“Reading should not be presented to children as a chore, a duty. It should be offered as a gift.”
-Kate DiCamillo

Thank you, Blueberry families! Through your generosity, the PTO was able to fund one copy of our “ONE BOOK, ONE SCHOOL” summer reading selection for every family!

After pouring through countless number of books I kept returning to...

Maxi’s Secrets (Or, What You Can Learn From A Dog) by Lynn Plourde

About

Set in small-town Maine, Maxi’s Secrets is a heartfelt story about a large, lovable dog who changes the life of a loudmouth, little boy while divulging just how many secrets the animals we love can reveal to us about being human.

The story is about an often bullied boy named Timminy who moves to a new town just in time to begin middle school. After the move, his family adopts Maxi, a gentle giant who the family quickly discovers is deaf.

Timminy is determined to help Maxi get through life and be her rock, yet when the going gets rough, Maxi ends up being the one there to be strong and help Timminy – along with their neighbor Abby, who never lets her blindness define her.

Maxi’s Secrets is a wonderful story that teaches us that there’s more to everyone than what’s on the surface – whether it’s Abby, Maxi, or Timminy himself. And while the book was written for middle-grade aged children, it’s certainly one that folks of all ages will truly enjoy.

Praise from School Library Journal- (at the end of every chapter there is a “secret” – very much like Mr. Browne’s precepts in the book Wonder)

“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.”
Finding the perfect book that is suitable and will appeal to all of our students, Kindergarten through fifth grade, is nearly impossible. We realize our selection of Maxi’s Secrets by Lynn Plourde may be a stretch for many of our readers; not only because of vocabulary but also topics and themes that may provoke questions. Our intent in choosing this book is that it is read aloud as a family. As the adult, take poetic license and change words to fit the tempo of your household.

Please join Ms. Bostian and me on Tuesday July 17 at 9:30am at Bliss Park to discuss chapters 1-5 and read chapter 6 together!

When we return to school we hope to connect with Lynn Plourde. A visit may not fit our budget, but hopefully we can skype or communicate with her on some level. Additionally, we would like to continue the conversation about disabilities with our BHS community.

I hope you enjoy this Summer’s selection. Best wishes for a safe and happy Summer!
- Moira Joyce, Library/Media Specialist

Below please find some discussion questions and activities to go with 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?


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?
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.

From www.lynnplourde.com
MAXI'S SECRETS WORD SEARCH


ABBY
BERS
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

From www.lynnplourde.com
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

From www.lynnplourde.com