

Lost Innocence: Let's Give Children a Childhood

Back when I used to own a bookstore in Waynesville, North Carolina, a grandmother with two adolescent grandchildren visited our shop. The kids were soon sitting on the floor, absorbed in books, and the grandmother engaged me in conversation, telling me, as so many grandparents did, how much they loved reading. Then she said, "I don't care what they're reading as long as they're reading."

Really?

Her remark made no sense to me then and makes no sense now. Would any of us say of our children, "I don't care what they're eating as long as they're eating?"

The approach we take to what our children are reading is especially important in today's cultural minefield. In a recent [article](#), writer Megan Fox takes to task social justice warriors who write age-inappropriate books and the librarians who either promote them or who refuse to issue cautionary labels warning against their contents.

"It's tough to find a book for pre-teens and teens without graphic sex and violence," Fox writes regarding current fiction. She points out that many adults have taken to reading these novels, revealing not only a desire for the salacious, but a sick grownup intrusion into literature intended for younger readers. She adds, "And now that some websites are answering parents' calls for innocent plotlines by offering 'Clean Teen selections,' SJW authors, who think every child should have the sexual knowledge of Caligula, have their panties in a twist about it."

Fox isn't exaggerating. I have several times encountered books unsuited to young readers. Here are two instances.

A number of years ago, I was at the public library in Waynesville when a girl who looked fifteen or sixteen approached the checkout desk. She held up a copy of *The Silence of the Lambs*, a novel dealing with a cannibalistic killer, and said to the librarians, "You should have some sort of warning about this book. I can't get some of the images out of my head."

More recently, I was helping homeschool my 11-year-old granddaughter. She has an adventurous spirit, and wanted some exciting books about kids her age. I found one at the library about a boy and girl who are on a school canoe trip, get lost, and must make their way back to safety and civilization.

Annie was sitting beside me reading the book for about 15 minutes when she looked up and said, "What's a condom?"

"Let me see the book," I said, and she handed it over. There was a scene in an elementary school class where the students were learning the benefits of condoms.

The thoughts which flashed through my head are unrepeatable. Suffice it to say, we ended the reading of that novel.

Several times when I used to teach homeschool seminars I overheard my students discussing movies they'd seen, the latest song, or some scene from YouTube. I said nothing, but wondered if their parents knew about these influences on their children.

Some in our culture should get credit for trying to maintain the innocence of children. The theater chain, Alamo Drafthouse, issued this [warning](#) about the movie "Joker:"

PARENTAL WARNING (This is not a Joke.) Joker is RATED R and for good reason. There's lots of very, very rough language, brutal violence, and overall bad vibes. It's a gritty, dark, and realistic Taxi Driver-esque depiction of one man's descent into madness. It's not for kids, and they won't like

it anyway. (There's no Batman.)

Admirable. And rare.

Which brings me to some broader questions.

Why do some in our society seem so set on ending childhood innocence?

Why, for example, are some libraries sponsoring [Drag Queen Story Hour](#) for young children?

Why do some children's authors wish to promote sex, orgies, drugs, and violence? Is there not enough such obscenity in our adult culture – our movies, our music, and our books – without letting it ooze over into children's literature?

Forty years ago, an advertisement used to run late in the evening on television, asking the question, "Do you know where your children are?"

Today we might ask that same question regarding what our children are reading, hearing on the radio, watching on television, and seeing on their electronic devices.

Our culture, our society, and our government have little interest in preserving innocence of any kind. It's up to us as parents, grandparents, and mentors to give our children a childhood.

If we don't do it, then who will?

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[Image Credit: Pixabay]