

Every Father's Teenage Son "A Letter To Dad"

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Dear Dad, in answer to your letter
I'd like to say I appreciate your
Understanding of my generation's
Need for individuality and need to rebel
Against the long file of look alike faces

For us, there was a simple answer
Hair, hair on the face and
Hair on the head, lots of it

To prove that I'm me and not to
Be identified with the establishment
And the mixed up state we find
The world in now

If this were the time of Lincoln
I just might decide to shave my face clean
Just to prove I'm me

I also appreciate your promise
Not to judge me just as a teenager
But as an individual

I realize that mankind is
Always attributed to the many
The misbehavior to the few

And I promise in return to judge you
As a thinking, rational being
Worthy of love and consideration
And not just as a parent

When we were discussing religion
I remembered having posed the question
Is God dead

By this, of course, I meant
God as we know him dead
Are the ideas of God changing
He is no longer, in my generation
Thought to be a vengeful old man
With a white beard or even

As a separate existence

We have realized that God is in all of us
That, as you said in your letter
God is love, but our love, brotherhood

I'm glad to see that you think
All the past wars were immoral
Here, we surely agree

But then you make
A different assumption than I
You say they were necessary
And I don't agree

I've spent long hours over this question
And find that I must hold
That war is not inevitable
That man's greatest goal should be
To avoid war at all costs

You used the phrase, fight for the right
Two times in your letter
I pose that this one phrase is to blame
For millions of lives and endless
Pain and suffering

It is not the lack of pride for my country
But an abundance of respect
For my fellow man which demands
That I must promise myself
Not to use violence, no matter what

This, I think, will go down in history as
The one truth discovered by my generation

And if after reading the words of
Schweitzer, Gandhi and other great men
And on the basis of all the
Available knowledge of history

And understanding the dangers
Of a too hardened patriotism
I choose to burn my draft card
Then, Dad, it will be you who will
Have to burn my birth certificate

And although you stopped calling me son
I'll never stop calling you Dad

