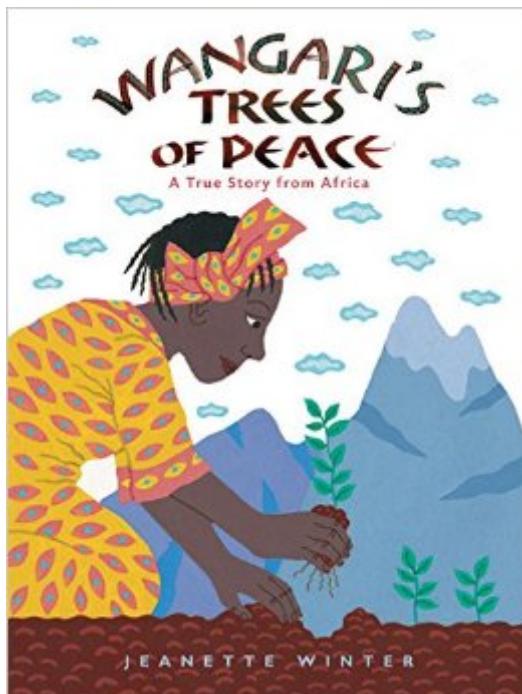


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# Wangari's Trees Of Peace: A True Story From Africa



## Synopsis

As a young girl growing up in Kenya, Wangari was surrounded by trees. But years later when she returns home, she is shocked to see whole forests being cut down, and she knows that soon all the trees will be destroyed. So Wangari decides to do something; and starts by planting nine seedlings in her own backyard. And as they grow, so do her plans. . . . This true story of Wangari Maathai, environmentalist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is a shining example of how one woman's passion, vision, and determination inspired great change. Includes an author's note. This book was printed on 100% recycled paper with 50% postconsumer waste. (20081101)

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (37 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #50,660 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Government #24 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature > Forests & Trees #32 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Africa

Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

"The earth was naked. For me the mission was to try to cover it with green." - Wangari Maathai

Growing up in the shadow of Mount Kenya in Africa, Wangari is surrounded by an umbrella of green trees. The trees protect the birds, provide firewood to the women of the village and help keep the soil rich for the sweet potatoes, sugarcane and maize Wangari helps to harvest. Wangari travels to America for school, but when she returns six years later, the trees are gone. No crops grow, the birds are gone and the women have to travel far distances to find firewood. On World

Environment Day in 1977, Wangari plants nine seedlings in her backyard and begins the Green Belt Movement which, over the next 27 years, plants thirty million trees across Africa. Wangari's Trees of Peace: a true story from Africa is the story of one woman's effort to return green to Africa. Told in Jeanette Winter's simple language and blocky, colorful illustrations, Wangari's Trees of Peace is wonderful means to introduce 3-to-7-year-olds to environmentalism, the interconnected nature of ecosystems and political activism. It also introduces some difficult subjects that may make some children and parents uncomfortable: prejudice ("Women can't do this"), violence ("Wangari blocks their way, so they hit her with clubs") and imprisonment ("They call her a troublemaker and put her in jail"). While Winter's tale simplifies Wangari's story to a basic level, it carries within it an important message, that one person can make a difference. Wangari's simple act of planting a tree translates to an important environmental movement and Wangari receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Children are innate idealists and it is never too early to foster their belief that they can achieve anything. In keeping with the environmental nature of Wangari's Trees of Peace, the book is printed on 100 percent recycled paper with 50 percent post-consumer waste. Armchair Interviews says: Book both educates and entertains.

Wangari's story is important, and she is an amazing woman. I always enjoy Jeanette Winter's spare and poetic storytelling. But here, I find her storytelling flawed. I got this book for my 8 year old when her class was studying Kenya. It was a good fit of topic and tone, except the narrative was incomplete. One page Wangari is getting beaten by the police, then she's arrested and then. . . what? On the next page "Wangari is not alone. . ." The women are planting trees, but there is no explanation for how long Wangari was jailed, how she got out, how did she get the seeds to the women when she was jailed, what happened to HER? Yes the trees are important, but how (as mentioned in the Author's Note) did she get from jail to being a member of Parliament? The last close-up of Wangari in the book is her face bleeding from the police club. Yes, that did happen and it is important, but it left my daughter with the logical idea that the beating was the last thing that ever happened to Wangari. (The tiny image of her on the last page could, really, be anyone. And there is no explanation for how she got out of jail to be standing on the mountain in that last image.) My child was wrapped up in the story and felt cheated by the fact that Wangari's story was left incomplete. Yes, the trees are important, but the story of the person who made it happen is just as important, especially to the young children to whom this book is targeted.

I bought this for my 8-year-old niece. She and her mother read it together and really loved it. This is

a great story, clearly told. For all our progress on the gender front, girls still need positive female role models, and Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement and Nobel Prize Winner is a terrific one. The story values education but also stresses the importance of putting education to use. Also, the story helps children understand sustainability. Finally, the story stresses how we all need to take part in forging solutions. One person can't fix enormous problems by herself.

Wangari Maathai is an amazing woman - she won a scholarship to attend college in the U.S., became a professor of biology in Kenya, she enabled Kenyan woman to become environmentalists by enticing them with money, and she stood up to the government to elicit needed change to better the lives of her people. The story is powerful and still accessible, written in plain language appropriate for the 4-7 crowd. That said - word of caution. I wanted to take this to my daughter's school, but there are two pages that make it inappropriate. The book discusses how she was beaten with clubs by police and thrown in jail. Blood is shown coming from her cheekbone. This is a difficult message to give to a 4 year old, conflicts with other messages about police we give them, and will render this book unusable in most classroom environments. So, I am recommending the book for home use with discussion and sadly not recommending it for school use unless it has been shared beforehand with the parental types.

This was a summer reading assignment for my 8 year old son and I was delighted to hear about this incredible woman. The illustrations were very vibrant and kid friendly (it kept his attention, yeah!). After reading this with him I immediately Googled Wangari ad was amazed to hear her efforts to plant trees in her country and how difficult a journey it was, but how with perservance and faith her campaign grew from her little village for the world to learn just how incredible a leader she become.

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