

Name: Sarah Westman

Name of lesson: Wangari Maathai and Environmental Activism

Intended grades: 3-5th

Goal / Objective(s): Students will be able to...

1. Explain how leaders have had an impact on the environment in a community.
2. Identify an environmental issue impacting their community and brainstorm a solution.

Materials needed:

- *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees* by Franck Prevot
- [Deforestation Article](#)
- Highlighters
- [Reading Response Worksheet](#)
- Computers

Day 1 (45-50 minutes)

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Ask students if they have heard of deforestation and if they know what it is.

Procedure (20 minutes)

- Read the Deforestation Article with students. Make sure that each student has their own printed copy and a highlighter so that they can annotate.
- Before reading, tell students to highlight main ideas and important facts as they hear them.
- After reading, ask students the following discussion questions:
 - Why do you think it's important that we stop deforestation?
 - What could we do to stop deforestation?
 - Is deforestation something we experience in our community?

Conclusion (25 minutes)

- Put students into groups of 3-4. Give them paper and markers.
- Tell students to brainstorm ways they would stop and help the effects of deforestation. Give them 5 minutes to brainstorm.
- Pull students back together and have each group present their poster.

Day 2 (40 minutes)

Introduction (2 minutes)

- Remind students that yesterday they learned about deforestation.
- Tell them that today we are going to learn about an activist in Africa who helped issues of deforestation.

- Introduce today's book: *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees*. Tell students that this is a true story about Wangari Maathai.

Procedure (25 minutes)

- Read *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees*. Ask the following discussion questions while reading:
 - P. 13 What can we say about Wangari as a person so far?
 - P. 15 How do you think having an education will impact Wangari?
 - P. 19 How has cutting trees affected Kenya's environment?
 - P. 27 What character traits would you use to describe Wangari?
 - P. 29 Why do people want to stop Wangari?
- After reading:
 - How did Wangari make a change?
 - What do you think the theme/message of the book is?

Conclusion (15 minutes)

- Show students a picture of Wangari Maathai and a picture of her work.
- Tell students that Wangari Maathai identified an issue in her community and did something to change it and have a positive impact.
- Pass out the [Reading Response Worksheet](#) and have students complete.

Day 3-4

Introduction (7 minutes)

- Remind students that yesterday we read about Wangari Maathai.
- Have students explore other environmental activists by going to the following website for 5 minutes: <https://www.britannica.com/explore/savingearth/meet-the-activists>

Procedure

- As a whole group, brainstorm environmental issues we would like to focus on in our community
- Instruct students to pick one issue they are interested in researching
- Tell students they will create a project/presentation answering the following questions:
 - What is the issue?
 - Why should people care about it?
 - What is being done to fix it?
 - What is something you can do to fix it?
- Show students the following [example](#).
- Have students work independently on their project. Adjust the amount of time you need to have them complete the project.
- There are many ways you could have students do this project. I had my students create a Google slide presentation which took 2 days. You could also use Canva or have them do it on a paper poster.