

MAXI'S SECRETS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Read the opening of *Maxi's Secrets*: “Let’s get this part over with—it’s no secret. My dog, Maxi, dies.” What do you think of the beginning? Does it work? Why or why not? Was it better to be warned at the beginning that Maxi dies or not? Do you think author Lynn Plourde should have just let Maxi live? Why or why not?
- 2** Do you think the cover of *Maxi's Secrets* is a good match for the story? What does the cover tell you about the story? Look at the end papers of the hardcover version of *Maxi's Secrets*. What do they mean?
- 3** Who’s your favorite character in *Maxi's Secrets*? Why? Your least favorite character? Why? Which character in the book are you most like? In what ways? Least like?
- 4** *Maxi's Secrets* is a book about fitting in. Timminy didn’t think that he fit in since he was so short plus the new kid at the school plus a city kid. What other characters in the book had one or more reasons why they might not “fit in”? Make a chart showing all the characters and their differences—why they didn’t fit in (i.e. short, big, deaf).
- 5** Have you ever felt as though you didn’t “fit in” somewhere? Why/for what reason? How did you deal with not fitting in? Could you have dealt with it in a different way? What advice/help would you give to someone who doesn’t think they belong or fit in?

- 6 What's your favorite secret in *Maxi's Secrets*? Why? How does that secret apply to *you*? Which secret in the book DON'T you believe, don't think is true? Why not?
- 7 Timminy in the book just wants to grow—taller, size-wise. He does *not* get bigger by the end of the book, but does he grow in any other ways? Be specific.
- 8 Have you ever had a pet or a person you loved die? How did you deal with that death? How did Timminy deal with Maxi's death? Did you learn anything from Timminy's experience of losing Maxi? What advice would you give someone who loses a pet or a loved one?
- 9 Was Rory a bully? Why or why not? Did your opinion about him change as the story unfolded? Answer the same questions about Kevin. Do you think being a bully is a clear-cut line—either you are or you aren't? Is it ever okay to bully someone? Can someone who bullies change?
- 10 In *Maxi's Secrets*, author Lynn Plourde wrote fictionalized versions of *real* things that happened to her real dog Maggie. Her Maggie really got into a porcupine and rolled in wild turkey poop. Do you have any connections to *Maxi's Secrets*? Are any parts of the book things that *really* happened to you (i.e. have a friend who is blind, got caught in a big snowstorm, trained a puppy)?
- 11 What do you think is the climax (the most intense, exciting, important point) of the book? Why?
- 12 What's a secret to life you've learned from a pet? How did the pet teach you that lesson/secret?
- 13 If you were to write a sequel to *Maxi's Secrets*, what do you think the sequel should be about?

***MAXI'S SECRETS* ACTIVITIES**

- Just as in *Maxi's Secrets*, what's one thing you have learned from a pet? Write a paragraph or short story about that lesson or secret you learned.
- Try some **BLIND TALK**. Abby could “see” or understand things she couldn't actually see (since she was blind) when they were described to her with words that focused on her other senses—hearing, taste, touch, smell. Remember when Maxi was hiding and peeking out from some green plants, Timminy said, “Maxi is hiding like a marshmallow in a big bowl of broccoli.” How would you describe a rainbow or a full moon or a porcupine or sunset to someone who is blind? Pull an object or a photo or piece of art and describe it with “blind talk.” Have someone close their eyes and guess what you are describing based on your “blind talk.”
- Search online for the sign language alphabet, print it out, and practice the letters. Then fingerspell your name to a partner and vice versa. Odds are everyone will cross paths with someone who is deaf so knowing the sign language alphabet will let you communicate with someone who is deaf. You can also learn several new signs every week—many are natural signs like “butterfly” in which the hands cross in front of the body and thumbs are hooked while the fingers move like wings or the sign for “bed” is one or two hands held up to the side of the head like a pillow.
- A part of *Maxi's Secrets* that was deleted during revisions was the meaning of names. Timminy got his name by combining his two great-great grandfathers' names Timotheus and Minyamin (pages 9-10). (Author Lynn Plourde started with the nickname Minny for her main character, then worked backwards to find a name that could have Minny for a nickname.) Timminy's dad loved researching the meanings of names. The name Abby means “joy”—is that a good match for her? Search to find out

what the names “Maxi,” Rory,” and “Darshan” mean (Note: Name websites tell the meanings & origins of names). Then search the meaning of your name and those of family and friends. Are the meanings good matches or not?

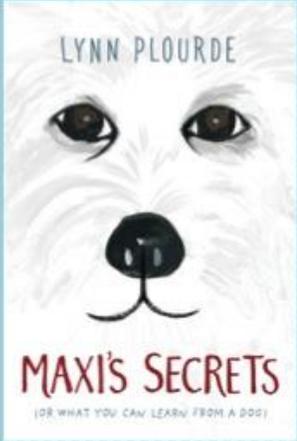
- After reading *Maxi's Secrets*, create a book trailer for the book OR view this [book trailer](#) and tell if you think it's a good match for the book. Why or why not?
- Have a first-hand, real-life experience based on *Maxi's Secrets*. Some schools have had Great Pyrenees or guide dogs visit the classroom, have had people who are deaf or blind visit the classroom, have collected and donated supplies for a local animal shelter, have had a *Maxi's Secrets* food party (i.e. SpaghettiOs, fudge, pizza, dog-shaped cookies).
- If your class or someone in your family has a Twitter account, tweet a photo of your favorite pet with the hashtag #MaxiandFriends
- Check out these reading suggestions and add more suggestions from others to the list. If you like dog books, check out the *Fenway and Hattie* series by Victoria Coe, *Wish* by Barbara O'Connor, *A Handful of Stars* by Cynthia Lord, *Marley, A Dog Like No Other* by John Grogan, *When Friendship Followed Me Home* by Paul Griffin. If you like books about kids with special challenges or needs, check out *Wonder* by RJ Palacio, *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper, *The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, *El Deafo* by Cece Bell, *A Whole New Ballgame* by Phil Bildner, *A Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt, *Finding Perfect* by Elly Swartz.

BOOK MATH

See the image below for Book Math for *Maxi's Secrets*. Can you figure out each part of the book math? For example, who is the shorter-than-short sassy boy? Answer: Timminy Figure out the other parts of the book math for this book. Then create “book math” for another book you have read, put it on an index card, and place the card inside the book for the next reader to see (it’s almost like a “math book report”).

BOOK MATH

1 shorter-than-short sassy boy
+
1 deaf Great Pyrenees puppy
+
1 blind, needs-a-guide-dog neighbor
+
1 Beast of the East (& it's not the puppy) =
+
4 school locker entombments
+
1 lost-in-a-snowstorm survival scene
+
51 secrets



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MAXI'S SECRETS WORD SEARCH

S T E R C E S M U J S I K B F
G P Y R E N E E S O T J E A N
Q U K E O U N T I R M R V E H
O E I G C B N T O T C I I R G
R L A D X U T H T J S P N T K
A S K U E E S Y I Q X P M N N
I G V F H D B Y M Y S S A K Y
M X B G R B O S M Z V I Z A R
Q I A J A E K G I T K N X Q O
I P R K O E K A N G D E A F R
S L C A N I T C Y B L I N D R
V I E A C P X K O B G X E D C
V O G O D Y N A X L P V K B T
V O U X I B E O M H O P Q F L
Y M O B K K A D B N B G B T V

ABBY

BAER

BLIND

DEAF

DEVON

FUDGE

GUIDEDOG

KASSY

KEVIN

LOCKER

MAXI

MINNY

MIRA

PYRENEES

RORY

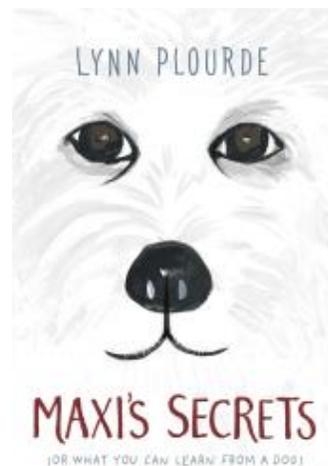
SECRETS

SHORT

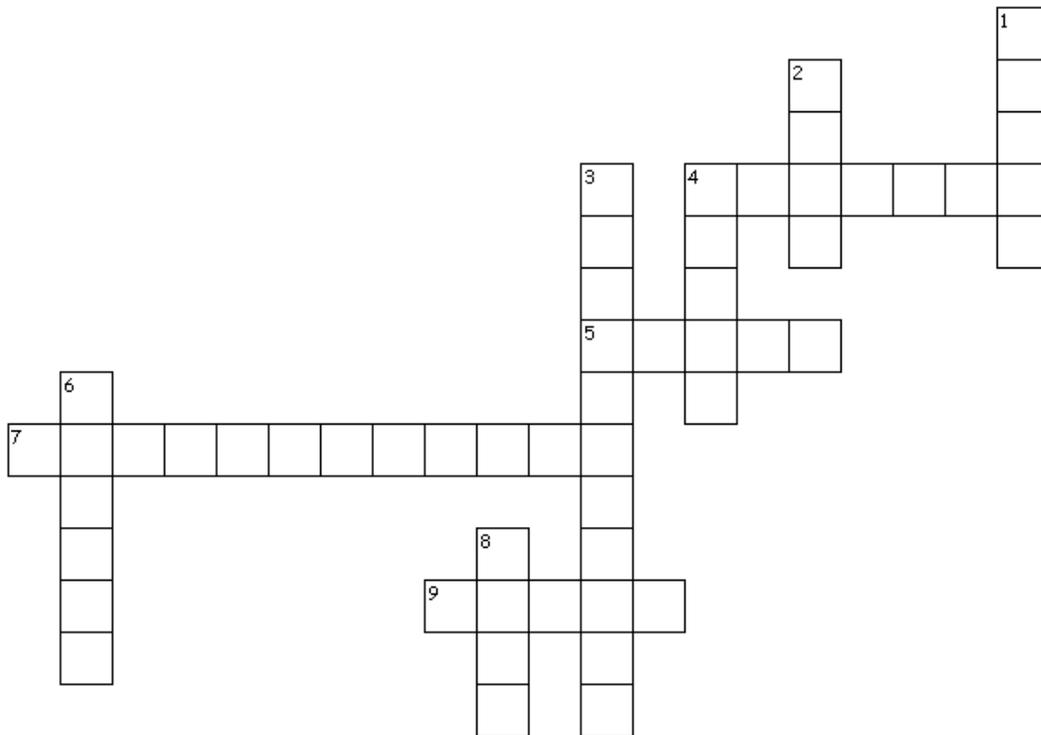
SKENAGO

SPAGHETTIOS

TIMMINY



MAXI'S SECRETS CROSSWORD

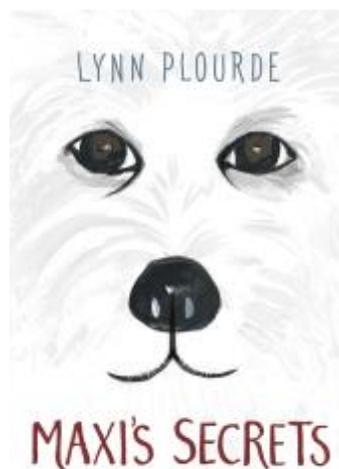


Across

- 4. Abby's canine
- 5. Timminy's challenge
- 7. fudge flavor
- 9. Locker bandit

Down

- 1. Abby's challenge
- 2. Abby's hope
- 3. cheese flavor
- 4. bowled over
- 6. porcupine weapon
- 8. Maxi's challenge



DON'T PEEK!—MAXI'S SECRETS CROSSWORD ANSWERS

(in reverse order)

deaf: Maxi's challenge
quills: porcupine weapon
Devon: bowled over
horseradish: cheese flavor
MIRA: Abby's hope
blind: Abby's challenge

Kevin: Locker bandit
Butterfinger: fudge flavor
short: Timminy's challenge
Darshan: Abby's canine