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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*

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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.

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 the important things you need to do?
2. Do you think Nina’s notebook, “Sakhi,” helps her stay organized or keeps her more distracted? Why?
3. Which character do you most relate to and why?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. Nina makes an exciting science discovery while helping her mom with dinner one night. What is the coolest discovery you’ve ever made?
7. 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?
8. *Kachumber* is a chopped salad found in Indian cuisine. Have you ever had Indian cuisine? Have you ever had cuisine from another country or culture? What kind/type?
9. Nina says her life is “as delicious as a bowl of kachumber: crunchy, spicy, salty, and sour” (142). What food would you use to describe your own family and why?
10. Jay gets to spend every weekend with his cousins who just moved to Wisconsin from Texas, 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?
11. Throughout the story, Nina is worried that Jay is not her friend anymore. What are some reasons she thinks this? Is there anything that suggests she’s wrong in her thinking?
12. 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?
13. This story is told from Nina’s point of view. How different do you think the story would be if we read it from Jay’s point of view?



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