups to design backgrounds that represented their themes. These drawings were worked on collaboratively while students were being called one at a time to record their line of the poem into the computer. This allows the teacher to focus on recording while the rest of the class works quietly to minimize

any background noise picked up by the microphone.

### Audio and Visual Recording

We made recordings of each student's lips and voice. The goal was to record a short video with audio, capturing the lips of the student speaking his or her line from the poem. This video would then be layered over the student's illustration to make the drawing look like it speaks.

### Editing

We edited the movie by layering the background illustrations with the Lorax images and the lip videos. This can be accomplished using Keynote, part of Apple's iWorks software package. This software is much like PowerPoint where you can animate how images, text, video, audio, and shapes come in, exit, and travel around the screen. The

possibilities are endless for making dynamic animations, but keeping it simple may tell the story best.

One thing that is very helpful in Keynote is that you can blur the edges of a video clip in the picture effects. This helps blend the video clip and the Lorax image. Your final animation can be exported into a QuickTime file format to further edit in iMovie or

upload to a movie-sharing website. I have very detailed instructions and a tutorial set up on my wiki to help you learn this animation technique.

There are so many ways to involve students in the movie-making experience, depending on how much time you want to devote to the process. Students can easily learn how to use these tools to digitally create this kind of animation.

If you do not have the resources or time to give students this hands-on experience, try projecting the classroom computer and having students come up one at a time to edit their own image while the rest of the class works on posters to advertise the movie debut on your school website or Earth Day assembly.

*Tricia Fuglestad is a K-5 art teacher at Dryden Elementary School in Arlington Heights, Illinois, who loves to incorporate technology into instruction and art production. Learn more about her program at [www.drydenart.notlong.com](http://www.drydenart.notlong.com).*

### NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.*

### WEB LINKS

[www.artsonia.com/museum/gallery.asp?exhibit=395805](http://www.artsonia.com/museum/gallery.asp?exhibit=395805)  
[vimeo.com/23323690](http://vimeo.com/23323690)  
[fugleflicks.wikispaces.com/Project7](http://fugleflicks.wikispaces.com/Project7)