

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Different Ways

By Christine Fournier  
2010

*In this informational text, Christine Fournier discusses how two farmers grow their crops. As you read, take notes on Tom's and Anne's farming practices.*

- [1] Two farmers, Tom and Anne, live only miles apart down a narrow blacktop road in central Illinois. Each year, they plant seeds in the same rich soil and face the same hot, sticky summers. Fifty years ago, these neighbors may have had a lot in common. Nowadays, Tom and Anne have different ideas about what to grow and how to grow it.



*"Tomato Garden" by Elaine Casap is licensed under CC0*

Tom grew up on his farm. When he was a kid, his dad farmed about 80 acres.<sup>1</sup> A big farm back then was 240 acres. Today, Tom uses tractors, sprayers, and combines<sup>2</sup> to do the work much faster. As a result, he is able to farm 700 acres of corn and soybeans. Tom's tractor is connected to a computer and a GPS system to help him plant seeds and distribute chemical fertilizers efficiently. Scientifically designed seeds, called hybrids, help Tom to win battles against weeds, pests, and drought. Special herbicides keep weeds away but allow the corn and soybeans to thrive. Thanks to these changes, Tom can produce almost three times more bushels<sup>3</sup> of grain per acre than his father did.

Ten years ago, Anne started up a small 15-acre farm. She believes in a different kind of farming and eating, called the Slow Food movement. Italian Carlo Petrini started the Slow Food movement to help people combat the "crazy speed of the fast life," eat good local food, and preserve the environment. Like Petrini, Anne wants to keep the soil rich for years to come. So, instead of chemical fertilizers, she mixes compost and dead fish into her soil. (Compost is fertilizer made of decayed<sup>4</sup> plant and animal materials.) Anne plows her fields with a tractor. Then, to save fuel, she pulls out the hand tools. She hires three or four helpers each season to plant seeds for hundreds of different vegetables, from broccoli to turnips and chard. Anne is not as concerned about the quantity of her food as she is about the quality of it.

In the fall, Tom sells his corn and soybeans to a grain dealer. Some of Tom's grain becomes animal feed, and some is used to make renewable<sup>5</sup> fuels like ethanol. A portion of Tom's grain is often shipped on a barge to countries around the world.

1. a unit measurement of land area
2. a machine that harvests grain crops
3. a measurement used for dry goods
4. **Decay (verb):** to rot
5. **Renewable (adjective):** capable of being used again

- [5] Unlike Tom, Anne keeps her products very close to home. She mainly sells her food at farmer's markets and to individual customers who visit her farm on a weekly basis. Anne's market may seem small, but it is growing. In the past ten years, the number of farmer's markets in Illinois has almost tripled.

Neither Tom nor Anne knows exactly what the future of farming will be. Tom's grandfather never would have dreamt that technology could advance as far as it has today. Anne hopes farmers will plan more for the well-being of future generations. Both hope that their farms will continue to succeed, providing people with some of their most important and basic needs.

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the central idea of the text?
  - A. Tom and Anne grow food differently based on their farming goals and beliefs.
  - B. Tom and Anne are both more interested in money than helping the environment.
  - C. Tom and Anne are both harming the environment in some way through their farming.
  - D. Tom and Anne help other farmers see that they have options when it comes to farming.
2. What is the meaning of “efficiently” in paragraph 2?
  - A. carelessly
  - B. productively
  - C. slowly
  - D. wastefully
3. How do paragraphs 4-5 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
  - A. They show that Tom’s produce is more successful than Anne’s.
  - B. They show how the quality of Tom’s and Anne’s produce compare.
  - C. They highlight that Tom’s and Anne’s products go to different places.
  - D. They stress how important Tom and Anne are to their local communities.
4. PART A: According to the text, how has farming changed over time?
  - A. Farmers are making more money than ever before.
  - B. New technology has been developed to help farmers.
  - C. New laws protect the environment from certain farming practices.
  - D. Farmers are growing their food in factories, rather than in the ground.
5. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. “Italian Carlo Petrini started the Slow Food movement to help people combat the ‘crazy speed of the fast life’” (Paragraph 3)
  - B. “In the fall, Tom sells his corn and soybeans to a grain dealer. Some of Tom’s grain becomes animal feed” (paragraph 4)
  - C. “Tom’s grandfather never would have dreamt that technology could advance as far as it has today.” (Paragraph 6)
  - D. “Both hope that their farms will continue to succeed, providing people with some of their most important and basic needs.” (Paragraph 6)
6. Which statement describes the connection between chemicals and farming?
  - A. They can help crops grow, but they make food taste bad.
  - B. They can help crops grow, but they harm the environment.
  - C. They make crops grow faster, but they are expensive to buy.
  - D. They make crops grow faster, but they result in smaller produce.

7. Which of the following describes how the author organizes the text?
- A. She compares Tom's and Anne's farm practices.
  - B. She compares Tom's and Anne's success as farmers.
  - C. She compares Tom and Anne to other types of farmers.
  - D. She compares the challenges Tom and Anne face as farmers.
8. What is the author's likely purpose in the text?
- A. to highlight the various ways to farm
  - B. to pressure farmers to change how they farm
  - C. to encourage farming for quality over quantity
  - D. to make predictions about the future of farming
9. How do paragraphs 2-3 demonstrate the different goals Tom and Anne have for their farms?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.**

1. Compare Tom's and Anne's farming methods. Which one provides more food? Which one is better for the environment? Do you think it's more important to provide food for the world, or protect our environment? Do you think it's possible to find a balance between the two farming methods described in the text? If so, describe how.
2. In the text, the author describes how Tom uses more farming technology than Anne. What do you think are the benefits of using farming technology, such as a tractor, to grow crops? What are the costs? Do you think the benefits outweigh the costs? Why or why not?