The perfect agricultural sisterhood

1 **Choose the sensible alternative among the words in italics in the passage.**

How can *two/three* humble plants be defined as the mythical "Three Sisters" of Native American cuisine? Actually, beans, maize and squash combined with the game hunted were a perfect diet and played such a large part in *many/few* myths and legends of the America Native tribes: since they were so magical when grown together, they were also eaten *together/separated* and, since they protected each other while growing, they would protect whoever ate them together.

Companion planting

Since the tribe's very survival depended on a reliable food supply, they developed a mixed cropping system called "companion planting", in *which/whose* maize, beans and squash were grown together in the same garden.

The combination of maize (a tall grass), beans (a nitrogen-fixing legume) and squash (a low-lying creeper plant) was a stroke of genius: in fact, even *today/yesterday*, intercropping is usually recommended as an alternative system for small-scale farmers to improve their yield, and thus food production and income in limited spaces. Intercropping is also insurance: if one of the crops fail, the others might not, no matter how extreme the *weather/whether* circumstances.

A farmer digs a hole in the ground and places one seed of each species into the hole. The maize grows first, providing a stalk for the beans, whose climbing vines need *tall/heavy* poles to grow upon.

Maize sucks the nitrogen out of the soil; beans, on the other hand, supply replacement mineral nitrogen back into the soil, which is ideal for the corn that needs nitrogen rich soil to produce a large crop: these are the effects of crop rotation without actually *having/avoiding* to rotate crops. So those two crops thrive together, much more than they would have, if planted apart.

But it was the *third/second* sister that really made the system so ingenious.

The squash plant grows low to the ground and performs best in shady, humid places, which is the type of microclimate provided by the corn and beans together. Further, it keeps the weeds from affecting the other two plants: with its large leaves it provides shade for the corn's very shallow roots, and *decreases/increases* the amount of erosion that plagues monocultural cropping of corn.

Nutritionally, the three sisters provide healthy foodstuff. Maize provides carbohydrates and some amino acids; beans provides the rest of *required/useless* amino acids, as well as dietary fiber, vitamins B2 and B6, zinc, iron, manganese, iodine, potassium, and phosphorus; and squash provides Vitamin A.



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2 Match the terms to the suitable definitions.

a.	Humble	**1.**	Person who shares the experiences of another.
b.	Perfect	**2.**	Of modest pretensions or dimensions.
c.	Reliable	**3.**	Having little depth.
d.	Companion	**4.**	Having all the required or desirable characteristics.
e.	Stroke of genius	**5.**	To afflict or cause trouble.
f.	Shady	**6.**	The part of something that remains.
g.	Shallow	**7.**	A very clever and innovative idea.
h.	To plague	**8.**	Sheltered from direct light from the sun.
i.	Rest	**9.**	Relating to or provided by diet.
j.	Dietary	**10.**	That can be trusted.



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