

A Nice Citizen by Abraham Lincoln

He 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 for every enemy there is a friend,
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 books...
But also give him quiet time
to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky,
bees in the sun,
and the flowers on a green hillside.
In the school teach him
it is far honourable 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's right.
Treat him gently,
but do not cuddle 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 have
sublime faith in mankind.
This is a big order,
but see what you can do...
He is such a fine fellow,
my son!