



2009

Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace

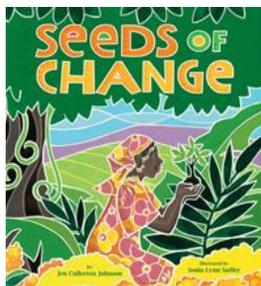
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Johnson, Jen Cullerton. *Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace*. Sonia Lynn Sadler. Lee & Low, 2010. ISBN 978-1600603679. \$18.95. 40 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Biographies; Informational Books

Subject: Maathai, Wangari--Juvenile literature; Kenya--Environmental conditions--Juvenile literature; Women Nobel Prize winners--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Seeds of Change is the true story of Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan girl in the Kikuyu tribe. Wangari's mother taught her to love and protect all living things, especially the Mugumo tree that provides shelter and food for animals and humans. Despite the fact it was not the norm for girls to attend school, Wangari's parents made the arrangements so she could go. This early love of education eventually led to her attending graduate school and receiving a doctorate degree from the University of Nairobi. Upon returning to Kenya, she was appalled at the great swaths of land which had been cleared by foreign companies for coffee crops. She decided that she needed to do something to help: plant trees, one by one and village by village. Although some mocked her at first, others soon joined and helped her. Their efforts became known as the Green Belt Movement. From Wangari's small "seed of an idea" thirty million trees flourished and again provided shelter and food for animals her people. Wangari's relentless efforts, even after she was arrested, helped to preserve Kenyan's environment and to lift Kenyan women to greater opportunities. She is called Mama Miti or "Mother of Trees" and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

This inspiring story could be used by teachers and parents to launch a discussion on family legacies, application of learning, and the importance of commitment to a good cause. Sadler's illustrative technique of scratchboard and oil lends itself naturally to Wangari's story. Each shape is outlined in white and the illustrations appear brilliant off the page. Books like this one introduce young readers to people who are willing to apply their learning and who tackle hard environmental problems.

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