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CLASSICS NOT CHAOS!

No question the only world we have to live in is teeming with problems. Wars and terrorism dot the planet, epidemics--both continuous like AIDS and hopefully episodic like SARS-- flicker on everybody's radar, the struggling economy is devastating to some and worrisome to all.

Plus we're all frazzled by the near-impossible pace of life, the assault on our senses of rapidly changing images and thunderous music.

Parents are worried about the world. At the same time we want their children to feel safe and secure and grow up with a sense of hope. But how to achieve this?

One suggestion I have is to look back. Give your kids exposure to some of the classics in film and literature that have enriched the lives of people in the past.

As a change of pace from Nemo and Rugrats show your kids some of the classics. Best on the big screen because that is where cinema should be seen.

We are fortunate in Tucson where I live. The Tucson Cinema Foundation is running a summer series of classic children's movies like "The Wizard of Oz" and "National Velvet" and the 1939 version of "Huckleberry Finn" at the family-friendly price of \$1 for kids and \$3 for adults. (Don't live in Tucson? Sure you can rent these flicks but maybe you and some other parents can promote a children's film festival of your own at a church or community center. Or speak to the manager at your local movie about doing it there.)

Talk about the films with your children. What's different about life when Velvet rode her horse to victory and today. Was it calmer, easier, harder? Would you like to have lived back then? Discuss what you thought when you first saw the "Wizard of Oz" and get the book out of the library so you can talk about how a story is translated into a film.

Speaking of books, although there is a multitude of new books for children out there, don't forget the classics. Kids bored this summer? Read some of the classics together. I am a great believer in family reading hours. Start

reading chapter books aloud to your children at an early age. Short ones like "Charlotte's Web" fascinate children as young as four and older kids just becoming fluent in reading can read one page after you read several. Introduce your kids to books like "Little Women", "Heidi" and "Tom Sawyer."

One parent last week told me she never read any of these books when she was growing up. Great! She will enjoy them along with her children. I guaranteed her that she would both laugh and cry when she read Little Women to her three daughters.

Maybe the classics won't bring world peace but they may make your family feel more peaceful and enhance your summer togetherness time.

Happy Parenting,
Marilyn Heins, M.D.