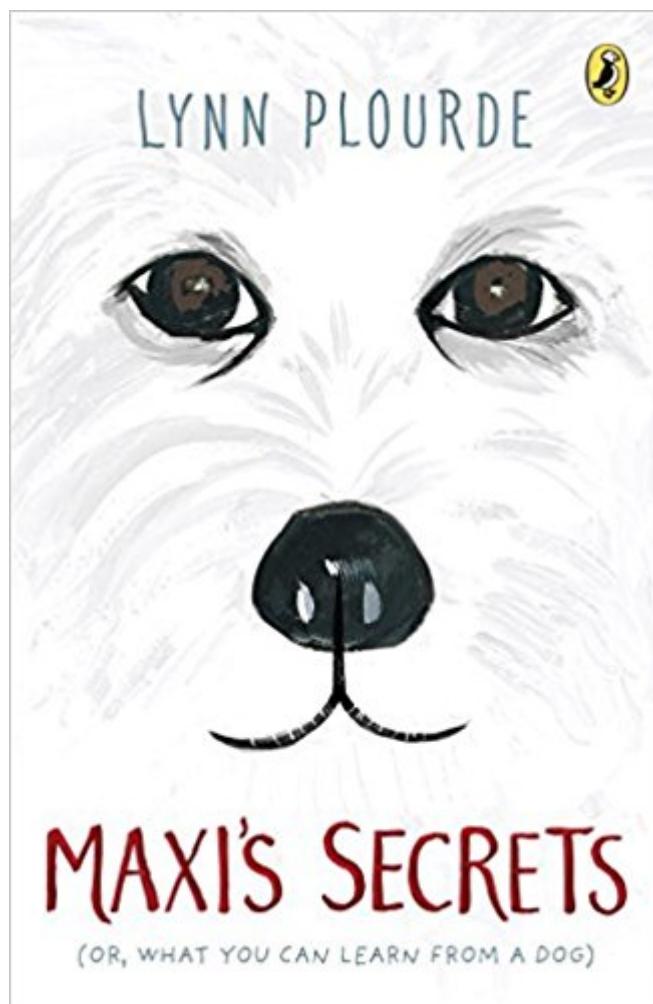


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# Maxi's Secrets: (Or, What You Can Learn From A Dog)



## Synopsis

When a BIG, lovable, does-it-her-way dog wiggles her way into the heart of a loudmouth pipsqueak of a boy, wonderful things happen that help him become a bigger, better person. Perfect for fans of Wonder and Because of Winn-Dixie. Timminy knows that moving to a new town just in time to start middle school when you are perfect bully bait is less than ideal. But he gets a great consolation prize in Maxi—a gentle giant of a dog who the family quickly discovers is deaf. Timminy is determined to do all he can to help Maxi—after all, his parents didn't return him because he was a runt. But when the going gets rough for Timminy, who spends a little too much time getting shoved into lockers at school, Maxi ends up being the one to help him—along with their neighbor, Abby, who doesn't let her blindness define her and bristles at Timminy's “poor-me” attitude. It turns out there's more to everyone than what's on the surface, whether it comes to Abby, Maxi, or even Timminy himself.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0650 (What's this?)

Paperback: 272 pages

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Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.7 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,114 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Special Needs #40 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Dogs #163 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6—Extra short fifth grader Timminy doesn't beat around the bush when he notifies readers upfront that the canine heroine of the story will meet a similar fate as beloved dogs

like Old Yeller and Sounder. Maxi, a Great Pyrenees puppy, is the bribe Timminy's parents dangled when they moved the family from Portland, ME, to middle of nowhere, Skenago. Timminy is terrified of starting middle school, fearing he will be the target of bullies, and having his dad as the vice principal surely can't help matters any. Timminy's fears are validated, as he soon faces relentless bullying and is frequently trapped in the lockers. He looks forward each day to returning home to Maxi, who the family soon discovers is deaf. Timminy's neighbor, fellow middle schooler Abby, is blind, and the two quickly form a friendship. Timminy is amazed that Abby doesn't let her blindness slow her down, and he eventually develops a shift in his own thinking about his shortcomings. Each chapter ends with one of Maxi's "secrets," such as "A new friend is like a present— you're not sure what's inside, but you can't wait to find out." The secrets are little gems, providing food for thought. Timminy's ability to make fun of himself backfires when he and Abby have a misunderstanding, which leads to a falling-out. When Abby gets lost in the woods during a horrible snowstorm, it's up to the small boy and his dog to find her. The characters are fully developed, and the delicate subjects of bullying and disabilities are dealt with deftly and with humor. The story would make a great read-aloud, as Plourde has created humorous and believable characters that readers will be cheering for. Knowing Maxi's fate from the outset makes for a heartbreak, yet satisfying, ending. VERDICT A novel that will have wide appeal to dog lovers and those looking for a feel-good tale of overcoming adversity. — Michele Shaw, Quail Run Elementary School, San Ramon, CA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"The secrets are little gems, providing food for thought . . . The characters are fully developed, and the delicate subjects of bullying and disabilities are dealt with deftly and with humor. The story would make a great read-aloud, as Plourde has created humorous and believable characters that readers will be cheering for . . . Will have wide appeal to dog lovers and those looking for a feel-good tale of overcoming adversity. — School Library Journal

Plourde's skillful blend of humor, pathos, and wisdom creates a story that begs to be shared with middle-grade students, who will fall in love with a deaf dog, her steadfast owner, and the rest of the characters who populate the novel . . . A story of love and friendship that deserves to join the ranks of other unforgettable canines and their owners. — Booklist

Timminy is a funny, personable narrator . . . A hopeful, satisfying conclusion. Bullying and disabilities are handled honestly . . . Perfect for reading aloud, any middle-level or younger student, especially dog lovers, will adore this humorous, heartwarming story of overcoming adversity. — Voice of Youth

Advocates—“Timmie”’s coping strategies could help readers dealing with the loss of a pet . . . This earnest boy-and-his-dog tale makes a strong case for Secret No. 11:

“There’s nothing so bad in the world that dog kisses won’t make it better.” Kirkus Reviews “Plourde clearly shows Maxi’s remarkable influence on the lives of Timminy, his family, and his friends. This story is a tender reminder that perceived shortcomings don’t define us and that the power of friendship can’t be underestimated.” Publishers Weekly

Lynn Plourde has honored dogs—and the people who love them—in her new novel, *Maxi*’s Secrets (or, What You Can Learn from a Dog). I began tearing up on page 1, but the tears didn’t actually fall until page 2!

That’s because we’re asked to accept a hard truth right up front: “Having Maxi in my life will always be a bigger deal than losing Maxi. Her tail still thump-thump-thumps in my heart.” This wonderful novel packed with wisdom in the form of “secrets” features a diverse cast of lovable characters trying to make their way through middle school while facing various issues, such as being new and different, having disabilities, and being bullied, not to mention the dreaded LOCKERS! (I still remember worrying about being able to open my locker in middle school! Opening her locker was also my daughter’s #1 worry!) Maxi’s boy, Timminy explains, “Classes are the safe part of school. I hate the in-between parts—before school, break time, passing between classes, lunch. All potential land mines that can blow up any second.” (Secret #12: The combination to unlock middle school survival is one big mystery.) But soon Maxi, a Great Pyrenees with a disability of her own, teaches them that life is best lived together.

(Secret #45: The bad stuff, like the good stuff, needs to be shared.) Despite being deaf, Maxi listens to everyone she loves . . . with her heart! (Secret #8: It’s possible to hear someone even if your ears don’t work.) The corollary? It’s also possible NOT to hear someone even if your ears work fine. Part of loving is listening. And Maxi loves EVERYONE. Without expectation. (Secret #29: When you expect nothing . . . everything is a treat.) So true! It’s when we place expectation on others—instead of ourselves—that we’re headed for disappointment. Thankfully, dogs like Maxi teach us to forgive easily and quickly. And completely. I

agree wholeheartedly with Plourde: The love, wisdom, and joy a dog imparts is greater than the pain of outliving them. ThereÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  „s a dog whose tail still thump-thump-thumps in my heart, too. And I believeÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  „ hopeÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  „ I honored her by adopting another dog. For me, knowing loss and choosing love anyway is greater love in action. As Plourde writes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  “The only thing that matters is LOVE.ÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  „I LOVED THIS BOOK!P.S. The acknowledgements are as thoughtfully and beautifully written as the book itself. I loved reading about PlourdeÃƒÂ¢Ã  ¬Ã  „s inspiration for Maxi: her dog, Maggie. Like Maggie, my special dog is still here with me at my desk, too.

Maxi's story is one I know readers are going to love so much. I loved the friendship between Timminy and Abby, as well as the unlikely friendship found with Rory. All three of those characters are so multidimensional, giving readers a lot to think about as they navigate their own friendships during the difficult middle grade years. I appreciated a story that includes supportive parents in a strong family unit. That's not something that's easy to do in a middle grade novel but this story found a perfect balance of depicting children handling problems on their own with parent support sprinkled in. And then of course there's Maxi. I'm really not an animal person. I don't always get the bound. But Maxi tugged at my heart from the very beginning, and I loved the way she brought so much joy to the story...and of course her secrets. You really CAN learn a lot from a dog!

Maxi's Secrets is about how dogs can teach us life lessons through their companionship and simply being there for us. Maxi is a deaf dog who's boy, Timminy, is small for his age. The book focuses more on Timminy's journey into finding friends, getting acclimated to a new school and environment, dealing with bigger kids, and his father being the new Principal. Lynn Plourde does a beautiful job of capturing the love of pets and the silent strength and comfort they provide. I loved this book!

My 8 year old did not enjoy this book. She thought it was long and not fun. She is an advanced reader so this wasn't above her reading level but maybe just not her interest.

Great read!

My Daughter an I read this to each other, we laughed and cried. Very well written to hold anyone's attention.

Very cute story that pleased my 11 year old : >

Great family story!

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