

Wangari's Trees of Peace

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Wangari's Trees of Peace the true story of Wangari Maathai an environmentalist and Nobel Peace Prize winner from Kenya. Wangari's childhood is filled the songs of birds, beautiful trees, and bountiful crops. She does so well in school that she wins a scholarship to study in the United States. She returns after six years and sees a huge change. Thousands of trees have been cut down to pave the way for buildings. The birds are gone, and the women of the village travels miles each day searching for firewood. No crops can grow in this barren land. Wangari is very sad about the state of her homeland, so she decides to begin planting trees in her own backyard. Eventually she decided to start a tree farm. She convinces other village women to plant trees. Wangari begins paying the women a small amount to plant more trees, but unfortunately the tree-cutting continues. One day Wangari stands in front of the old trees to protect them. The government men throw Wangari in jail. Fortunately, word of tree planting spreads. More women plant trees until there are 30 million where before there were none. The beautiful green canopy returns to Kenya. The women stand tall, gathering firewood close to home. The earth returns to its rich state, growing bountiful crops. The entire world hears of Wangari's trees and the strong army of women who planted them.

This powerful story leads to many possibilities for adding music. Kindergarten and first grade students can play instruments to make sound effects for the birds, trees, and rich soil. Older students can add pieces with drums, syncopated xylophone pieces, singing and movement depicting planting, harvest, tree planting, Wangari protecting the old trees, her time in jail, and seeing Wangari's millions of trees from the top of Mount Kenya.

Wangari's Trees of Peace tells the story of an influential woman who changes her world one seed at a time. I hope you enjoy bringing this book alive in your music classroom as much as my students did!

