

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



## The *Nina Soni* Series

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### ABOUT THE BOOKS

In *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*, Nina tried as hard as she could, but still somehow she forgot about her school project. Fortunately, a class lesson about Alexander Fleming suggests how she might make a great discovery—and thus a great project! But with little sister Kavita’s birthday right around the corner and her longtime friendship with Jay on the rocks, Nina has a lot to keep track of.

In *Nina Soni, Sister Fixer*, a long rainy stretch during spring break has Nina restless and hungry for a new project and aggravated with little sister Kavita’s embarrassing behavior. A fresh pile of dirt just delivered to the neighbor’s house for a landscaping project ends up being too tempting to resist. Can Nina fix Kavita and create something amazing at the same time? With her sister’s help, Nina launches a grand engineering project—with unexpected consequences.

In *Nina Soni, Master of the Garden*, it’s Take Your Child to Work Day, and Nina, Kavita, and Jay are all going to work with Mom, a landscape architect, to learn how to start a garden. Naturally that’s not enough for Nina, who quickly develops big plans for a business selling the vegetables she plans to grow. But her plans don’t include managing the problems that inevitably arise, including rabbits, slugs, mosquitos, and more.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Nina is always making lists—both written lists and in-her-head lists—but she still forgets about important things like her school project. How do you keep track of all your important to-do list items?
2. Do you think Nina’s notebook, “Sakhi,” helps her stay organized or keeps her more distracted? Why?
3. Which character in the series do you most relate to and why?
4. Most of Nina’s family lives far away in India, and she doesn’t get to speak with them very often due to the time difference. Do any of your family members live in another state or another country? How do you stay in touch?
5. Although Nina can sometimes be forgetful, she is still very helpful. What are some ways Nina helps her mom the weekend before her Personal Narrative Project is due in *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*?
6. When you work on a project, do you finish it immediately like Jay, or do you wait longer for inspiration to strike like Nina? What are the pros and cons of each approach?
7. In *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*, Nina makes an exciting science discovery while helping her mom with dinner one night. What is the coolest discovery you’ve ever made?
8. Nina helps her mother make kachumber, one of Nina’s favorite recipes. What is your favorite family recipe and why? Do you like to cook with someone in your family? With whom in your family do you like to cook?
9. Nina says her life is “as delicious as a bowl of kachumber: crunchy, spicy, salty, and sour.” What food would you use to describe your own family and why?
10. Kachumber (*Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*) and aloo paratha (*Nina Soni, Sister Fixer*) are foods found in Indian cuisine. Have you ever had Indian cuisine? Have you ever had cuisine from another country or culture? What kind/type?
11. In *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*, Jay gets to spend every weekend with his cousins who just moved to Wisconsin from Texas and California, and he now seems to spend more time with his family than he

does with Nina. If you were in Nina's situation, how would you feel?

12. In *Nina Soni, Sister Fixer*, the rain during Nina Soni's spring break has Nina and her sister Kavita restless for a fun new project. What's your favorite rainy day activity?
13. Why do you think Nina's stomach begins to hurt in *Nina Soni, Sister Fixer* after her dam starts to fill with water?
14. Have you ever done something in front of your friends or classmates that made you feel embarrassed? How did you deal with it?
15. In *Nina Soni, Sister Fixer*, Nina plans a project to fix Kavita's "weirdness." But after writing down "Kavita's weirdness list" Nina realizes it's good to be weird because that's what makes people who they are. If you could make up your own "weirdness list," what you would include?
16. Do you have a little sibling with as much energy as Kavita?
17. Nina says her mom and dad need their tea before they can start their mornings. What gets you ready to start your day?
18. Have you ever participated in Take Your Child to Work Day? What sorts of jobs did you do? Was it fun? If not, what would you have liked to do instead?
19. In *Nina Soni, Master of the Garden*, Nina worries that her friendship with Jay has a "wrinkle" in it. Think of other examples from the *Nina Soni* series when Nina has worried about her friendship with Jay. Was she overreacting? Why or why not?
20. In *Nina Soni, Master of the Garden*, Nina says the air smells warm, rich, and earthy, and the clear sky is forget-me-not blue. Based on her description, what season is on its way?
21. Do you have a garden? If so, what are you growing? If not, what would you plant if you had a garden?
22. Nina's plans for her garden get derailed in *Nina Soni, Master of the Garden*. Can you think of examples from other *Nina Soni* books where Nina's plans go awry? What did she do to solve her problems?
23. Nina says Wisconsin is called "America's Dairyland." What's the nickname of the state where you live? Why is it called that?
24. The books in this series are told from Nina's point of view. How different do you think the stories would be if we read them from Jay's or Kavita's point of view?