

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LETTER TO HIS SON'S TEACHER

*ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809 – 15, 1865), the sixteenth President of the United States of America, successfully led his country through its greatest internal crisis, the American Civil War. He introduced measures that resulted in the abolition of slavery, issuing his Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and promoting the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Lincoln successfully rallied public opinion through his rhetoric and speeches. Lincoln held a moderate view of Reconstruction, seeking to speedily reunite the nation through a policy of generous reconciliation. His assassination in 1865 was the first presidential assassination in U.S. history and made him a martyr for the ideal of national unity. The present piece, 'Abraham Lincoln's Letter To His Son's Teacher', is a wonderful piece of suggestion as to the kind of education a child should receive.*



### **A. Answer the following questions orally:**

1. What do you know about Abraham Lincoln, the famous President of America?
2. Has your father ever written any letter to your teacher?
3. Can you imagine how much your father is worried for your future?

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LETTER TO HIS SON'S TEACHER

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... 5

Teach him for every enemy there is  
a friend,  
It will take time, I now;  
but teach him if you can, 10  
that a dollar earned is of far more value than five  
pound...

Teach him to learn to lose...  
and also to enjoy winning. 15

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... 20

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, 25  
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... 30

**B. 1. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statement:**

1. It is a letter written by a father to his son.
2. All men are not just and true.
3. A dollar earned is of far more value than five pound.
4. One should be taught to mourn over losing.
5. One should be taught to fail rather than to cheat.

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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. 35

Try to give my son  
the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone is getting on  
the band wagon... 40

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. 45

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... 50

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. 55

Treat him gently,  
but do not cuddle him,  
because only the test  
of fire makes fine steel. 60

Let him have the courage  
to be impatient...  
let him have the patience to be brave. 65

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! 70

**B. 2. Complete the sentences on the basis of your reading of the poem:**

1. Teach him to sell his ..... and brain to the highest .....
2. Teach him to be ..... with gentle people.
3. Teach him to ..... at cynics.
4. Teach him it is far ..... to fail than to .....
5. Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to .....
6. Teach him the ..... of books.
7. He should be given quiet time to ponder the ..... mystery of birds in the sky.
8. One should have sublime ..... in himself to have faith in mankind.

**GLOSSARY AND NOTES**

**scoundrel** (n): a person who has no moral principles and no conscience; a villain

**envy** (n): feeling of discontent caused by sb else's good fortune or success, esp when one wishes this for oneself

**lick** (v): pass the tongue over (sb/sth).

**ponder** (v): think about (sth) carefully and for a long time, esp in trying to reach a decision.

**scoff** (v): speak contemptuously; jeer or mock

**cynic** (n): a person who believes that people do not do things for good, sincere or noble reasons, but only for their own advantage.

**howling** (adj): (informal) very fierce

**sublime** (adj): of the greatest, most admirable kind; causing awe and reverence.

**cuddle** (v): hold (sb, sth, each other) close and lovingly in one's arms.

**eternal** (adj): without beginning or end; lasting or existing for ever.

### C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why did Abraham Lincoln write a letter to his son's teacher?
2. What does Lincoln mean by saying that "for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every selfish Politician, there is a dedicated leader..."
3. A child should be treated gently but not cuddled. Do you agree? Give your opinion.
4. "All men are not just, all men are not true." Comment on this statement.
5. Why do you think Lincoln wants his son to steer away from envy and learn the secret of quiet laughter?
6. Why does Lincoln not want his son to follow the crowd when everyone is getting on the band wagon?
7. What qualities did Lincoln want his son's teacher to teach him?

### C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

1. The present system of education is at variance with the learners' experience.

### C. 3. COMPOSITION

1. Imagine your brother/sister studies at class V. You find some problem with him/her. Write a letter to his/her teacher drawing his attention to the problems.

### D. Word Study

#### D. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

pander

envi

mistry

braon

mab

paitense

#### D. 2. Write the synonyms of the following words:

big

enemy

enjoy

wonder

howl

**E. GRAMAR**

Study the following sentences

1. Teach him to sell his brawn  
and brain to the highest bidders  
but never to put a price-tag  
**on** his heart and soul.
2. Teach him to close his ears  
**to** a howling mob  
and to stand and fight  
if he thinks he's right.

Here, 'on' in the first example is used to establish relation between the words 'price-tag' and 'his heart and soul'.

The word 'to' also establishes relation between 'his ears' and 'a howling mob'

Such words, used to establish relation between a Noun or Pronoun and other words in a sentence is called a '**Preposition**'.

The relationship may be based on **time, place, position or direction** etc. 'Above', 'under', 'below' etc. are the **Prepositions of Place** or **Position**, 'towards', 'to', 'from' etc are the **Prepositions of Direction**; 'on', 'at', 'until' etc. are the **Preposition of time**.

Can you find out other Prepositions from this lesson? Also mention their types and the words these Prepositions relate together.

**F. ACTIVITY**

1. Do a project work on the Gurukul, the ancient system of education in India.

**G. TRANSLATE**

Translate the following sentences into English:

1. तुम्हें अंग्रेजी सीखना होगा।
2. सरकार को अंग्रेजी अनिवार्य करनी होगी।
3. रोजगार के लिये अंग्रेजी पढ़नी होगी।
4. सभी लोग दयालू नहीं होते।
5. सभी बदमाश में एक नायक होता है।

6. बुराई में अच्छाई भी होती है।
7. प्रत्येक दुश्मन में एक दोस्त होता है।
8. उसे आराम से अंग्रेजी सीखने दें।
9. अगर पढ़ा सकते हैं तो किताब के महत्व के बारे में बतावें।
10. मेरे भाई को अंग्रेजी सीखने की कोशिश करने दें।

