

Unit 6A

Explanation:

The lesson “Environment” is an excerpt of the interview of Wangari Maathai- the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and the one to start the Green Belt Movement. Her interview was taken by Nippon Hoso Kyokoi (NHK) Radio (Japan).

The interview is all about the struggles that the people have faced due to the decline of local flora and fauna due to the increase of the exotic trees and commercial timber.

The women who needed wood, stood up for themselves and contributed to their own benefits. It all started with the awareness of environment.

Wangari Maathai started by responding to the basic needs of the people who were asking for clean drinking water, for food and energy (mostly firewood). They did not have those things because the environment was degraded which made them understand the need to rehabilitate the environment.

When asked how peace is connected to a good environment, Maathai said that the war is fought to meet the needs or to control the resources and gain power etc. She believed that some people with power were allowed to acquire a lot of supremacy over the environment and it was not equally distributed which resulted in the imbalance.

Wangari as a child had a different experience of the environment which was clean, green and beautiful but slowly the commercial use of land degraded the local flora and fauna.

In 1975, at the very first United Nations Conference for women in Mexico, many of the women were saying “We need food, water and fodder for our animals.” Wangari started working with the women and encouraged them to plant trees. The women did not know to plant trees and the forester’s ways were too complicated for them to understand. So, Wangari told them to use the common sense and follow the method to plant trees that they use with other seeds. Though at the beginning it was difficult built soon the women began gaining confidence.

They started growing firewood for themselves, cut the trees themselves, earned for themselves and gained a sense of pride as they did not beg to others.

The scenario changed for the better. People started to fight for their own rights willingly. When asked that what is the one thing that can be done, Wangari said that the greatest activity is to plant a tree. She thinks that a tree is a wonderful symbol for the environment and it is a symbol of hope too. Plants are for our future, for ourselves and our children. It will last long even after we are gone.

