

UNIT 4

Section 1 “Something Wonderful Happens When You Plant a Seed”

1. What were the two major achievements that got Wangari Maathai worldwide recognition?

The first major achievement that earned Wangari Maathai worldwide recognition was her contribution to the Green Belt Movement since 1977. She formed a network of rural women who planted 30 million trees and in 2004 she got the Nobel Peace Prize. The other contribution that won her respect and appreciation internationally is that despite being beaten, harassed and jailed for her good work, she fought the elections to get into the Parliament so that she could change the system from within.

2. How did Wangari Maathai want to assist the earth?

Wangari Maathai believed that all of us should assist the earth. We should together heal the wounds of the earth and in the process heal our own wounds too. She said that we need to embrace the creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder.

3. What was the major hurdle that Wangari Maathai faced on her way achieving her mission?

The biggest hurdle Maathai faced in her mission was from the then government of Kenya. When she organized the Green Belt Movement, apart from planting trees, it sparked a debate about why the trees were disappearing and how the citizens had a right to protest and protect their environment. The Movement became a target of the government because it sowed the seeds for democracy in Kenya. Maathai was beaten, harassed and even jailed for her efforts.

4. What were the problems of the rural women in Kenya? How did Wangari Maathai arrive at the solution?

The rural women in Kenya faced the problem of not having enough energy for their homes. The main source of energy which they used came from firewood. Other major problems were lack of clean drinking water and malnutrition. While interacting with these rural women, Wangari realized that planting trees would solve much of the problem. Added to which was the fact that planting a tree was a reasonable and doable job. Not only are trees a source of fuel and food, but water also comes from forested mountains.

5. What were the chief causes of malnutrition in Kenya? How was it also linked to environmental degradation?

A lot of farmers were growing cash crops like tea and coffee for the international market; they had stopped growing food crops for household consumption. This became the main cause of malnutrition. It was linked to environmental degradation because the environment provides us with many basic necessities of life. Thus, environmental degradation was linked to the basic needs of communities.

6. What are the chief uses of a tree, according to Wangari Maathai?

According to Wangari Maathai, trees were a good source of fuel. This meant the problem of energy deficiency that the rural women of Kenya faced could be solved by planting trees. Trees also provided building material for fences, fruits, fodder and added to the aesthetic beauty of the place. Additionally, the women were able to earn a little money because the Green Belt Movement paid them for each seedling that was successfully raised.

7. How were the two causes – environment health and good governance linked?

Environmental health and good governance are linked because maintaining good environmental health was also a responsibility of the government. The people always blamed the government whenever they were asked about their grievances and why their basic requirements were not met. The Green Belt Movement started explaining to the people why the trees were disappearing and thus forced the government to sit up, take notice and take action. This movement encouraged the people to stand up for their environment and their rights, and most importantly, to play an active part in preserving the environment that gave them everything.

8. What made Wangari Maathai not give up on her herculean task?

Wangari did not give up her herculean task because she knew that people did not have to live like this. As long as there was a way of breaking this cycle of poverty and disempowerment, she found the courage and power to continue fighting. She saw that her efforts were bearing fruits, their campaign became successful, it said— When you planted a tree, it grew.

9. How did Wangari Maathai wish to spend her prize money?

Wangari Maathai said that she was used to having only a few shillings in her pocket. The prize money of \$1.3 million would be spent to establish the Wangari Maathai Foundation. She wanted the people of Kenya and other countries to have the opportunity to do what she had done.

Reading 2

Write answer on your own for all the 4 questions given in CW

