

Example of the green belt movement essay

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Wangari Mathai is an environmental icon in the world, and the first and only Woman Nobel Peace awardee. Born in 1940, in Nyeri county of Kenya, Wangari Mathai amassed quite a number of accolades which are no mean feat for any woman schooled during her times. She obtained a degree in biological Sciences from the Mount Scolastical College in Kansas in 1964, and then proceeded for her Master of Sciences degree in Germany before joining the University of Nairobi for another Masters degree and lastly a Ph. D from the same university where she taught for some time.

In order to fully understand the content and context of this literary work, its important to note that Wangari Mathai, in her life, fought quite a number of battles with the government of the then president of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi. Key among these battles arose as a result of the government's intention to lease the present day Uluru park gardens to foreign investors for the construction of high-rise buildings.

Wangari staged a demonstration of people who opposed this government move. In the process, she was badly beaten, by the police and sustained injuries that were evident in her head even till her death. In commemoration of this fight, there is a poster at the corner of the park which is written ' The Green belt Movement, Lest we forget', which reminds everyone who visits that park that it was through the efforts of the greenbelt movement that the park stands, even today.

Her battles with the government did not end there. She has been involved in a number of scuffles with the government, especially as a result of her willingness to protect the environment, especially the Karura forest, which the government of His Excellency former President of Kenya wanted destroyed.

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On the spiritual front, Wangari equated planting of trees with spiritual Nourishment and this is founded in the core values of the greenbelt movement, where Wangari worked for most of her life. These values include the love for the environment, gratitude and respect for earth's resources, self empowerment and self betterment.

Wangari believed that humans have a responsibility towards ensuring that the environment is taken care of, as it's a duty from God, according to the Christian Faith. The rate at which the earth's resources were being depleted was worrying and therefore Wangari and other like minded people took it upon themselves to enlighten the people on the need to plant trees to conserve the environment.

It must be noted that during the context of the authorship of this book, the world was undergoing massive tree cutting and natural forest destruction and therefore Wangari and like minded people thought of the world as being wounded and therefore tree planting is a way of replenishing and healing this land. True to her words, areas that have been planted trees are much better as there is water that can be utilized by all, as opposed to the depleted forest cover areas.

Trees, in the words of Prof Mathai are significant as they represent God's presence in nature. Symbolically, the biblical garden and Eve were placed at the Garden of Eden, where there were many trees from which they were to eat their foods; this shows that in the Christian context, trees are an important aspect of spirituality. Trees represent abundance too, of God's grace. In other faith contexts, trees represent God's grace on Earth as well as life that God has given to mankind which should not be interfered with.

Mathai, through the greenbelt movement that has presence in almost all

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countries of the world tried to bring an understanding of the value of nature and trees through her many works as well as presentations both local and international. So strong was her commitment to preserving the environment that Wangari, on her death had critically insisted that her body be cremated, rather than cutting trees to make her coffin. In her honor, a resident of Nyanza province made a coffin from reed from her, which considered a very informed decision, given her fight for trees through the greenbelt movement. This was despite her Christian faith that does not allow cremation. For all her efforts, Mathai was internationally recognized by the Nobel Peace Commission for her efforts in environmental conservation.

This book is a very interesting read, as it not only mirrors the environmental commitment that an educationist and environmentalist had towards the environment, but also provides a chronology of events that happened to prior environmentalists in the hands of the oppressive regime of the time. It details the struggles that people and leaders have gone through in bringing environmental change and awareness to the society of today.

Works cited:

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