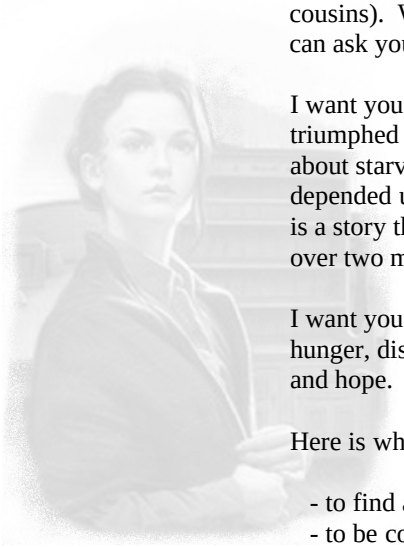
Cynthia G. Neale

Dear Students:

Do you have a special hiding place? I hope you do, and if not, maybe you will find one after reading my books, *The Irish Dresser* and *Hope in New York City*. Hiding places can be your own space that you designate as special and a place all your own to get away from the world. For my character/protagonist, Nora McCabe, it was in the cupboard of an Irish dresser. An Irish dresser looks like a china cabinet and this piece of furniture was in some Irish cottages in the 1800s. A hiding place can be a tree fort, a spot underneath a weeping willow tree or any tree that is leafed out in summer and autumn. It can be a large window seat with cushions that faces out into the lawn or the street. It can be a place in your bedroom, attic, or even a barn. My special hiding place was an old abandoned Ford car that sat out in a field. It had big cushiony seats and I spent my summers and autumns there reading, writing, and dreaming (and getting away from all my brothers and boy cousins). Whatever place you find, make sure it is safe (never a refrigerator or freezer). Perhaps you can ask your parents or guardians if it is a safe place and if it can be your own hiding place.



I want you to read *The Irish Dresser* and learn how a young girl and her family suffered and triumphed in Ireland in 1848. The Great Hunger in Ireland was about the potato famine that brought about starvation and death to over one million people from 1845 to 1850. It is about a people who depended upon potatoes for their livelihood and who were oppressed as a colony of Great Britain. It is a story that takes place during a real event in history, an event that changed Ireland and brought over two million people to North America.

I want you to read *Hope in New York City* and learn how this same immigrant family, weakened from hunger, disease, and oppression, comes to a strange country and suffers prejudice, hate, adventure, and hope.

Here is what I hope for you after you read my two books:

- to find a hiding place, but especially to make your heart a hiding place for peace
- to be compassionate and participate in helping the hungry and suffering in the world
- to have your own American dream and make your own American dream journal
- to learn of real struggles in history and gain strength for your own struggles

A little fairy dust and prayer for each of you…and who knows, maybe we'll meet someday!

Blessings,

Cynthia G. Neale
www.cynthianeale.com