

The Legend of the Three Sisters

The Northeastern Woodland Indians used a planting technique called "The Three Sisters" to grow corn, pole beans and gourds, like squash or pumpkins. The plants worked together to help on another grow. This is called companion planting.

The Three Sisters was more than just a way of growing food. Woodland Indians believed corn, beans and squash were gifts protected by the Three Sister Spirits. Many different stories, or legends, were told about The Three Sisters. Here is a Cherokee version for you!

The Three Sisters

Once upon a time there were three sisters. The oldest sister was very strong with long, silky hair. She liked to stand tall in the field, but the hot sun burned her feet and she didn't have anything to eat standing by herself.

The second sister was very thin and fast, but she wasn't strong. She was good at making food, but she couldn't stand up on her own to share it! She would lie on the ground in the field and get dirty and wet.

The third sister was short and didn't leave the ground even though she was hungry.

Even though all the sisters were unhappy, they wouldn't help each other and work together. So one sister stood hungry with sunburned feet, one lay on the ground wet and dirty and the last was lonely and bored.

Finally, the middle sister asked her older sister, "If I make food for you, will you help me stand up?" The oldest sister said yes! Then the youngest sister asked her tall sister, "How about I lie at your feet so you don't get sunburned?" It was perfect!

The oldest sister helped the middle sister stand up, the middle sister fed her two sisters and the littlest sister shaded her oldest sister's feet from the sun. The Three Sisters worked together to make each other happy and healthy!

The Three Sisters represent corn, beans and squash. After reading the story, can you tell which sister represents which plant?

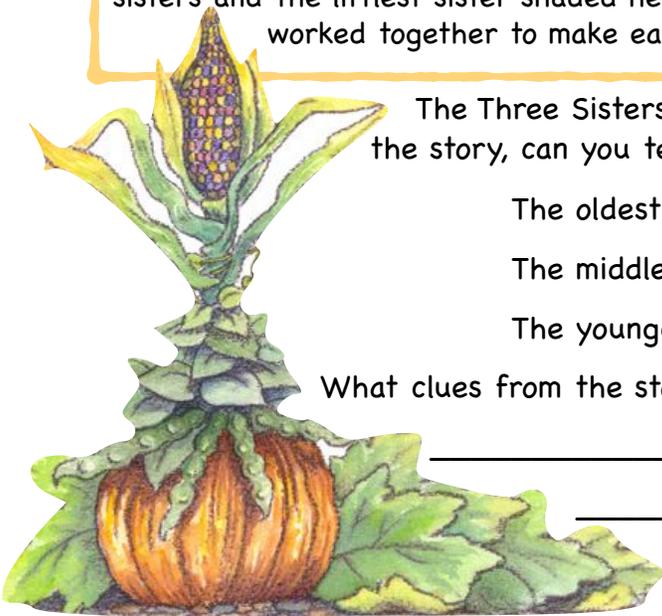
The oldest sister is _____.

The middle sister is _____.

The youngest sister is _____.

What clues from the story did you use to decide?

_____.



Bonus: You can make an American Indian Three Sisters succotash for a healthy and delicious treat!