

All About Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai was an activist. She loved the Earth and she was a leader. She was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Wangari Maathai was born in 1940 in Kenya. She grew up in a small village where her father was a farmer. She would collect firewood and help out at home. When she was 8 years old, she started school. She loved to learn and was a good student. When she was older, she won a scholarship to study in the United States. She earned many degrees. In 1971, she went to the University of Nairobi. She was the first woman in East Africa to earn a doctorate degree. In 1976, she started to work at the university.



When she came back to Kenya, she was sad to learn about all of the trees being cut down. People wanted to make room for big buildings. She wanted to help the Earth. She also wanted to help women find work. In 1977, she started the Green Belt Movement. This movement helped women by paying them to plant trees all over Kenya. These trees added some green to Kenya again. Wangari helped to plant over 30 million trees in Kenya. She also helped over 30,000 women find work.

Wangari was an activist for the Earth. She protested the construction of big buildings because cutting the trees down hurt the environment. She asked to plant more trees. She was arrested many times for protesting the government's actions. After many years of protesting, a new government came into power. In 2002, Wangari became the assistant minister of environment, natural resources, and wildlife.

Wangari kept helping women and the Earth. In 2004, she became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2006, she wrote a book called *Unbowed* to share her story. Wangari died in 2011 when she was 71 years old.

Name _____

Date _____ **Answer Key**

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Directions: Answer the questions about the text.

Why is Wangari Maathai famous?

She was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

She started the Green Belt Movement.

Finish the sentence: Wangari Maathai became the first _____

woman in East Africa to earn a doctorate degree.

What were some of the challenges Wangari faced?

She was arrested many times for her beliefs and her protests.

Where did Wangari study?

She studied in the USA, Germany, and at the University of Nairobi.

Why was Wangari known internationally?

She was an environmental activist who started the Green Belt Movement.

What else would you like to know about Wangari Maathai? Share your questions with a friend.

Answers will vary