

# Hans and Gretel Find a Friend

by Mary Mapes Dodge *from Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates*

*This is the story of a Dutch boy, Hans Brinker, and his family. The family is very poor. Hans and his sister, Gretel, are excellent ice skaters. They want to take part in a race to win silver skates, but their homemade wooden skates aren't good enough for them to win. In this passage, a wealthy young girl has given Hans some money. The children try to decide how to spend the money.*

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Hans shook his head. "The young lady would have given us the money to buy skates, but if I EARN it, Gretel, it shall be spent for wool. You must have a warm jacket."

"Oh!" cried Gretel in real dismay, "not buy the skates? Why, I am not often cold! Mother says the blood runs up and down in poor children's veins, humming, 'I must keep 'em warm! I must keep 'em warm.'

"Oh, Hans," she continued with something like a sob, "don't say you won't buy the skates. It makes me feel just like crying. Besides, I want to be cold. I mean, I'm real, awful warm—so now!"

Hans looked up hurriedly. He had a true Dutch horror for tears, or emotion of any kind, and most of all, he dreaded to see his sisters' blue eyes overflowing.

"Now, mind," cried Gretel, seeing her advantage, "I'll feel awful if you give up the skates. I don't want them. I'm not so stingy as that; but I want YOU to have them, and then when I get bigger, they'll do for me—oh—count the pieces, Hans. Did you ever see so many!"

Hans turned the money thoughtfully in his palm. Never in all his life had he longed so intensely for a pair of skates, for he had known of the race and had fairly ached for a chance to test his powers with the other children. He felt confident that with a good pair of steel runners he could readily outdistance most of the boys on the canal. Then, too, Gretel's argument was plausible. On the other hand, he knew that she, with her strong but lithe little frame, needed but a week's practice on good runners to make her a better skater than Rychie Korbes or even Katrinka Flack. As soon as this last thought flashed upon him, his resolve was made. If Gretel would not have the jacket, she should have the skates.

"No, Gretel," he answered at last, "I can wait. Someday I may have money enough saved to buy a fine pair. You shall have these."

Gretel's eyes sparkled, but in another instant she insisted, rather faintly, "The young lady gave the money to YOU, Hans. I'd be real bad to take it."

Hans shook his head resolutely as he trudged on, causing his sister to half skip and half walk in her effort to

keep beside him. By this time they had taken off their wooden “rockers” and were hastening home to tell their mother the good news.

“Oh! I know!” cried Gretel in a sprightly tone. “You can do this. You can get a pair a little too small for you, and too big for me, and we can take turns and use them. Won’t that be fine?” Gretel clapped her hands again.

Poor Hans! This was a strong temptation, but he pushed it away from him, brave-hearted fellow that he was.

“Nonsense, Gretel. You could never get on with a big pair. You stumbled about with these, like a blind chicken, before I curved off the ends. No, you must have a pair to fit exactly, and you must practice every chance you can get, until the twentieth comes. My little Gretel shall win the silver skates.”

Gretel could not help laughing with delight at the very idea.

**Questions**

1. Gretel tells Hans she doesn't need a jacket because she isn't \_\_\_\_\_ very often.
2. The homemade skates the children wore were made of \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. A young lady had given Hans \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Hans decides that \_\_\_\_\_ should have the new skates.

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**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. dreaded
2. plausible
3. lithe
4. resolutely
5. sprightly

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**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "he **dreaded** to see his sisters' blue eyes overflowing"

- a. feared; hated    b. looked forward to; liked    c. waited or paused    d. expected happily

2) "Gretel's argument was **plausible**"

- a. untrue; impossible    b. charmingly silly    c. long and confusing    d. believable or possible

3) "she, with her strong but **lithe** little frame"

- a. clumsy; awkward    b. slender and willowy    c. young and immature    d. plump or pudgy

4) "Hans shook his head **resolutely** as he trudged on"

- a. sadly; sorrowfully    b. purposefully; firmly    c. angrily or furiously    d. in circles; roundly

5) "'Oh! I know!" cried Gretel in a **sprightly** tone"

- a. loudly or noisily    b. quietly; silently    c. energetically; brightly    d. sweetly or gently