

Timmy Turtle's First Adventure *By Linda Cunningham*

Growing up is hard to do ... even for a turtle

If you rooted for the tortoise in *The Tortoise and the Hare*, you'll root for Timmy Turtle in Linda Cunningham's *Timmy Turtle's First Adventure*. After a fun day swimming with his best friend Groggy Froggy, Timmy Turtle gets caught in a vicious thunderstorm. What's a turtle to do? Hide in the one place he hates – his shell.

"The whole idea behind this book is to help children accept the fact that they're valuable in their own uniqueness," said author Linda Cunningham. "Up until this time, Timmy felt that his shell made him very different from all of his other animal friends, and the shell slowed him down. But during the storm, he realizes that pulling into his shell protects him."

Timmy hurries home to tell his mom about the storm.

"So Timmy, your shell protected you, didn't it? Do you think that could be one reason God gave you that shell on your back?" asked Timmy's mother.

Timmy smiled at his mom and, being one tired turtle, headed for his room.

Later, when he was tucked safely in bed he thought about what his mom had said. Maybe his shell was good for something. His friends might be fast but none of them carried their own hard, protective shell on their backs.

The book's message is one of purpose and appreciation. It is geared toward young children, ages 3 to 9, but Linda said teenagers enjoy it, too. "I've had teenagers tell me they absolutely loved

it. They could identify with the fact that they felt different one way or another, but they recognized Timmy found a way to successfully deal with his differences."

Profile photos



Linda Cunningham has geared her first children's book to readers age 3 to 9 years old.

Linda's own children, Brandon and Brett, were 7 and 8 years old when she told them about a brave little turtle named Timmy. Brandon had a learning disability, and would ultimately inspire Linda to write the story. His untimely death at the tender age of 12 taught Linda to appreciate each day as it comes, no matter if a thunderstorm is brewing.

"That was a real difficult thing in my life," said Linda, "but in the years that he was here, it helped me appreciate the fact that people who are different are sometimes not valued by the people around them, but there is a greater value to them that we don't always see."

When *Plano Profile* pulled Linda out of her "shell" and asked, "What is one trait that others don't see in you?" she paused, and said very humbly, "I would have to say that I have perseverance that I think people may not recognize. They have no idea some of the things I've encountered in my life, but I think I'm a pretty positive person."

Certainly, her optimism is reflected in *Timmy Turtle's First Adventure*; the book's pictures have as much punch as its positive message. Colors abound and bleed off the pages leaving a lasting impression. Linda credits her son, and illustrator, Brett Dobbs.

"He said he'd love to do it!" said Linda with excitement, as if she just heard the news. "As a child and as a young adult, Brett spent many hours drawing and was really talented. But when he began working and raising a family, his talent kind of fell by the wayside.

This was an opportunity for him to pull that out, dust it off, and start using it again."

Brett used a thick black marker to outline the illustrations done in colored pencil. "We softened the animals' features to make them look more childlike," said Linda. After all, this is just Timmy Turtle's *first* adventure; he has some growing up to do. ...



Signing books at Barnes & Noble.

Linda's favorite book growing up was *The Christmas Tree*. She displays the pocket-size treasure every Christmas on her mantel. "It's a little tiny book about a Christmas tree that's waiting his turn to be cut down," said Linda. "When I open that book today, I remember exactly how I felt when my mother read it to me. It would just fill me with wonder about Christmas. It was as though when she opened up that little book, I could actually smell Christmas trees," her voice crescendoed with excitement.

Linda grew up in a small town in east Texas called Mineola, just north of Tyler. She received her bachelor's degree in human resources with a minor in psychology from the University of Texas at Dallas, and she is currently the Ethics and Compliance Manager in Human Resources at Medical Center of Plano. "My job entails a great deal of classroom training because the hospital is required to train its employees on code of conduct annually," said Linda. "I am involved in employee relations, investigations, and ethics and compliance training."

The author said she's always loved books and that her goal in writing is "to encourage children," including her twelve "energetic" grandchildren: Courtney, Christina, Brandon, Gabby, Olivia, Joshua, Joel, Samuel, Clarissa, Dominic, Zachary, and Nathaniel.

Timmy Turtle's First Adventure is the first book in a series. "I have three others that are already written, and a fourth that is in the creative stage, but I have no idea when I will publish the others," said Linda. "I'm waiting to see how well Timmy does with his first adventure!"

We're all rootin' for him.

Timmy Turtle's First Adventure is available at Barnes and Noble at Park and Preston in Plano and at www.amazon.com.

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