

In the **Spotlight**

Grades
K-2, 3-5

by | Sharron L. McElmeel

The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore. Lee & Low Books, 2011.

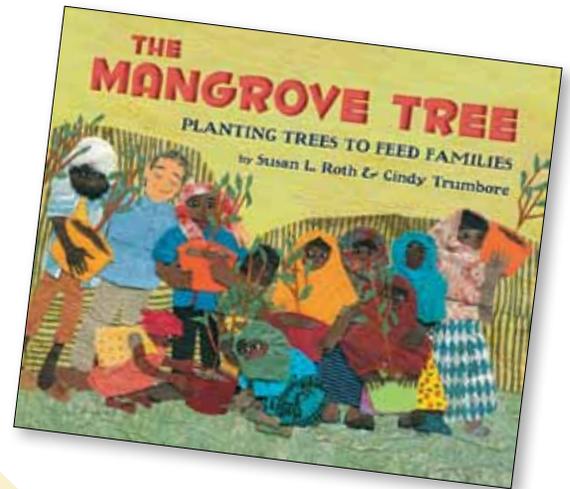
Feeding the World

In the 1940s, Dr. Gordon H. Sato was a hungry child living in the California desert in the Manzanar War Relocation Center—one of many internment sites where Japanese Americans were imprisoned on U.S. soil during World War II. There, he learned how to raise corn in the dry desert to help feed his family. Gordon survived, and earned a doctorate in cell biology.

As an adult, Dr. Sato often remembered the hunger he felt as a boy, and, in the 1980s, he traveled to help the small African country of Eritrea combat famine. Eritrea had been fighting for its independence from Ethiopia, and many years of conflict had resulted in widespread poverty and starvation throughout the war-torn country.

Dr. Sato had observed the use of mangrove tree leaves as food for animals, and he wondered if mango trees could be raised as food for Eritrea's goats and sheep. In turn, the goats and sheep would provide food for the people of Eritrea. Dr. Sato set to work in the Eritrean village of Hargigo, developing strategies that allowed mangrove trees to grow in sea water. The Hargigo community soon learned how to cultivate the trees, and the results were a great success. To date, more than one million trees have been planted in Hargigo.

The Manzanar Project, as the tree growing project came to be called, was named after Dr. Sato's childhood home. He intended the name to remind others that good can come from injustice. Dr. Sato has extended the project to northwestern Africa, with projects in Mauritania and in Morocco, and he envisions forests of mangrove trees in all the world's deserts.



Susan Roth and Cindy Trumbore tell the story of Dr. Sato's Manzanar Project in lyrical poetic text that mimics the pattern of the classic "The House that Jack Built." The story begins with, "These are the goats/ And these are the sheep/ That eat the leaves/ All plump and green . . ." Roth's texture-filled collages amplify the poetic verses and reflect the nonfiction text that provides factual information presented in a bordered panel.

The Mangrove Tree is told in three parts. The first part is the poetic text with its refrain, "A forest of trees/ Mangrove trees/ That were planted by the sea," celebrates the work of Dr. Sato and the men and women in Hargigo. (Fittingly, the final lines of the poem turns to the people who really make the project a success: "This is Gordon/ Whose greatest wish . . . To help all the women/ Who tend the seedlings —/ By planting trees,/Mangrove trees,/ By the Sea.")

The second part is the nonfiction narrative in the side panels, which explains each phase of the project. The third part of the story is the six-page afterword which uses photographs, captions, and informative paragraphs to explain the ongoing efforts to bring food to the world's people. Each of the book's sections help readers develop a clear picture of Dr. Sato's efforts to transform an impoverished village into a self-sufficient community.

Curriculum Connections

1. The sea provides water to nourish the mangrove trees, as well as fish to the people, who dry the fish and mix them with the mangrove leaves to feed the sheep and goats. The sheep and goats, in turn, provide food for the people of the village. Relate this chain to other food chains found in the natural world.
2. Locate the country of Eritrea on the eastern coast of Africa, and the other countries that are now included in the Manzanar Project. Research and learn about the status of the project now. The final double-page spread of the book contains glossary words, websites of interest, and resources used by the authors. The websites and resources listed will provide additional information about the Manzanar Project.
3. Compare the work of Dr. Gordon Sato with the work of Wangari Maathai and her project of planting trees in Kenya. Share these books:
 - a. *Seeds of Change* by Jen Cullerton Johnson
 - b. *Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story of Africa* by Jeanette Winter
 - c. *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* by Claire A. Nivola.
 - d. *Mama Miti: Wangari Maathai and the Trees of Kenya* by Donna Jo Napoli
 What problems did Sato and Maathai seek to solve in these books? What motivated them to solve these problems? What common struggles did Sato and Maathai share during their childhoods (his in the California desert and hers in Kenya)? Do you think there is any significance to the fact that both Sato and Maathai became renowned scientists?
4. Research and compare the mangrove tree (those planted by Dr. Sato) and the Kikuyu people's sacred mugumo tree. How are the trees similar? What nutrients are needed for each to grow? Locate the native region for each tree. List ten facts about each tree.
5. Brainstorm a list of actions that young scholars might take to contribute to the environment or to the fight against hunger. What activities can be done to solve an identified problem that relates to the environment or the plight of poverty and hunger? Creating a strategy for making a difference in one's own community is a first step toward becoming involved in a global community.
6. Seek a project that also extends the readers' interest to global concerns. Check the building projects for libraries at Ethiopia Reads (www.ethiopiareads.org), or those developed by Friends of African Village Libraries at www.favl.org.
7. Discuss how growing trees and building libraries help to "free" people from poverty and hunger. Are there any common elements in goals to plant trees and plant libraries in impoverished communities?
8. Inspired by her family's humanitarian work in various countries, fifteen-year-old Shannon McNamara founded SHARE—SHannon's After-school Reading Exchange, a Tanzania-based nonprofit organization that empowers girls in Africa through education. Read about her work at www.shareinafrica.org.
9. The authors of *The Mangrove Tree* used a technique for presenting their story that incorporated both poetic text and informational panels that provides additional details throughout the book. One of the first books that used this technique was *Snowflake Bentley* by Jacqueline Briggs Martin. Read Martin's book and compare the presentation. Ask readers to choose a person whom they admire who has accomplished something significant for the local or global community. Write a biographical sketch of the selected person using poetry, fictional narrative, informational text, photograph/scrapbook presentation, or any other design that one might choose. (Consider pairing students and their written selections about the same person as paired texts in a student-made book.)

People Who Make a Difference

Dr. Gordon Sato, Wangari Maatha, and Shannon McNamara are people who are making a difference in the world today. There are many others who do humanitarian work each and every day. Encourage students to investigate the efforts of individuals in the local community who help fight hunger and poverty. Can your students help? If so, how? Invite them to research ways to assist local efforts in these areas, and, if possible, organize an outing in which students can help make a difference.

In the Spotlight

Collages

Susan L Roth says that she does not paint; she cuts and tears. Using paper, cloth, and other materials, she cuts and shapes and glues to shape her illustrations. Sometimes the pieces of paper are very small bits.

1. Explore collages created by Roth for her books, and the collages of other illustrators such as David Wisniewski, Leo Lionni, Eric Carle, Lois Ehlert, and Ezra Jack Keats.
2. View the short video, “How I Make My Pictures,” on Eric Carle’s website at www.eric-carle.com/photogallery.html.
3. Explore Caldecott Award/Honor books that are illustrated with collage.
 - a. *Alexander and the Wind Up Mouse*
 - b. *Frederick*
 - c. *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*
 - d. *Golem*
 - e. *Smoky Night*
 - f. *Seven Blind Mice*
 - g. *Color Zoo*
 - h. *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*

According to the PicassoMio website (www.picassomio.com), collage is “a work of visual art made from an assemblage of different forms, thus

creating a new whole. Collage can include any material, such as newspaper clippings, ribbons, bits of colored or hand-made papers, photographs, and other material which are glued to a solid support or canvas.” Eric Carle uses many pieces of hand-colored tissue paper. Leo Lionni, one of the first illustrators to use collage, employed paper doilies, torn paper, and other objects. David Wisniewski’s illustrations were created with cut paper, and many of the objects were backed with blocks of foam in order to give the finished illustration a 3-D look. Lois Ehlert is inspired by all kinds of materials, including those found in nature, such as leaves and acorns. Ezra Jack Keats often used cloth and wallpaper. Use these artists and their illustrations as mentor texts and create collages from found material.



Sharron L. McElmeel is the director of McBookwords, a literacy organization, and an instructor of children’s and young adult literature at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Her latest book is *Picture That! From Mendel to Normandy: Picture Books and Ideas, Curriculum and Connections*—for ‘Tweens and Teens. (*Libraries Unlimited*, 2009). Visit her website at www.mcelmeel.com.

About the Author/Illustrator: Susan Roth

Susan L. Roth is a writer and an illustrator who has illustrated dozens of books with her mixed-media collages. Her work has been lauded for their intense and vibrant colors, their textures, and creativity. After first hearing about Dr. Gordon Sato’s work, Roth knew she wanted to illustrate a story about it for children. She approached her friend, editor and author Cindy Kane Trumbore, about co-authoring a book with her. Roth used wood cuts to illustrate her first two children’s books, but found that the media was too time-consuming. She needed a faster way to illustrate, and she found that media when she developed her technique for creating illustrations from cut and torn papers, bits of threads, fabrics, and other found objects.

Roth grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and has since lived on the East and the West Coasts. After her three children were grown, she and her husband moved to New York. They live in a home right on a river, where they can see the New York skyline. She writes and illustrates every day. Learn more about Susan L. Roth on her website, www.susanroth.com.

About the Author: Cindy Trumbore

Cindy Kane Trumbore is a writer and book editor. When she authors books for young readers, she uses her married name, Cindy Trumbore. She grew up in a family with two sisters. Her older sister, Julie Kane, became a published poet. Her other sister, Susan Kane, is the editorial director of *BabyTalk* and *Parenting* magazines. Cindy’s husband, Harry Trumbore, is an illustrator, and together they live in Chatham, New Jersey, with their two children. Learn more about Cindy Kane Trumbore on her website, www.cindykane.com.