

Dear Anne Frank,

I struggle a lot with being Jewish. Every year around Christmas time, I feel like the only one who's not talking about Santa and Christmas trees. There are Santas around every corner saying "Merry Christmas," and through the windows of houses I can see big tall trees with glittering ornaments and happy presents just sitting there waiting to be opened. Every magazine I open says "Get your Christmas presents here." Even the job listings say things like "Have the chimney cleaned so Santa will have a clean landing!" I feel like I am surrounded by people who don't know what the word "Hanukkah" means. When I was younger, I felt jealous. Now that I am older, I realize that I just feel lonely.

I could always join the crowd. It's not that hard to pretend. All you do is, when kids talk about Christmas, smile and laugh and talk about what is on your wish list. I get really tempted to do this. But then I think about you. My grandfather gave me your book last year. At first I did not want to read it. I was tired of having to think about being Jewish. It was part of me that others did not really want to look at and see. My parents told me that *The Diary of a Young Girl* was a really important book so I doubtfully started to read it.

At first, your book seemed to be about normal teenage girl thoughts. Then it turned upside down. Your story – well, your life – got really gray and dark and scary. Jews weren't allowed to go to stores or movies. Soon you couldn't even go to school. Then you weren't allowed outside. Your diary changed, and it seemed as if it was written by a completely different person. I think that it *was* written by a completely different person – someone who was allowed only to be Jewish. I can hide from being Jewish. You couldn't. You were really proud of being Jewish. You would have rather died as a Jew than lived behind a mask. You gave up so much. It makes me want to carry on your name as a young Jewish girl.

I'm studying for my Bat Mitzvah, and whenever I study the Torah, I always think about you and how you never got to have one. On the day of my Bat Mitzvah I hope you will be there, standing right next to me, reciting and praying along with me.

Yours truly,

*Eliana Kahn*