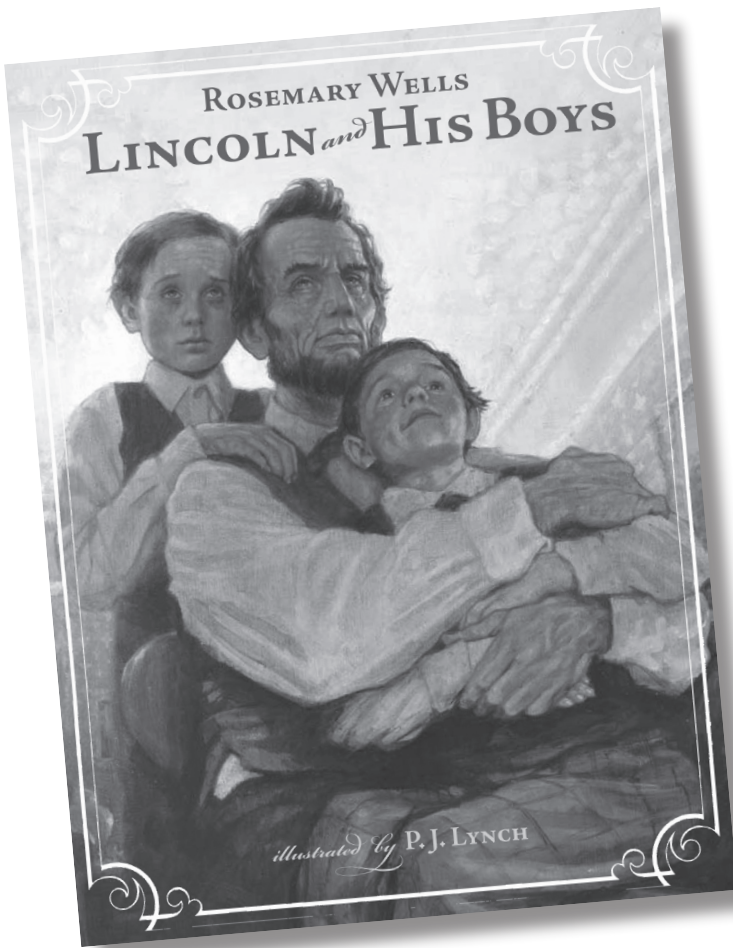


# ❖ CANDLEWICK PRESS TEACHERS' GUIDE ❖



## *Lincoln and His Boys*

BY ROSEMARY WELLS

ILLUSTRATED BY P.J. LYNCH

ISBN 978-0-7636-3723-1



### *About the Book*

With the country on the verge of collapse, a newly elected president comes to Washington, D.C., with his young family. Willie and Tad Lincoln have much to learn about their father's new burdens, but they know all about his playful side — and how to draw out his gentle, patient nature, even in the darkest moments. Told from a child's-eye perspective and illustrated with luminous oils, this is an intimate portrait of an exceptional family living through extraordinary times.



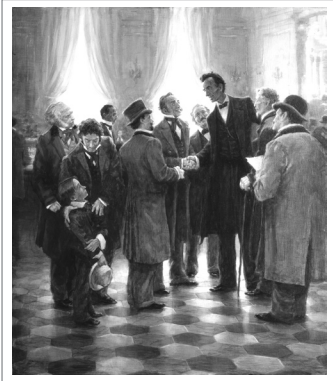
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## Questions to Discuss

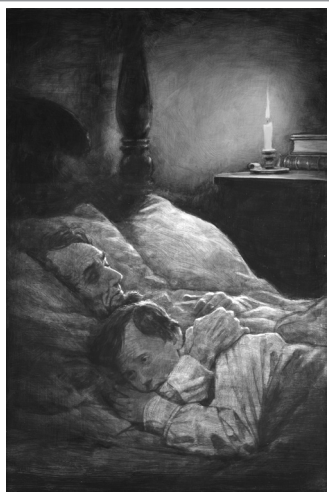


*"President of the whole United States?"  
I say. I don't think I heard him right.*

1. What would it be like to be a child of the president of the United States? What would be its best aspects? What would be its worst? If your parent wanted to be president, would you encourage her or him?
2. Pay close attention to the ways artist P.J. Lynch portrays Abraham Lincoln. How are his family relationships depicted? How is his height emphasized? How does his appearance change over the course of the book?
3. "It's a derby race," Lincoln says about his presidential campaign, "and I've got a plow horse's chance" (page 19). What does he mean? Do you think he's being sincere? Would you run for president if you thought you had a slim chance of winning?
4. Who or what is the "angel of darkness" (page 29) that Mrs. Lincoln fears? How do her worries affect the way she lives? How do they affect her sons?
5. Lincoln calls himself a "prairie tick" (pages 27 and 28) with almost no formal schooling. Where did he get his education?
6. "Pa's going to be swallowed up by the war because it's coming soon," Robert Lincoln tells his younger brother Willie (pages 46–47). Is Robert right? Is President Lincoln "swallowed up" by the Civil War?
7. How does coming to the President's House change the Lincoln family? How does the Lincoln family change the President's House?
8. What is Tad Lincoln's physical disability? How does it affect the way he is treated by people outside the family? Why does he feel more confident in his soldier's uniform?
9. Why is Lincoln so embarrassed when the newly freed slaves of Richmond call him Father Abraham? "I have freed no one," he insists (page 88). Why?
10. Celebrating their victory, the U.S. army band keeps playing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" until Lincoln asks for "Dixie." What is the significance of each song? What message does Lincoln want to send to the country?



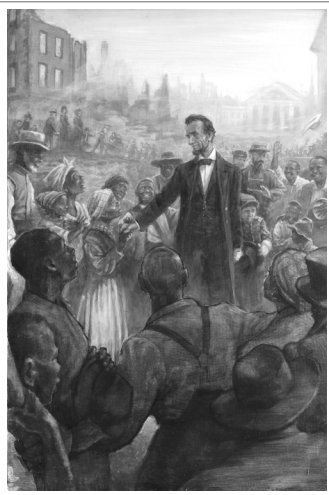
*"Truth is the very hardest thing on  
earth to see clear."*



*He goes away in his sleep. To the land of worry, I think, where I can not follow.*

## *Classroom Activities*

1. What advice might President Lincoln's sons have for President Obama's daughters? Ask your students to imagine that Tad Lincoln left a note for future White House children. Invite them to write and illustrate such a message.
2. Have your students produce campaign materials for Lincoln's 1860 presidential race against Stephen Douglas: posters, flyers, buttons, and flags. Students could even do some time-bending by creating websites or videos.
3. *Lincoln and His Boys* views the Civil War from the perspective of two young boys who happen to be sons of the president. Broaden your students' view of the era by introducing them to other materials about the Civil War. Many fine photographic histories and film documentaries are widely available in libraries. If your community has any Civil War monuments or memorials, try to arrange a class visit.
4. What happened to Mrs. Lincoln and her surviving sons after they left Washington? Divide your class into small work groups to research the Lincolns' later lives. Ask students to present brief oral reports on their findings.
5. Abraham Lincoln might have been born in the backwoods of Kentucky, but these days he is everywhere. Challenge your students to keep a log of all the different Lincolns they can spot in one day: on currency, streets, schools, businesses, and more. Perhaps you can reward the winner with a shiny new Lincoln penny.
6. Lincoln's most famous speech, the Gettysburg Address, is fewer than 300 words long. Read it aloud in your class. Afterward, divide the speech into small segments so that each student can recite his or her own individual part. If the schedule permits, perform your group reading on a family night at the school.
7. *Straight-shooter, four-flusher, shicoonery* — *Lincoln and His Boys* is thoroughly salted with nineteenth-century words and phrases. As a whole-class project, keep track of these words and phrases, along with their definitions. Brainstorm with your students about twenty-first-century words that might baffle the Lincoln boys.



*"All men are born free in the eyes of the Lord."*





## About the Author

Rosemary Wells has distinguished herself as an author and as an artist in all corners of children's literature — picture books, nonfiction, board books, and novels. While researching her historical novel *Red Moon at Sharpsburg*, she discovered an autobiographical fragment by Willie Lincoln. It became the inspiration for *Lincoln and His Boys*.

## About the Artist

Irish artist P.J. Lynch has illustrated several books with American themes, including *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* and *When Jessie Came Across the Sea*. To prepare for *Lincoln and His Boys*, he assembled hundreds of contemporary images of Lincoln and traveled to Springfield, Illinois, with Rosemary Wells.

### Praise for LINCOLN AND HIS BOYS



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★ "Rarely does a biography so robustly engage the audience's emotions."  
— *Publishers Weekly*  
(starred review)

"An evocative peek into the daily lives of President Lincoln's children."  
— *Booklist*

"Lynch captures the people and the warmth of their interactions in carefully researched oil paintings that reflect his mastery with light, perspective, and portraiture."  
— *School Library Journal*