

**Directions**  
Read this article. Then answer questions 29 through 35.

*This is the true story of a Kenyan woman named Wangari Maathai.*

## Excerpt from *Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace*

*by Jen Cullerton Johnson*

1 “Come,” Wangari’s mother called. She beckoned her young daughter over to a tall tree with a wide, smooth trunk and a crown of green, oval leaves.

2 “Feel,” her mother whispered.

3 Wangari spread her small hands over the tree’s trunk. She smoothed her fingers over the rough bark.

4 “This is the *mugumo*,” her mother said. “It is home to many. It feeds many too.”

5 She snapped off a wild fig from a low branch, and gave it to her daughter. Wangari ate the delicious fruit, just as geckos and elephants did. High in the tree, birds chirped in their nests. The branches bounced with jumping monkeys.

6 “Our people, the Kikuyu of Kenya, believe that our ancestors rest in the tree’s shade,” her mother explained.

7 Wangari wrapped her arms around the trunk as if hugging her great-grandmother’s spirit. She promised never to cut down the tree. . . .

8 When Wangari finished elementary school, she was eleven years old. Her mind was like a seed rooted in rich soil, ready to grow. Wangari wanted to continue her education, but to do so she would have to leave her village and move to the capital city of Nairobi. Wangari had never been farther than her valley’s ridge. She was scared.

9 “Go,” her mother said. She picked up a handful of earth and placed it gently into her daughter’s hand. “Where you go, we go.” . . .

10 As graduation neared, Wangari told her friends she wanted to become a biologist.

11 “Not many native women become biologists,” they told her.

12 “I will,” she said.

**GO ON**

- 13 Wangari watched sadly as her government sold more and more land to big companies that cut down forests for timber and to clear land for coffee plantations. Native trees such as cedar and acacia vanished. Without trees, birds had no place to nest. Monkeys lost their swings. Tired mothers walked miles for firewood. . . .
- 14 When Wangari visited her village she saw that the Kikuyu custom of not chopping down the mugumo trees had been lost. No longer held in place by tree roots, the soil streamed into the rivers. The water that had been used to grow maize, bananas, and sweet potatoes turned to mud and dried up. Many families went hungry.
- 15 Wangari could not bear to think of the land being destroyed. Now married and the mother of three children, she worried about what would happen to the mothers and children who depended on the land.
- 16 “We must do something,” Wangari said.
- 17 Wangari had an idea as small as a seed but as tall as a tree that reaches for the sky. “*Harabee!* Let’s work together!” she said to her countrywomen—mothers like her. Wangari dug deep into the soil, a seedling by her side. “We must plant trees.” . . .
- 18 Wangari traveled to villages, towns, and cities with saplings and seeds, shovels and hoes. At each place she went, women planted rows of trees that looked like green belts across the land. Because of this they started calling themselves the Green Belt Movement.
- 19 “We might not change the big world but we can change the landscape of the forest,” she said.
- 20 One tree turned to ten, ten to one hundred, one hundred to one million, all the way up to thirty million planted trees. Kenya grew green again. Birds nested in new trees. Monkeys swung on branches. Rivers filled with clean water. Wild figs grew heavy in mugumo branches.
- 21 Mothers fed their children maize, bananas, and sweet potatoes until they could eat no more.

**29** What idea is developed in paragraphs 4 through 7?

- A Wangari and her mother want to plant more trees.
- B Mugumo trees are important to people and animals.
- C Mugumo trees can provide shade to many people.
- D Wangari and her mother think education is important.

**30** Read this sentence from paragraph 8 of the article.

**Her mind was like a seed rooted in rich soil, ready to grow.**

What does the sentence help the reader to understand about Wangari?

- A She likes to think about plants.
- B She wants to keep learning.
- C She imagines ways to help others.
- D She believes in working together.

**31** How are the details in paragraphs 13 and 14 organized?

- A as a description of how animal habitats changed
- B as an explanation of the solution to a problem in the environment
- C as a comparison of the village before and after the government sold the land
- D as a description of how a problem was caused in the area and its effects

**GO ON**

**32** Paragraphs 17 and 18 explain that Wangari spread her idea by

- A** sharing it with women around the country
- B** giving it the name Green Belt Movement
- C** watching the land in Kenya turn green again
- D** planting trees herself everywhere she went

**33** Which sentence **most likely** expresses Wangari's point of view?

- A** People can make the changes they want by working together with determination.
- B** People change their traditions and customs with each generation.
- C** People cannot rely on the government to help them in a time of need.
- D** People in other countries do not need to work as hard on the same problem.

**34** How does the title of the article support a main idea?

- A** It describes advice Wangari followed.
- B** It describes how Wangari solved a problem.
- C** It explains how Wangari felt about trees.
- D** It explains which values Wangari's village held.

**35**

Based on the information in the article, where did Wangari **most likely** get her idea for planting trees across Kenya?

- A** from the school she attended in the capital city
- B** from the government of her country
- C** from the women of the village where she grew up
- D** from what her mother taught her as a girl

**STOP**