



Grades 2-5

Authors and Educators Resources

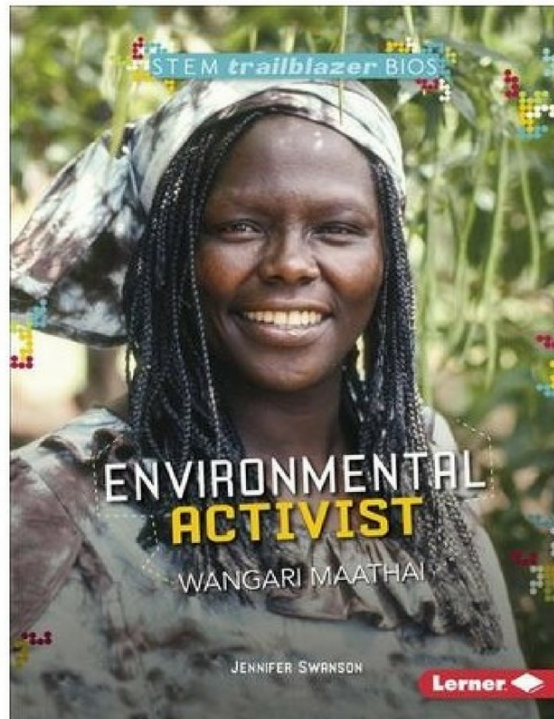


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Teacher's Guide by Pamela Brunskill

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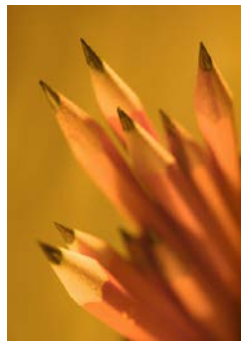
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Summary

Wangari Maathai worked to solve an environmental crisis and help people at the same time.

When Maathai was young, it was unusual for girls in Kenya to go to school, but she was determined to learn more about science and nature. As an adult, she noticed that people were cutting down too many trees. Maathai knew that forest loss was bad for the health of the environment and people. She started the Green Belt Movement, which educated women in rural villages and paid them for every tree they planted. The program helped plant millions of trees and brought money to the villages. For her environmental and human rights work, Maathai became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai by Jennifer Swanson is one of Lerner Publishing's STEM trailblazer biographies.



. Photo credit: Martin Rowe via [Flicker](#). No changes made

About the Author



Jennifer Swanson

Jennifer began her writing career at the age of five when she wrote and illustrated books for her kindergarten class. A self-professed science geek, Jennifer started a science club in her garage at the age of 7. She used to gather leaves and flowers and look at them under a microscope. She has carried that love of science her whole life. Jennifer has a B.S. in chemistry from the U. S. Naval Academy and an M.S. Ed in K-8 science from Walden University. In addition to being an award-winning author, she is also a middle school science instructor for John Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth.

Jennifer is always on the hunt to learn something new. How do submarines stay submerged? How do satellites work? Why do bed bugs live in beds? She has learned it all in the many nonfiction books she has authored. Like any good scientist and author, Jennifer is rarely without a notebook and she writes down her observations throughout the day. It is a practice she encourages in both her students and new writers alike.

For more information about Jennifer and her books, visit her website at <http://jenniferswansonbooks.com>.

Pre-Reading Activities

The following are suggested activities you can do with your students before you read *Environmental Activist* by Jennifer Swanson.

1. Complete a Book Walk—Ask students to look at the front cover and images throughout the book to predict what the biography will be about. Record their responses on a prediction chart so that you can refer back to it after reading the book and reflect on its accuracy.
2. Create a KWL Chart—Ask students what they KNOW about environmental activism and what they WANT to know about Environmental Activism. Have students record their thoughts on individual KWL charts (page 5). Then, complete the K and W sections on a class chart and save it to refer back to it after reading *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai*.
3. Quickwrite about Interacting with the Environment—Students can complete a 10-15 minute quickwrite outlining different ways they have noticed, wondered, and acted with the environment (page 6).
 - This book and quickwrite could be included as part of a center or rotational activity.



Image from Max Pixel

Name _____

Date _____

Environmental Activism

What I KNOW	What I WANT to Know	What I LEARNED

Name _____

Date _____

NOTICE. WONDER. ACT.

Directions: Think about the environment in which you live. What do you notice about it? What do you wonder about it? How do you act in it? Write your responses in the boxes below.

Things I NOTICE about my environment:

Hint: Pick one place, such as your block, school, or town. Think about the characteristics or parts of that place that make it unique. Include both natural and man-made items.

Things I WONDER about my environment:

Hint: Think about why the environment is the way it is. What would happen if one thing changed?

How I ACT in my environment:

Hint: What do you do in the place? How do your actions affect the environment?

Exploring the Book

The following are suggested activities to do with your students as they read *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai* by Jennifer Swanson.

1. Discussion Questions—Involve students in monitoring their own comprehension by using the reading strategy of questioning. Use the lesson plan (page 9) and sample discussion questions to guide you.
2. Continue with a KWL Chart—Have students add their thoughts to the W and L sections on the individual KWL charts (page 5) as they read *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai*.
3. Complete a Genre Study—Distribute *Nonfiction Genre Inquiry* (page 10) and have students identify components of nonfiction text structure.
4. Word Mapping—Point out the glossary on page 30 in *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai*. Explain that these are domain-specific vocabulary words because they all relate to the environment or schooling. Have the students choose one word they'd like to learn more about and have them complete *Word Mapping* (page 11) for that word. Challenge the students to use that word in other writing tasks.

“Education, if it means anything, should not take people away from the land, but instill in them even more respect for it, because educated people are in a position to understand what is being lost.”

-- P. 12 Education Activist Wangari Maathai

Lesson Plan—Promoting Inquiry with Discussion Questions

Objective: Given a reading of *Environmental Activist: Wangari Maathai*, students will ask and discuss questions related to the text.

Materials: copies of *Environmental Activist: Wangari Maathai* for each student, sticky notes for each student, and pens/pencils for each student.

Background: Students will become more actively involved in reading when their questions and natural curiosity are valued. Promote inquiry with students by allowing them to ask questions about the text.

Anticipatory Set: Hold up *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai* and ask student what they think the book is about and what they think Wangari Maathai did. If you did the K-W-L chart, then you can explain that this book goes along with the study on environmental activism. Allow students a chance to share their ideas and explain that today they are going to read the book and discuss some of the questions they have as they read.

Follow-Through:

1. Pass out sticky notes and instruct students to write down three things they wonder about as they read *Environmental Activist: Wangari Maathai*.
2. If students struggle to come up with their own questions, you can start the conversation with some of the discussion questions on page 9.
3. Give students time to discuss their questions.

Conclusion: Hold a Grand Discussion whereby each group summarizes their discussion. If you did the K-W-L chart, you can add to the W and L chart, as pertinent.

Discussion Questions for
Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai by Jennifer Swanson

How would you describe Wangari Maathai?

Who does Wangari Maathai remind you of? Why?

What do you think was the most important thing Wangari Maathai did in her life?

In what ways does this book fit the form of a biography?

When did Wangari Maathai really become an environmental activist?

Why did Wangari Maathai win the Nobel Peace Prize?

Name _____

Date _____

Nonfiction Genre Inquiry
What Do You Notice About Nonfiction?

Nonfiction material is organized differently than fiction. Look through *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai* and jot down what you notice about the text structure of the book.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Now find some other nonfiction books. You could look at more books in the Lerner STEM Biography series. What do all of these books have in common? What does that suggest to you about the genre of nonfiction?

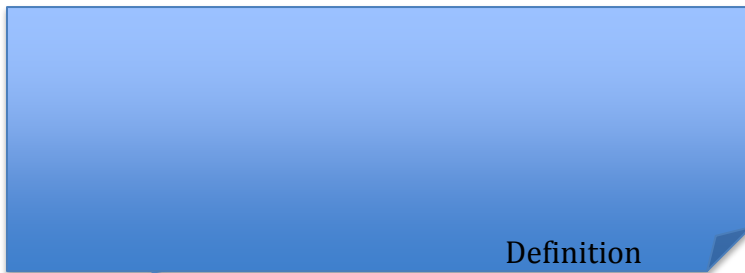
Name _____ Date _____

Word Mapping

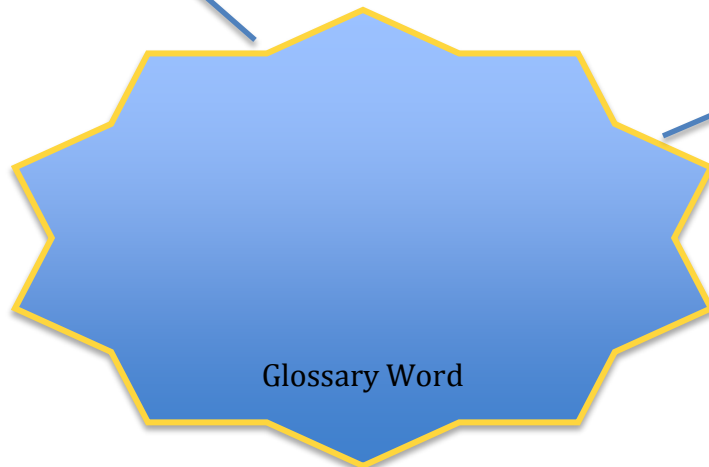
Directions:

Complete the word map using one of the glossary words below.

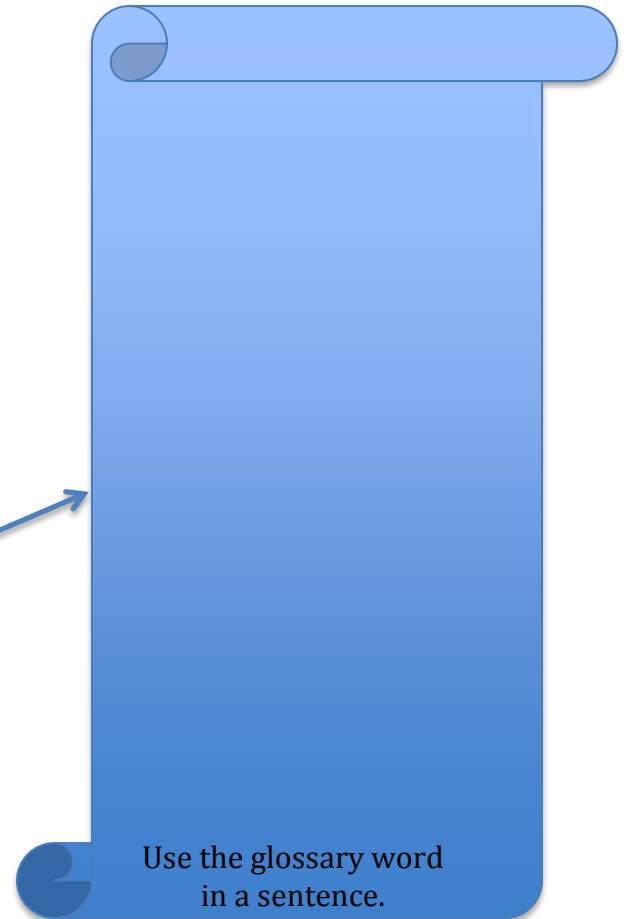
- Deforestation
- Humanitarian
- Reforestation
- Rural
- Scholarship
- Seedlings



Definition



Glossary Word



Use the glossary word
in a sentence.

Illustrate the word in a way that will help you remember what it means in the space below.



After the Book

The following are suggested activities you can do with your students after they read *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai* by Jennifer Swanson.

1. Comprehension Questions—Have students answer the comprehension questions to demonstrate their understanding of the text (pages 13-16).
2. Grand Discussion with the KWL Chart—Bring up the KWL chart (page 5) you started at the beginning of *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai*, and have students add to the L column to share what they've learned. Hold a grand discussion to address any misconceptions that may have been identified from the reading. You may decide to add a fourth column to jot down what they still want to know or wonder more about based on what they've learned.
3. Write a Mini Environmental Biography—Revisit *Notice. Wonder. Act.* (page 6). Tell the students that they just read about how Wangari Maathai noticed, wondered, and acted in her community. Explain that they will follow this format to write their own biography or “future” biography of their activism in their environments (page 17).
 - First, model how to write a summary of how Wangari Maathai noticed, wondered, and acted in her community. Then, guide students to use their graphic organizers from *Notice. Wonder. Act.* (page 6) to write their own.
 - Challenge students to incorporate at least two glossary and/or domain-specific words from *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai*.
 - Celebrate the students' growth in learning about environmental activism by having them share their environmental biographies with one another.

Name _____

Date _____

**Comprehension Questions for
Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai by Jennifer Swanson**

Directions: Choose the BEST answer.

Chapter 1: Connecting with the Land

1. Where was Wangari Maathai born?
 - A. America
 - B. Ethiopia
 - C. Finland
 - D. Kenya

2. How did Maathai's early years connect her with the land?
 - A. She grew up in a farming family and noticed the natural environment.
 - B. She went to school to study streams and learned about natural disasters.
 - C. She was part of a large family, and she took care of her brothers and sisters.
 - D. She was a member of the Kikuyu tribe, and walked for miles every day.

Chapter 2: Finding Roots in Education

3. Maathai's education help her to achieve what honor?
 - A. She discovered the pineal gland in Japanese quails.
 - B. She married a wealthy American doctor and built schools with him.
 - C. She became the first woman doctor in Central and East Africa.
 - D. She published a paper on the history of British government.

4. What educational experience allowed Maathai to gain confidence in activism?
 - A. Winning a scholarship to study in the United States
 - B. Writing a dissertation on brain development
 - C. Gathering crops with other women for her community in Kenya
 - D. Demanding equal treatment for women staff at the University of Nairobi

Chapter 3: Planting for a Future

5. Why was Kenya's soil suffering?
 - A. Deforestation made the land dry.
 - B. Natural Disasters took away its nutrients.
 - C. The native trees were using too much of it.
 - D. People were burning it.

6. What did Maathai decide to do to help Kenya's soil?
 - A. Introduce animals into the region
 - B. Plant trees in areas that had lost them
 - C. Water the land as she walked to work
 - D. Ask the government for money

Chapter 4: Taking Action

7. What was the Green Belt Movement?
 - A. A fashion design for teenagers
 - B. A course at Maathai's university
 - C. A program to teach women how to plant trees
 - D. A sign on Kenya's forest lands to promote tourism

8. Why did some people oppose the Green Belt Movement?
 - A. The Green Belt Movement threatened traditional ways.
 - B. The government made money from the cleared land.
 - C. People didn't like women working.
 - D. The Green Belt Movement wasn't effective.

Chapter 5: Inspiring a Generation

9. Why was Maathai awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?
 - A. She worked hard for the environment and African women.
 - B. She published more papers than any other woman in Africa.
 - C. She arranged for peace in the Middle East.
 - D. She prevented a war between Kenya and the United States.

10. How does Maathai's legacy live on?
 - A. Maathai speaks at international conferences, spreading a message of hope.
 - B. Maathai's children share her vision for a healthy environment.
 - C. Many groups honor her by using her name on their products, including water bottles and filters.
 - D. Millions of trees stand in Kenya, and other environmental organizations have sprung up.

Response to Text

When the Nobel Peace Prize committee awarded Wangari Maathai the Nobel Peace Prize, they said she “thinks globally and acts locally.” What does this mean? Use details from the book to support and explain your answer.

Look at the timeline on page 29 of the book. Choose one of the events from Wangari Maathai’s life. How did that event impact Maathai as an environmental activist?

Be sure to state what Maathai accomplished as an activist and explain how that event impacted her.

Answer Key for Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. D
2. A
3. C
4. D
5. A
6. B
7. C
8. B
9. A
10. D

Short Response

Answers will vary. One example could be:

The Nobel Peace Prize committee said Wangari Maathai “thinks globally and acts locally” because she recognized the importance of trees for soil all over the world, and she did something to combat deforestation in her community. According to *Environmental Activist Wangari Maathai* by Jennifer Swanson, Maathai asked women in Kenya to protect the land with her Green Belt Movement. This Movement planted over 30 million trees.

Extended Response

Answers will vary. Solid responses will include one event from the timeline and explain how that event impacted Wangari Maathai. The student will support the decision and synthesize information from the book to explain their position.

Common Core Matrix

Depending on which activities you choose to complete (and how you complete them) with your students, the following Language Arts Common Core anchor standards can be met. You can always meet additional standards by focusing your lesson objectives.

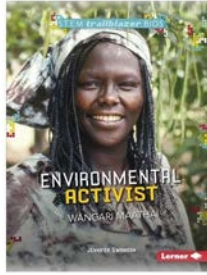
(Taken from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R/> 2015)

Common Core State Standard	KWL Chart	Notice. Wonder. Act.	Discussion & Comprehension	Word Mapping	Genre Study
READING Key Ideas and Details					
CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.			X	X	
CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.			X		
CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.			X		
READING Craft and Structure					
CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.			X	X	
CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.			X		X
CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	X		X		X
READING Integration of Knowledge and Ideas					
CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	X	X	X	X	X

Common Core State Standard	KWL Chart	Notice, Wonder, Act.	Discussion & Comprehension Questions	Word Mapping	Genre Study
CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.					
CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.		X			X
READING Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity					
CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.			X		
WRITING Text Types and Purposes					
CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence					
CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.		X			
CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.		X			
WRITING Production and Distribution of Writing					
CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.		X		X	
CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.		X			
CCRA.W.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.		X			

Common Core State Standard	KWL Chart	Notice. Wonder. Act.	Discussion & Comprehension Questions	Word Mapping	Genre Study
CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.	X				X
CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.					
CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.		X			X
WRITING Range of Writing					
CCRA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.		X			
SPEAKING AND LISTENING Comprehension and Collaboration					
CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	X		X		
CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	X	X	X	X	X
CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric					X
SPEAKING AND LISTENING Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas					
CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.		X			
CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.					

Common Core State Standard	KWL Chart	Notice, Wonder, Act.	Discussion & Comprehension Questions	Word Mapping	Genre Study
CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	X		X		
LANGUAGE Conventions of Standard English					
CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	X	X	X	X	X
CCRA.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.		X		X	
LANGUAGE Knowledge of Language					
CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	X	X	X	X	X
LANGUAGE Vocabulary Acquisition and Use					
CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.			X	X	
CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.					
CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.				X	



Teacher Reflection

Use this page to write down notes on what worked well and what you would like to try differently next time.

If you liked this resource, check out the other resources available from [AuthorsandEducators.com](https://www.authorsandeducators.com).