A Letter from Abraham Lincoln to His Son's Headmaster

My son will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just, all men are not true, but teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every selfish politician, there is a dedicated leader... Teach him that for every enemy there is a friend. It will take time, I know, but teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than five found...Teach him to learn to lose...and also to enjoy winning. Steer him away from envy, if you can, teach him the secret of quiet laughter. Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to lick...Teach him, if you can, the wonder of a book...but also give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and flowers on a green hillside. In school, teach him it is far more honorable to fail than to cheat...Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong...Teach him to be gentle with gentle people, and tough with the tough. Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone is getting on the bandwagon...Teach him to listen to all men...but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth, and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him, if you can, how to laugh when he is sad...Teach him there is no shame in tears. Teach him to scoff at cynics and to beware of too much sweetness...Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidders, but never to put a price tag on his heart and soul. Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob...and to stand and fight if he thinks he is right.

Treat him gently, but do not coddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel. Let him have the courage to be impatient...let him have the patience to be brave. Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then he will always have sublime faith in mankind.

This is a big order, but see what you can do... He is such a fine little fellow, my son! A Lincoln