Introduction

Below is an article that describes how a community of fourth graders made a difference. These are the kinds of articles you’ll read throughout the Word Generation program.

**Fourth Graders Speak for the Trees**

When fourth graders in Brookline, Massachusetts, learned that the trailer and website for *The Lorax* movie said nothing about saving the earth, they were surprised and disappointed. The whole message of Dr. Seuss’ book had been lost! In the book, when a factory owner chops down all the trees, the Lorax speaks up for the value of saving them. The fourth graders decided that they needed to speak up too.

They learned about Change.org, a social media website where people can start petitions and gather signatures. About 10,000 new petitions on all kinds of issues from people across the world appear on the website every month! Together, the class created a petition to ask Universal Studios to change the movie’s website so that it would transmit the book’s message of saving the earth.

Their petition included these statements:

- The Lorax movie, with its millions of dollars in advertising and massive audience has the potential to help heal the Earth. This movie can show the world we should not take our sky, water, trees, and animals for granted.

- Please know The Lorax has power and that this movie could start a movement of kids helping the planet. The movie website and promotions should do what the book does and help the planet. This is possible with a few simple changes such as adding a “Lorax Tips” button.

They concluded their petition by quoting from Dr. Seuss’ book:

“How would you feel if your home were no more. Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing’s going to get better, it’s not.” Please consider this line from the book; it is also true for the world.

Their petition got 57,239 signatures! This made an impact on Universal Studios. The company changed the website by adding activities and tips on saving the earth. From what her class was able to accomplish, Mikayla, one of the fourth graders, learned this lesson: “We’re not just kids; we can be really powerful in many different ways.”

---

**Turn and Talk:**

This article includes three powerful statements from the fourth graders’ argument for changing *The Lorax* movie website. Talk to a partner about these two questions:

1. What examples of **academic language** do you find in their argument?
2. If you created a petition to change something, what would you want to change?