Wangarĩ Muta Maathai was a renowned Kenyan social, environmental and political activist and the first African woman to win the Nobel Prize. She was educated in the United States at Mount St. Scholastica and the University of Pittsburgh, as well as the University of Nairobi in Kenya.

[**Born**](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=wangari+maathai+born&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjbVEstOttIvSM0vyEkFUkXF-XlWSflFeYtYRcoT89ITizIVchMTSzISMxVAwgAC_OlaPAAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4Q6BMoADAiegQICxAG)**:**1 April 1940, [Nyeri, Kenya](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=Nyeri&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjZVAjON09KrTLTEspOt9AtS8wtyUoFUUXF-nlVSflHeIlZWv8rUokwAhGpjojgAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4QmxMoATAiegQICxAH)

[**Died**](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=wangari+maathai+died&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjbVks9OttIvSM0vyEnVT0lNTk0sTk2JL0gtKs7Ps0rJTE1ZxCpSnpiXnliUqZCbmFiSkZipABIGAM1he_5FAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4Q6BMoADAjegQICxAK)**:**25 September 2011, [The Nairobi Hospital Cancer Centre, Nairobi, Kenya](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=Nairobi+Hospital&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjZV4gIxjcotqgpMtOSzk630C1LzC3JS9VNSk1MTi1NT4gtSi4rz86xSMlNTFrEK-CVmFuUnZSp45BcXZJYk5gAApdhE7U0AAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4QmxMoATAjegQICxAL)

[**Nationality**](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=wangari+maathai+nationality&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjbVks1OttIvSM0vyEkFUkXF-XlWeYklmfl5iTmZJZWLWKXLE_PSE4syFXITE0syEjMVkGQBb4deuEoAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4Q6BMoADAkegQICxAO)**:**Kenyan

[**Awards**](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=wangari+maathai+awards&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjbVks1OttJPLE8sSoGQ8eWZeXmpRVZgTvEiVrHyxLz0xKJMhdzExJKMxEwFiAQAGNGad0UAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4Q6BMoADAlegQICxAR)**:**[Nobel Peace Prize](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=Nobel+Peace+Prize&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjZV4gAxTdOMC7Vks5Ot9BPLE4tSIGR8eWZeXmqRFZhTvIhV0C8_KTVHISA1MTlVIaAosyoVAESfE11KAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4QmxMoATAlegQICxAS), [Right Livelihood Award](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=Right+Livelihood+Award&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjZV4gAxs43zjLRks5Ot9BPLE4tSIGR8eWZeXmqRFZhTvIhVLCgzPaNEwSezLDUnMyM_P0XBESQDANGI2llPAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4QmxMoAjAlegQICxAT)

[**Education**](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=wangari+maathai+education&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjbVks5OttIvSM0vyEkFUkXF-XlWqSmlyYklmfl5i1glyxPz0hOLMhVyExNLMhIzFeByAO8oryhGAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4Q6BMoADAmegQICxAX)**:**[University of Pittsburgh](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBD_enIN837IN837&q=University+of+Pittsburgh&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDHMKjZVAjOBrOICLensZCv9gtT8gpxUIFVUnJ9nlZpSmpxYkpmft4hVIjQvswwomllSqZCfphCQWVJSnFRalJ4BAFP-ev5QAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj8oOuNvKDkAhUGUI8KHYrFBF4QmxMoATAmegQICxAY) (1964–1966)

Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan political and environmental activist and her country's assistant minister of environment, natural resources and wildlife.

**Synopsis**

In 1971, Wangari Maathai received a Ph.D., effectively becoming the first woman in either East or Central Africa to earn a doctorate. She was elected to Kenya's National Assembly in 2002 and has written several books and scholarly articles. She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her "holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights, and women's rights in particular." Maathai died of cancer on September 25, 2011, in Nairobi, Kenya.

**Early Life and Education**

Born on April 1, 1940, in Nyeri, Kenya, environmental activist Wangari Maathai grew up in a small village. Her father supported the family working as a tenant farmer. At this time, Kenya was still a British colony. Maathai's family decided to send her to school, which was uncommon for girls to be educated at this time. She started at a local primary school when she was 8 years old.

An excellent student, Maathai was able to continue her education at the Loreto Girls' High School. She won a scholarship in 1960 to go to college in the United States. Maathai attended Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas, where she earned a bachelor's degree in biology in 1964. Two years later, she completed a master's degree in biological sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. Maathai would later draw inspiration by the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements in the United States.