TEXT COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS OF
Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya

by Donna Jo Napoli

Text Type: Informational

TEXT DESCRIPTION	PLACEMENT
The true story of Wangari Maathai, known as "Mama Miti," a woman who gave seeds and seedlings to women all over Kenya to help their families and communities. The story explores many reasons for planting trees as woman after woman comes to Mama Miti with a need (food, shelter, clean water) that can be met by planting a tree. The story is told in a literary style and beautifully illustrated using the colors and patterns of Kenyan textiles.	The simple repeated structure of the book, along with students' previous work with simpler texts on the same topic make this text appropriate for Kindergarten.

QUANTITATIVE MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE MEASURE OF THE TEXT: AD710L
ASSOCIATED BAND LEVEL: 2-3

QUALITATIVE MEASURES

MEANING/PURPOSE: Moderately Complex
The purpose is implied but Mama Miti's repeated advice to plant a tree makes it easy to identify

TEXT STRUCTURE: Slightly Complex
The text is patterned in a problem/solution structure that is easy to predict and the connections between events are clear. Illustrations support readers in understanding the written text and offer some cultural context. The text contains Kikuyu glossary at the back. An afterward provides additional biographical information about Wangari Maathai and her accomplishments.

LANGUAGE FEATURES: Moderately Complex
The language is generally easy to understand, but offers some occasions for more complex meaning. The names of trees and some words and phrases in Kikuyu, a language used in Kenya, but meaning is supported by the illustrations, defined in context or included in the glossary at the end of the book. The text primarily uses simple and compound sentences, with some complex constructions.

KNOWLEDGE DEMANDS: Complex
The text contains frequent references to the trees, language and culture of Kenya and includes a mix of simple and more abstract ideas. While the meaning of the book can be more deeply understood with additional background on Wangari Maathai, deforestation and Kenya, this context is not necessary in order to comprehend the story or its message.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR READER AND TASK

The language of this text is fairly complex, but comprehension is supported by the repeating pattern of the story, and by activities designed to connect *Mama Miti* with the more simplistic text, *A Tree is Nice,* read earlier in the module. Using the Kenyan glossary at the end of the book, as well as details in the illustrations, should provide any cultural context needed to follow the story and determine its message. Several other picture books about Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement are available if students would like more information.

Specific supports for English Language Learners, students with special needs, and students who need enrichment are included in the module.

RATIONALE

This text is part of the continuing study of trees and the ways that planting trees can contribute to a community. Students read *Mama Miti* to continue gathering information about why people plant trees to add to the Reasons to Plant a Tree anchor chart (RI.K.1, RI.K.2, W.K.8). They compare and contrast the reasons and information from *Mama Miti* and *A Tree is Nice* (RI.K.9). They then use the information gathered from both of these texts to state an opinion about where to plant a tree and why (W.K.1).

KM4.2 #11