

Dear Anne from Nina by Claudia I. Haas

Characters: Jeannie (female) age 14  
 Nina (female) age 11  
 (They are both farm-girls in Danville, Iowa, 1940)

NINA

*Jeannie! Mama! Jeannie! Mama! I have a pen pal!*

JEANNIE

Quiet down! Mama's upstairs grading papers.

NINA

It is the most wonderful thing! Her name is Anne Frank and Miss Birdie says she is in the fifth grade – just like me. She lives in Amsterdam which is in Holland/

JEANNIE

/The Netherlands.

NINA

Right. And it has all those rivers running through it/

JEANNIE

/Canals. Help me set the table.

NINA

Right! Canals! I wonder if she ice skates like Hans Brinker and if she uses wooden skates like he did or if she uses the same kind we have but more old fashioned because maybe Amsterdam is more old fashioned/

JEANNIE

Nina! Breathe!

(NINA takes a deep breath.)

NINA

Do you think she's poor like Hans Brinker? I mean that would be all right – because we're poor/

JEANNIE

/We're not poor.

NINA

I'm going to write her tonight only I don't know what to say because I don't really know her. Maybe she'll think farm stuff is boring. I wouldn't want her to think I'm boring. I want us to become great friends and learn about her world/

JEANNIE

/Breathe!

(NINA breathes.)

NINA

Miss Birdie says having an international pen pal helps us to be citizens of the world! She thinks we need to know things outside of Iowa. And I agree – there has to be something more in life besides corn! And look – on my slip of paper it also has another name: Margot Frank. Age 14. Which means Anne has a sister your age. Which means you should/

JEANNIE

/Neeny! Come up for air/

NINA

/Write her. Maybe we can learn about things – like tulips! I think Holland/

JEANNIE

/The Netherlands/

NINA

/is famous for tulips. Do you think she likes to read? She must like to write or she wouldn't sign up to be a pen pal, right?

JEANNIE

Right.

NINA

What do you think?

JEANNIE

I think it is just peachy that you have a pen pal. Now, feed the chickens while I get dinner ready. Mama will want a nice, hot meal when she's done.

NINA

Should I tell Anne about the chickens?

JEANNIE

Absolutely. Everyone should know about our chickens.

You're making fun of me.

NINA

Just a little. GO!

JEANNIE