Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa by Jeanette Winter", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1460. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Jeanette Winter

Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa

United States (2008)

TAGS: African Storytelling African Traditions



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	USA, Kenya, Korea, Japan, Spain, China, Sri Lanka
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2008
First Edition Details	Jeanette Winter, *Wangari's Trees of Peace. A True Story from Africa*. New York and Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Harcourt, Inc., 2008, 32 pp.
ISBN	978015206545

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

Awards	2008 – Commended for Cybils (Nonfiction Picture Book); 2009 – Winner of Nautilus Award (Children's Nonfiction); 2009 – American Library Association Amelia Bloomer Project; 2009 – Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People; 2009 – Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K-12; 2010 – Short-listed for South Carolina Childrens, Junior and Young Adult Book Award (Picture Book); 2010 – Short-listed for Washington Children's Choice Picture Book Award; 2010 – Short-listed for Red Clover Award; 2011 – Short-listed for Virginia Readers Choice Award (Primary); 2011 – Short-listed for Grand Canyon Reader Award (Nonfiction).
Genre	Biographies, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (5–8 years)
Author of the Entry	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Divine Che Neba, University of Yaoundé 1, nebankiwang@yahoo.com Daniel A. Nkemleke, University of Yaoundé 1, nkemlekedan@yahoo.com Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Jeanette Winter , b. 1939
(Author, Illustrator)

Jeanette Winter was born in Chicago in 1939 where she attended the Art Institute of Chicago University. She got married to Roger Winter, an American artist painter. She writes mostly about prominent women in history, and for children. Jeannette Winter received awards such as the New York Times Best Illustrated Book citation and the designation as Notable children's Trade Book in Language Art. She is the author of many self-illustrated books including *My Baby* (2001), *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* (2005), *Following the Drinking Gourd* (2008), *Kali's Song* (2012), *Manuk the Ice Bear* (2016) and *Our House Is on Fire: Greta Thunberg's Call to Save the Planet* (2019).

Sources:

Biography.jrank.org (accessed: June 21, 2022);

Katherine Handcock, "A Mighty Girl Creators Series: Interview with Jeanette Winter, Author and Illustrator", posted on April 6, 2013 (accessed: June 21, 2022).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com

Questionnaire

Interview with Jeanette Winter is available at amightygirl.com (accessed: June 21, 2022).

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Additional information

Translation

Korean: □□□□ □□□ *(* □□ *)* (Namudŭl ŭi ŏmŏni), trans. Chi Hye-wŏn omgim, Sŏul-si : Mirae Ai, 2009.

Catalan: *Wangari i els arbres de la pau: una història real de l'Àfrica*, trans. Anna Gasol i Trullols, Barcelona: Ekaré, 2009.

Japanese: □□□□□□□□□ *:* □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ (Wangari no heiwa no ki: Afurika de hontō ni atta ohanashi), trans. Yumiko Fukumoto, Kōbe: BL Shuppan, 2010.

Spanish: *Wangari y los árboles de la paz: una historia verdadera*, trans. Carolina Paoli, Barcelona: Ekaré, 2015.

Chinese: □□□ *:* □□□□□□□□□□ (He ping shu: yi ze lai zi fei zhou de zhen shi gu shi), trans. Yongling Sha, □□□□, Tai bei shi : Xiao lu wen hua, 2017.

Tamil: □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□: □□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ □□□ (Vaṅkāriyiṉ pacumait tūtuvarkaḷ: or Āppirikka uṉmaik katai), trans. Āti Vaḷḷiyappaṉ, Ceṉṉai: Puks Ḵapār Cilraṉ, Pārati Puttakālayam ōr aṅkam, Epral 2019.

Chinese: □□□ *:* □□□□□□□□□□ (He ping cun : yi ge lai zi Feizhou de zhen shi gu shi), trans. Hong Xu, Beijing : Beijing lian he chu ban gong si, 2020.

Summary

Wangari grew up at the foot of Mount Kenya among beautiful trees. These trees were home to birds and a source of wood for the villagers. The forest provided a rich soil on which Wangari's mother and other women grew foodstuffs like sweet potatoes, sugar cane and maize. Wangari used to help her mother with these activities. When she grew up, she obtained a scholarship to study in America. She returned to Kenya after six years to find that the forest has been destroyed. Women became bent from fetching wood in faraway places; the soil no longer produced good yields and the birds all disappeared. She cried at this sight and decided to plant trees. She mobilized women from her village to do the same and they planted many trees. Soon after, news of Wangari's vision of tree planting spread to other villages where women joined the tree planting movement. When these trees

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grew, the government sent deforestation agents to cut them down for lumber claiming that they wanted to build infrastructure. Wangari opposed them. She was imprisoned but it did not stop the news of her tree-planting movement from spreading to other African countries, where people also started planting trees. Soon all of Kenya was covered with trees. The land regained its beautiful forests. Women walked tall as they no longer had to go far away to fetch firewood. From the top of the Mount Kenya, there is a beautiful view of the green forest Wangari restored in Kenya and in Africa.

Analysis

Many world communities accord great value to forests. Many lives, human, as well as non-human, depend on the forest. For humans particularly, it provides habitat and a rich soil on which crops are grown, and also a good source of potable water. Unfortunately, with urbanization in Africa today, many of these forests have been destroyed and no replacements have been planted. The above story is a true-life account of Wangari Maathai who takes it upon herself to save her Kenyan country from becoming a desert by planting trees to replace the destroyed forest. As a little girl growing up at the foot of Mount Kenya, she appreciated the value of trees – they provided shade from the sun, rich soil to grow food crops, wood with which to make fire and a habitat for birds. Seeing the effects of the felling of these trees – the barrenness of the soil, the backbreaking long distances women go to fetch wood, and the disappearance of the birds – Wangari resisted opposition from men, braved social hierarchy and led women into a green revolution. The positive results serve as a booster to other communities in and beyond Kenya who followed in Wangari's footsteps.

The story speaks to the necessity of being environmentally conscious and emphasizes the role women play in achieving this. It also brings the African woman to the center of the fight for the protection/preservation of nature as shown in the story because in many African communities, it is women who interact more with the land. Young girls are therefore encouraged by Wangari's story, to stand up for what will help to save the world.

The illustrations correspond to Wangari's trajectory from her childhood to her return to a tree-less homeland and to the beginning of the tree planting movement, with the involvement of women and successful planting of millions of trees.

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	African Storytelling African Traditions
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adversity Environment Girls Nature Transformation Water
Further Reading	Ikeke, Mark, "The Forest in African Traditional Thought and Practice: An Ecophilosophical Discourse", *Open Journal of Philosophy* 3.2 (2013): 345–350.
Addenda	Braille book: Boston, MA: National Braille Press, 2012.

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