**Educating Wanjiku**

As Nyambura lowered her pail into the sun-dappled stream from which she fetched her family’s water each morning, she heard a pure, high voice singing the old song about the maize flowers blooming all over Kenya. It was Wanjiku; the voice was unmistakable — and much missed in class now that her parents had pulled her out of school to help her mother at home after the birth of her latest brother. Nyambura didn’t quite understand why they had done that; her own mother had just as much work as Wanjiku’s. And it made her uncomfortable that she was still in school when Wanjiku wasn’t. She set her pail down and ran up the path to greet her former classmate; she didn’t want Wanjiku to feel that they weren’t close friends just because they no longer saw each other daily.

“We got a new goat to go with my new brother,” said Wanjiku as Nyambura took her hand.

“Which one is more troubling?” asked Nyambura, smiling.

“It’s hard to tell. The goat, I guess. Yesterday it ate the sleeve of my red blouse.” They laughed together and, at the stream’s edge, kicked off their sandals to cool their feet in the water.

“It’s my little sister who’s exciting,” said Wanjiku. “She’s beginning to talk. She still stumbles when she walks, but she chatters away. Just like me at her age, Mamma says.”

Nyambura wondered if Wanjiku’s baby sister would ever go to school. She tried to remember the proverb her mother had learned at the dressmaking centre where she had also learned to read a few years before. All the eight-year-old girl could recall, though, was that when she had asked if she should stay at home like Wanjiku to help with the younger children and the other household chores, her mother had pulled her ears gently and said, “Not you, honeypot. With that head of yours, you’re going to write the kind of books that taught me how to read.”

“And your father thinks the same,” his voice had boomed suddenly in the doorway, “so don’t go asking him such foolish things.” He had entered the house, smiling, and threatened to tickle her to death if she raised the question again. That had closed the matter — for her at least. The problem, thought Nyambura, as she looked at her friend’s rippled reflection in the water, was that Wanjiku’s head was just as good as hers — different, but just as good. One of the reasons she missed Wanjiku so much in class was that her friend’s answers to their teacher’s questions often set off new thoughts in her own head. Had each made the other’s head better?

And now Wanjiku was asking just the question Nyambura had been dreading: “What’s going on at school?”

“We’re learning division.” she replied. “It’s easy,” she added, remembering how good Wanjiku had been at math. “I could teach it to you if you like.” Suddenly she realized that she’d said something wrong.

“Of course it’s easy,” Wanjiku retorted. “Just the opposite of the times tables we were doing when I left. If five times two is ten, then two goes into ten five times.” She stood up and filled her pail. “You know,” she said, “I bet I can get my older brother to teach me everything he’s learned in school. I don’t really need to go myself.”

Nyambura wondered, but she said nothing. That brother wasn’t very interested in school — and he never seemed to have time for anyone but his friends. Then her mother’s proverb came back to her: “Educate a boy and you educate one person; educate a girl and you educate a nation.”

Citation:

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**EDUCATING WANJIKU**

**Part 1**

**All questions must be answered in complete sentences.**

1. How old is Wanjiku?
2. Why did Wanjiku’s parents take her out of school?
3. Why did Nyambura's mother decide to keep her in school?
4. What might the mother’s proverb mean? “Educate a boy and you educate one person; educate a girl and you educate a nation.”

Do you agree with the mother? Why or why not?

1. How might Nyambura’s future differ from Wanjiku’s as a result of her having gone to school?
2. What kinds of choices will Wanjiku have when she is older if she never returns to school?
3. Which girl might get married first? Why?
4. Which girl might have children first? Why?
5. List two possible results of societies denying girls education

**Part 2: Graph Interpretation**

1. On the graph below, which country has the highest female literacy rate?

2. Which country has the highest population growth rate?

3. What might be the relation or connection between the female literacy rate and the population growth rate?

