

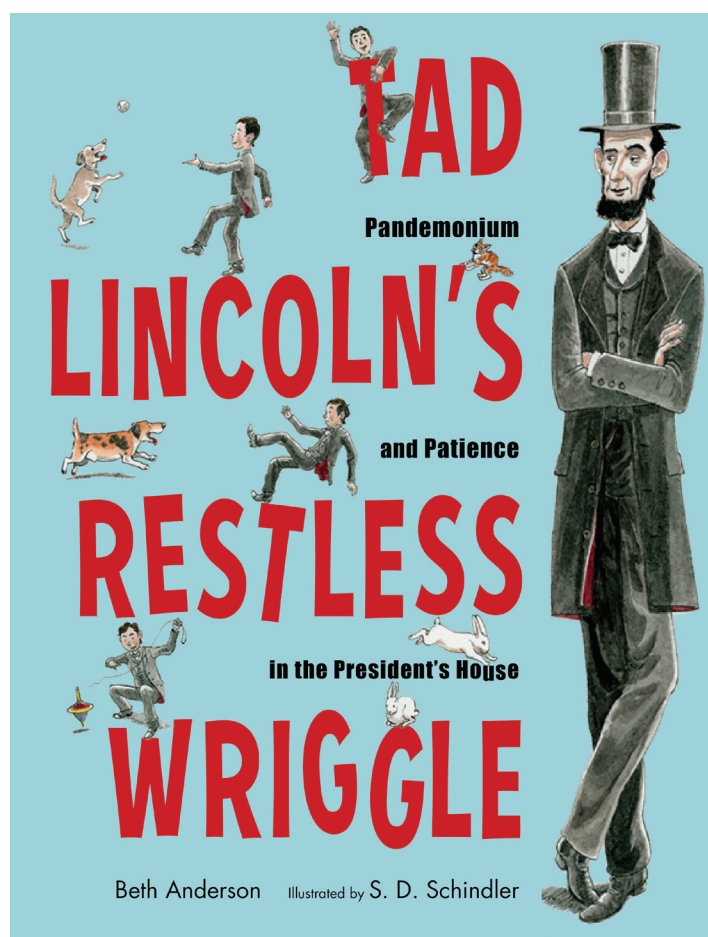
# TAD LINCOLN'S RESTLESS WRIGGLE

**Pandemonium and Patience  
in the President's House**

BETH ANDERSON    Illustrated by S. D. SCHINDLER

**An Educator Guide**

“A vivid introduction to  
Tad Lincoln.” —*Booklist*



## OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Tad Lincoln's restless wriggle just wouldn't quit, much to the delight of his father President Abraham Lincoln—but not so much to anybody else! This picture book is based on the famous first son who, despite a disability and other challenges, had compassion, intelligence, and wisdom beyond his years.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Beth Anderson** has always been fascinated with words and language—from sound and meaning, to figurative language and point of view, to cultural and scientific aspects of language. After earning a

BA in linguistics and an MEd in reading, she taught English language learners for more than 20 years. That classroom community taught her valuable lessons as she advocated for students and encouraged them to share their voices. Surrounded by young people from all over the world, with literature as her favorite tool, Beth was fascinated by the power of books to teach, connect, and inspire.

Born and raised in Illinois, the “Land of Lincoln,” Beth has always been captivated by Abraham Lincoln. His drive to learn and raise himself up from his humble beginnings, along with his famous sense of humor and compassion for others has made him one of her favorite historical figures. You can read more about Beth Anderson’s writing journey, enjoy posts from other kid lit creators, and get book recommendations at her website: [bethandersonwriter.com](http://bethandersonwriter.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**S. D. Schindler** grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin (only about 30 miles from where author Beth Anderson grew up). Before he had even started school, he won a coloring contest at the local elementary school summer program. And his prize was a red wagon!

From childhood, SD loved animals and plants. He soon became a young naturalist and majored in biology in college. But SD never lost his interest in art. After college he assembled a portfolio and explored illustration. Eventually, he signed with an agent and began to work in children’s books.

SD says, “The words tell a story one way and the pictures add to it and tell stories of their own. My job is to interpret the text in pictures and make clear the intent of the author. But in every book, there is the opportunity to represent in my pictures, my slant on things.” You can visit S. D. Schindler at [sdschindlerbooks.com](http://sdschindlerbooks.com).

---

40 pages • 8 ½ x 11 • Ages 7–10 • Grades 2–5 • 978-1-63592-315-5 (hc) • \$18.99 U.S. / \$24.99 CAN • 978-1-63592-462-6 (eBook)

---

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

NOTE: Questions and activities cover a range of ages and abilities and involve reading, writing, language, and speaking and listening standards. Please use them as appropriate for your learners. Also, please adapt for different kinds of learners like Tad.

## VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Preview and discuss any vocabulary words that might be new to students.

## PRE-READING

Look at the cover and read the title of the book.

What do you know about Abraham Lincoln?

What interesting details do you notice?

What can you understand about Tad from the pictures on the cover?

What do you think “*restless wriggle*” means?

Read the subtitle: *Pandemonium and Patience in the President’s House*. Can you guess what “pandemonium” means?

What do you think the story is about? Make some predictions.

What questions do you have?

## POST-READING

Return to your predictions. Were you correct?

Have your questions been answered by the story?

What would you like to know more about?

## KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What kind of behavior do you think people expected in the President’s House? Why?

Why do you think Abraham Lincoln smiled at Tad’s antics? What is meant by “*Tad’s sunshine*”?

Why do Tad and his father need each other?

Why do you think Papa shut down Tad’s business efforts? Do you think it would have been different had they been back home in Illinois and not in the President’s House? Why?

How did Abraham Lincoln teach his son to behave appropriately? Do you think this was the best way? Why or why not?

When Tad brought street kids into the kitchen, the cook protested: “this was the President’s House!” Tad argued back: “But this was his home!” What is the difference between the two ideas these characters express? How do you think “house” and “home” are the same or different?

If you could have visited Tad, what would you have liked to do?

What challenges did Tad face? Which do you think was the most difficult? Why? How would you have helped him?

What is the most important idea or theme you found in the story? Support your choice with textual evidence.

## WORDS AND PICTURES

How do words and illustrations work together to help you understand Tad as a character? Examine the scenes and choose some examples. Which scene is your favorite? Why?

In the scene when Papa tried not to laugh at Tad being pulled by the goats, the author wrote:

*“Amid the sorrow of civil war, a little trouble seemed a small price to pay for a bit of Tad’s sunshine.”*

What does she mean by *“a small price to pay for a bit of Tad’s sunshine”*? How does the illustration help you understand this? What are some other examples of Tad’s sunshine in the story? What was the “price” people paid?

## MEANINGS OF WORDS AND PHRASES

The story states that the staff in the President’s House thought that *“Children should not be seen—and certainly not heard!”* What does that mean?

The traditional old saying is, *“Children should be seen and not heard.”* Compare that to what the author used. Why do you think the author changed it for Tad’s story?

Do you agree or disagree with the saying? Why? Do you think people have changed about this idea?

What does it mean in the story when the author says *“Papa’s eyes lit up”*? What does the twinkle in Papa’s eyes signal to Tad? What other “signals” of approval or disapproval did you see in the story? What makes your eyes “light up”?

## AUTHOR’S WORD CHOICE

In this story, the author uses several types of figurative language that play with sound.

**Alliteration** is the repetition of initial sounds. Look at the title, then the subtitle. What initial sounds are repeated? [The title is a good example of how alliteration is about the first sound, not necessarily the first letter.]

*Tad Lincoln’s Restless Wriggle:*

*Pandemonium and Patience in the President’s House*

Find some examples in the story. How do the different kinds of sounds affect the story when you read it aloud?

Practice: With a partner, create another title for the story using alliteration that expresses the main idea or a theme.

(Extension for advanced learners) **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds. Look at the following example. What vowel sound is repeated? [short a]

*“Tad baffled listeners with words that twisted and tumbled out of control. Few people understood him as he ran and jabbered and bubbled with ideas.*

What other examples can you find in the story? Try using a different word (*Tad confused listeners . . .*) to see how the sounds affect the story when you read it aloud.

You can also look at **consonance**, the repetition of consonant sounds. The example above has repeated *B* sounds.

**Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that imitate sounds, or sound words. Look at the following examples.

*“BAM!”*

*“. . . scattering shrieking ladies into corners . . . The staff huffed . . . Tad’s mother, Mary, groaned . . .”*

Can you find more sound words? How does onomatopoeia affect the storytelling? Look for ways to use it in your own writing.

## WORD WORK AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Tad was a boy of action, and his story offers multiple opportunities to work with action verbs. English language learners especially benefit from a variety of activities to build vocabulary. By working with words in varied ways, all students will make the words “their own,” more readily accessible for them as writers.

### ACTIVITIES:

**Identify action verbs:** Distribute the task of gathering action verbs from each spread to individuals or small groups. As students consider if words are verbs, it helps if they ask themselves—“Can you DO it?”

**Two-Word or Phrasal Verbs:** Many verbs in English pair with prepositions to make two-word verbs. English language learners can benefit from exploring the differences such as pick, pick out, pick up, or pick over, by acting out the verbs.

**Multiple Meaning Words/Context Clues:** Some verbs have more than one meaning. How do you know which meaning the author used? Be a meaning detective and find the clues.

**Build Vocabulary:** Use charades to act out the verbs and learn unfamiliar words.

**Categorize:** Put the verbs you've collected on sticky notes. Draw the life-size shape of a body on a large piece of paper. (Or use a life-size cardboard figure available online or from a store display. Ongoing use is a great way to build vocabulary!) Distribute sticky notes to students and ask them to stick verbs on appropriate parts of the body. [ex: jabber—mouth] Note: Some verbs like *comforted* might be associated with hands, mouth, or heart. If a student can justify the placement, it should be accepted.

You can attach the “body” to a wall and continue to collect strong verbs for students to use in their writing.

**Evaluate Word Meaning: Synonyms/Connotation/Intensity:** Use sticky notes with action verbs to explore how words differ in meaning. On a white board, draw a horizontal line to represent a scale ranging low to high intensity. Take one category from the “body” activity, such as “feet verbs,” for students to post along the line to show how their meanings compare. Are they synonyms? How are the meanings different? Do they differ in mood? Or humor?

Use a basic sentence with a common verb such as GO, WALK, or RUN and replace it with options you've just worked with. Help the students see the power of using just the right verb to bring writing to life. [ex: I went to the store.>I scurried to the store.]

## **INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS**

**Art and Setting:** Authors and illustrators do research when they create historical stories. What details do you notice in the art that help you understand the time and place?

Look around the space where you are. What objects from your world do you think Tad would have found interesting? How would you explain each to him?

How do you think today's world would have affected Tad's life if he lived today?

**Evaluate:** Consider the pros and cons of being a child in the White House. Make a T-chart to weigh the options. In one column list the pros, the positive things; in the other column the cons, or negative things. Do you think it would be harder or easier than being where you are? Why?

**Connect to Self:** Use a Venn diagram to compare yourself to Tad. How are you the same? How are you different? Do you think you'd be good friends if you could have met him?

*[You can springboard from this activity to the Two-Voice Poem.]*

**The Civil War:** In 1863, the United States was in the middle of the Civil War with the northern states fighting against the southern states. Abraham Lincoln was trying to keep the nation together. This was one of the most challenging times in American history.

Look at the illustrations. What details show the country was at war? What do the pictures help you understand about the war?

Next, look at the text. What do the words tell you about the war and people's lives ?

How does the war affect Tad? How do you think it affected other children?

**Back Matter:** How does the Author's Note help you understand more about Tad and the Lincoln family?

What did you learn that surprised you?

What connections can you make to the story from your own life?

## WRITE IN RESPONSE TO READING

These activities may take different forms for different learners. Consider art, role play, a short video, and more ways for kids to express their ideas.

**Journal or personal narrative:** In the beginning of the story, Tad's lessons "*launched him down the hall and out the door.*" The Cabinet members became aggravated when Tad interrupted their meetings. Later the gardener had enough of Nanny goat's destruction. It seems just about everyone struggled with patience. What makes you lose patience? Write or draw about a time you lost patience with someone. What happened? How did you deal with it? What are some positive ways to express impatience?

**Write to persuade:** Tad used his most persuasive argument to save Jack from the cook and keep the turkey as a pet. Is there a pet you would like to have? Are there some animals that should not be pets? Choose an idea about a pet or pets that you feel strongly about. Who do you need to convince? What points are important for them to understand? Organize your argument and write to persuade someone to accept your idea.

**Imperatives:** Pretend you're Tad. Write 5 rules for the President's House.

**Connect and Act:** At the end of the story, Tad filled a box with gifts for the soldiers.

What material or physical items, things you can see and hold in your hands, did he give them? What “gifts” were not physical objects? What do you think was most meaningful for the soldiers?

Have students choose someone they appreciate—a mentor, role model, or someone who makes a difference in their life. We all have something to give, whether it’s our time, help, care, kind words, or our talents. How can they each show appreciation to someone? Create cards to share their gifts.

Guide written by Beth Anderson