

## Meet Fiona the Hippo

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

Fiona is a hippo that was born at the Cincinnati Zoo. Many people helped her grow up. She learned to drink, eat, walk, float, and more! She had a lot of fun, and people loved to watch her. They even wrote her letters! She will grow up to be just like her mama.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If you could be on Team Fiona, which person would you be—one of her doctors, nurses, zookeepers, or cheerleaders?
2. Fiona had to try again and again to learn how to walk. What do you have to try again and again to learn?
3. If you went to visit Fiona, what would you want to see her do?
4. What is the most interesting page to you in this story? Why?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

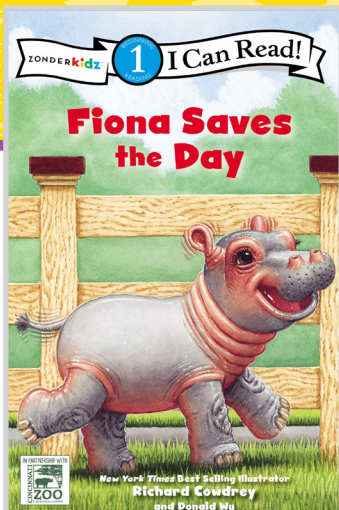
**Speaking Practice:** Sometimes it takes our mouths a little while to figure out big words. Page 4 tells us that “hippo” is short for “hippopotamus.” Try saying this long word! It can be fun to say! But if you have to try again and again to get it right, don’t worry. Go to a website like [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com). Have a parent or another adult help you find the word “hippopotamus.” Then click on the audio button as many times as you want to hear the word! Then break the word apart and practice the three parts—hippo-pota-mus! Jump on your right leg for “hippo”; jump onto your left leg for “pota”; clap for “mus”! I bet you’ve got it now! Well done!

**The Real Hippo:** Did you know that Fiona the Hippo is real? She really was born at the Cincinnati Zoo! Her birthday is January 24, 2017. Watch highlights of her first two years here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWkQ\\_TAQeTo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWkQ_TAQeTo). (Parent note: The clip is three and a half minutes, put together by the Cincinnati Zoo. In the first few seconds, Fiona’s birth is shown.) Watch to see what details you recognize from the book you’ve just read! What was your favorite part about seeing Fiona? What was surprising?

**Weigh Me:** Fiona was twenty-nine pounds when she was born! How much did you weigh when you were born? Get out your scales! Find something that weighs as much as you weighed at birth. Then find something that weighs twenty-nine pounds. Is there a big difference? Can you hold something as heavy as Fiona at birth? If you want to dig even deeper, research how much Fiona weighs now. Then read page 28 again! Do you think you could fit Fiona on your scale now?

**Connect with Fiona:** Choose either page 23 (drawing) or pages 24 and 25 (writing) to connect with Fiona. Draw a picture of her like she’s on the front page of a newspaper. Another option is to have a parent or adult search for a Fiona the Hippo coloring page. Choose your favorite one to creatively color! If you prefer writing, write Fiona a letter, just like you see on pages 24 and 25. Look up the address to the zoo and send it to her!





## Fiona Saves the Day

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

Fiona the Hippo walked around the zoo to visit her friends. The penguins were worried. Mango was stuck on a ledge! Fiona tried to help on her own first. Then she came up with a plan to rescue the penguin! But it took teamwork from all of her friends at the zoo. They rescued Mango together!

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What animals did Fiona visit at the zoo? Which animals do you like to see on your zoo visits?
2. Why were the penguins worried? (see pages 12-13)
3. What did the orangutan do to help rescue Mango?
4. How do you think Mango felt when he jumped into the blanket? How do you think he felt when he saw all his friends helping him?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Counting Fun:** Choose an animal and count how many times this type of animal shows up in the book. Maybe count the monkeys first. Then count Kris and the cheetahs. Then you could count how many different kinds of animals are pictured in the book. What other animals would you include in a zoo story?

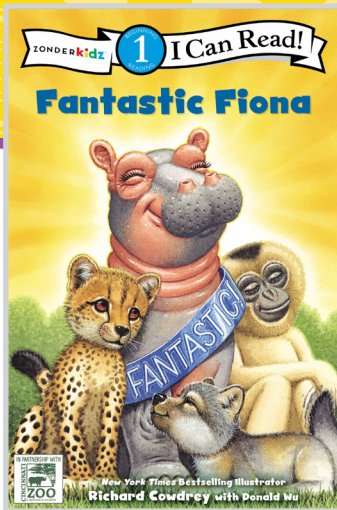
**Solve Problems:** Do you like to solve problems? Fiona the Hippo worked hard to find a way to rescue Mango. Practice thinking creatively to help you solve problems. Sometimes it takes trying different ways of doing something until you figure it out! Have your parent or an adult get out all the Tupperware with lids from the kitchen. Mix them all up! Then use your problem solving skills to match the containers and lids correctly! For more ways to practice your skills, visit The Atlas Mission, "8 Problem Solving Games to Play with Your Preschooler," <https://atlasmission.com/blog/8-problem-solving-games-play-preschooler/>. Have fun being a problem solver!

**Teamwork:** Gather a group of neighborhood friends to practice working together, just like Fiona and her friends! What helps a team to be able to work together? Maybe you've played on a sports

team, and you know that if you pay attention to others on your team, you can do amazing things! Get a big blanket and a large ball. Place the ball in the middle. Have your friends spread out and take ahold of the edge of the blanket. See if you can keep the ball on the blanket as you work together to bounce the ball up high and catch it again! Laugh, have fun, and work together!

**Talents:** What are you good at? Make a list! On one side of the paper list your family members or a handful of friends. Then in the next column, write (or draw) what they are good at. Think about what they like to do and who they are. For example, maybe your sister is good at keeping her room picked up. Maybe a friend from school always includes others at recess. Maybe another school friend is quick to share her toys or supplies. As an added activity, have a parent or an adult help you write a friend or two a note (or draw a picture). Tell them how thankful you are for them and their special talents or traits!





## Fantastic Fiona

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

What makes someone special? Fiona visits many of her friends in the zoo. Each one shows her something special about themselves. Fiona can't do any of those things! What makes her special? Her friends help her see that she is fantastic in her own ways!

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What makes the gorillas special?
2. Count how many different animals Fiona visited.
3. Fiona wanted to try to jump like the antelope. She tried to jump over the bush! What did you think might happen as you were reading this part?
4. What are some ways that you are special?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Ways I Am Special:** Think about things that make up “you”! Have a parent or another adult trace your hand or paint your handprint onto a blank piece of paper. Then write or draw something special about you on each finger! Think of things you can do (make a fort, skip, hang on the monkey bars, read). Include how you are (kind, thoughtful, creative, strong). Maybe even think of hard things you have tried! Are you the same as or different than Fiona and her zoo friends?

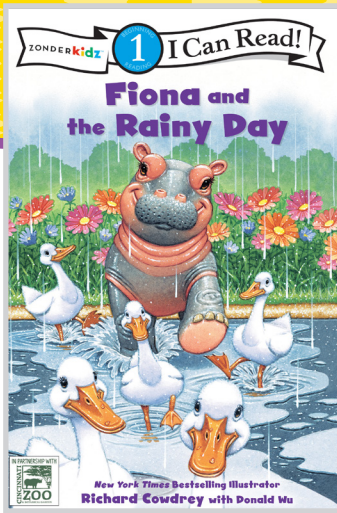
**Try Something New:** How many new activities did Fiona try? She was brave to try so many new things! Think of something new to try—maybe learning a new song, trying to skip, trying something new on the playground, talking to a new friend, reading a new kind of book, or baking with a parent. Maybe you'll find that you really like one of these activities!

**Send Some Happiness:** Think of a friend or family member not in your home. Kris says, “Everyone is special!” (page 27). What makes your friend

special? Have a parent or another adult make a short video to tell this person how they are special. This is exactly what Fiona's friends did for her (pages 28–32). See how happy she was at the end? Her friends helped her realize how fantastic she is! Send your friend your clip to make them feel happy!

**Color:** Have an adult print off a coloring page for your favorite animal in *Fantastic Fiona*. Think of all the ways each animal was special! If you'd rather, you could learn to draw one of these animals. Sometimes it takes time and practice to learn special skills—like how to color or draw well!





## *Fiona and the Rainy Day*

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### **About the Book**

A storm comes to the zoo. Fiona likes the rain, thunder, and lightning. Her friend Flamingo is ready with an umbrella. Fiona's other friends feel different ways about the storm. It does not bother some friends. Other friends get a little worried. They help each other through the storm!

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why does Fiona like rain, thunder, and lightning?
2. What colors do you see in all the umbrellas?
3. Which friends seem to like the storm? Why?
4. Which animals seem worried about the storm? Why? Which animals are you like?

### **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:**

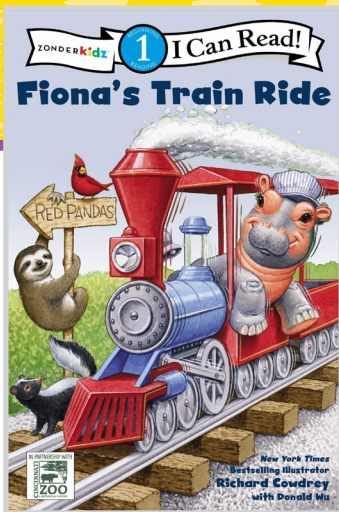
**Food for Plants:** Fiona likes storms. She says that rain, thunder, and lightning help trees and flowers grow. Plants need water to grow, so they like the rain! When lightning strikes, the energy that is let out is food for plants. Thunder is the sound that comes from lightning. Thunderstorms also cool down the air. If you like to paint and create, grab some paint, brushes, paper, blue and yellow construction paper, and create your own thunderstorm! (See Buggy and Buddy, "Weather Activities for Kids: Thunderstorm Art Project," March 30, 2015, <https://buggyandbuddy.com/weather-activities-for-kids-thunderstorm-art-project/>.) For fun, hang up your thunderstorm over a plant!

**The Sound of Rain:** Some people—like Fiona—like the sound of a storm. They may even have an app with the sound of rain and play it all night when they sleep! Have an adult find an audio clip of a calm storm and read *Fiona and the Rainy Day* again to the sound of the rain! You could even sit under an umbrella!

**Make an Umbrella:** We saw that umbrellas come in many colors! You can pick your color (or maybe lots of colors) and make your own play mini-umbrella. Have an adult search for a way to make an easy umbrella, or pick one of the "20 Unusual Umbrella Crafts for Kids" on ArtsyCraftsyMom! Go to <https://artsycraftsymom.com/umbrella-crafts-for-kids/>.

**Sing a Song:** Look up "rain songs for kids" and pick a new one to learn, like "Drip Drop Rain" or "Rain Rain Go Away"! Learn the motions and the words. Have fun dancing to the new song! Do you think Fiona and her friends would like this song?





## Fiona's Train Ride

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

A red panda baby was born at the zoo! Fiona wants to go see her. Everyone had reasons not to go right then. Fiona thought they should ride the train to see that red panda baby! After a little trouble, Fiona and her friends got to see the new baby! She was sleepy after a long day, and so was Fiona.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What new animal was Fiona excited about seeing?
2. What reasons did other animals give for not going to see the new animal?
3. Who drove the train? What did you think of this?
4. Have you taken a train ride? What was it like? If not, what do you think it would be like to ride a train like the one at Fiona's zoo?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Fun Sounds:** What sound does a train make? In the story it's "CHOO-CHOO! CHUG-CHUG! DING, DING, DING, DING!!" Practice being a train! In our story the animals talk. But in nature, what sounds do the animals really make? You might need to look up some of the animals' sounds. For example, did you know that a hippo honks, grunts, roars, and squeals? A lot of his communication is even underwater. It might be fun to watch a video clip to actually hear these fun sounds. Which sounds surprised you the most? Try imitating some new animal sounds, and see if a friend can guess which animal it is!

**Asking for Help:** The train helped the animal friends get to see the red panda baby. After Fiona decided to drive the train, she got stuck! How did she get out of this problem? Yes, the monkeys offered to help Fiona. Sometimes we need help, either with getting someplace or when things don't go as planned. What do you need help with sometimes? What have you learned how to do on your own? Draw a picture of both of these, side by side. In the next days, look for ways you can help others, like a sibling, mom, or a neighbor!

**ABC:** Practice your ABCs! Sing the ABC song. Then slowly sing it again as you search and find

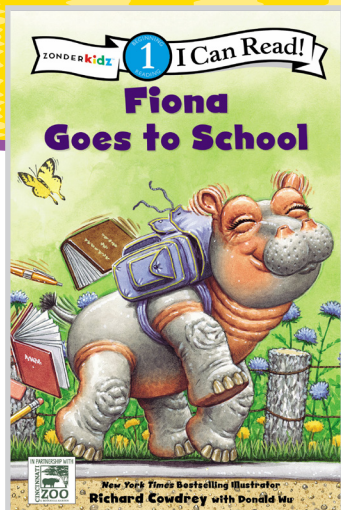
each letter in the story. If you can't find a letter, write it out on a piece of paper, a chalkboard, or a tablet. Alternately, write out your name. Then find just the letters of your name in the pages of the story! Another idea is to talk about lowercase and uppercase letters and how one letter looks different, depending on whether or not it is capitalized.

**Trains:** There is so much to learn about trains! What do you already know about trains? Is the train that Fiona rides on the same as all trains? You can learn more about trains by doing one of these things:

Watch a short video to learn the parts of a train: "Trains for Children," YouTube, Toddler Fun Learning, June 5, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6sGE2Qv6Yo&ab\\_channel=ToddlerFunLearning](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6sGE2Qv6Yo&ab_channel=ToddlerFunLearning). Is the train in the video the same as the train in Fiona's Train Ride? What is the same? What is different?

Try one of the many train activities or crafts, like the toilet paper roll train craft, listed on this site: "50+ Train Activities & Crafts," Happy Toddler Playtime, July 17, 2020, <https://happytoddlerplaytime.com/50-amazing-train-activities-crafts-for-toddlers-preschoolers-kids/>.





## Fiona Goes to School

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

Schoolkids visited the zoo! Fiona learns that school is a place to learn new things. She and her friends want to start a zoo school. They find out that school rules are important to learning. They also learn lots from each other. Fiona loves school!

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you go to school yet? If you do, what do you like best about school? If not, what do you think you would like?
2. What is one school behavior the animals had to learn?
3. If you had a day to teach your friends, what would you teach them about?
4. What is the most interesting page to you in this story? Why?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Rules for a Reason:** Mr. Barn Owl taught the animals about rules that would make school more orderly. What was important? (See pp. 24–25.) If you aren't in school yet, tell your parent what you would have to practice and learn for school. If you go to school: What are the rules in your classroom? If you are homeschooled, go to school online, or go to an outdoor-type school, you probably have some different rules. What makes your school day go well? Talk about these differences, draw a picture about the rules, write/dictate a list, or play school to practice!

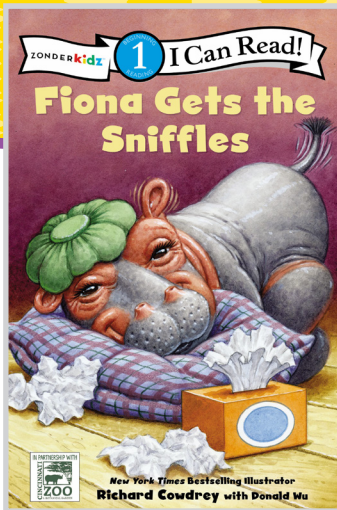
**Be a Learner:** Learning is fun! Each of Fiona's friends wanted to teach about something. What do you want to learn about—animals, zoos, reading, or something else? Have a parent or an adult look up some new facts about something that interests you! Teach your friends a “Did you know?” fact! (For example, did you know that there are more than 2,800 zoos and aquariums around the world, including more than 355 in the United States?\*) Draw it or write it out, if that helps you remember the fact! Use paints, chalk, markers, or an iPad app!

\* “Lions, Tigers and Bears—Oh My! These Are the Best Zoos in America,” USA Today, August 18, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/travel/destinations/2019/08/13/best-zoos-in-america/39946275/>.

**Count It Out:** Math is an important subject in school! Counting is one of the first skills to work on. Count the fish on pages 4 and 5. Be careful! They are different sizes! Point to each fish as you count. Then count up to this number on your fingers. Next find that many items of something (blocks, cars, balls, pencils, dolls, etc.). For older ones: Does page 4 or 5 have more fish? Divide up the items to show the difference. Then count the fish by twos. Write out the number for the total number of fish. Repeat these exercises with other pages! (For example, count the bamboo poles in the fence on page 10, count the children on page 12, or count the red and then blue shapes that make up the snake on page 27.)

**Explore Emotions:** Read page 12 again. How were the schoolkids feeling? Look at page 16. Does it look like the animal students are happy, sad, nervous? How do you know? How do you feel when you go to school? Some kids feel happy, but others feel anxious or nervous. What can you do, no matter how you feel? On page 32 Fiona and her mom talked about school. No matter how you feel, talk to your mom, dad, or another adult. They can help you as you figure out school. To practice and learn managing emotions, choose a game to play, such as dominoes, tic tac toe, or a memory card game. This will give practice with taking turns, winning, losing, and staying friendly even when we are frustrated.





## Fiona Gets the Sniffles

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

Fiona the hippo finds out that Mr. Elephant is sick! She wants to help him feel better. She asks her friends what they can do. They think of ideas and visit Mr. Elephant. Then Fiona starts to get the sniffles too! She goes home to rest.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the beginning of the story who wasn't feeling well? How do you know?
2. Who did Fiona go find to ask for help? How many friends is this total?
3. Who do you think had the best idea for helping Mr. Elephant feel better?
4. What is the most interesting page to you in this story? Why?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Be Kind:** Just like Fiona, brainstorm some ways you can help someone feel better! Maybe a friend is sick, or maybe she just had a hard day. You could make a colorful card and write, "Feel better soon!" in it. That would cheer someone up! What about baking someone cookies and taking it to them? Or blow up some balloons and take them some cheerful bunch! Or practice a nice song, and sing it to your friend over Zoom. Choose one and do it!

**Be a Germ Stopper:** Germs are small living things that can make you sick. You can't see them with just your eyes though. There are ways that we can stay healthy and get rid of germs! Watch and sing this song for one idea (The Hand Washing Song): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-A\\_nKraFVE&ab\\_channel=Kinder-Uke](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-A_nKraFVE&ab_channel=Kinder-Uke)

Then go practice washing your hands well! You can even sing "Happy Birthday" while you wash your hands! That's how long you should scrub your hands.

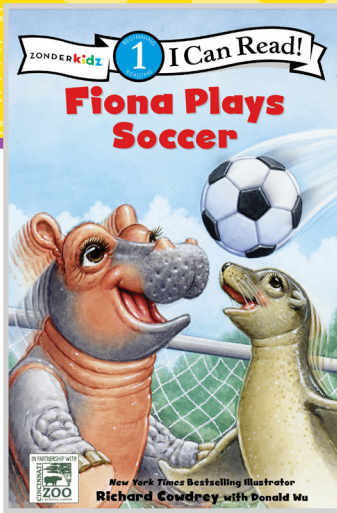
You can even check your learning by doing assessment 1 (page 23) of this packet: [https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/resources/Documents/BAGS---Teachers-Combined-Resource-2022v2\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/professionals-and-partners/resources/Documents/BAGS---Teachers-Combined-Resource-2022v2_EN.pdf)

In the assessment you glue or place the pictures in order to show proper hand washing. Now you are an expert germ stopper!

**Healthy Foods:** On page 13, Cheetah says that Mr. Elephant needs good food to help him feel better. Chicken soup is a good option! Other ideas to help you stay healthy are bananas, berries, citrus fruits like oranges, tomatoes, and carrots! Be sure to drink a lot of water throughout the day too. Find and color a picture of one of these healthy options that you would like to try! Maybe you can even go to the store with your parent and pick a new fruit or vegetable to try.

**Letter Practice:** Search the pages and find your ABCs! If you can't find a letter, write it on an index card and keep going. Which ones were missing? Another way to practice is to write out the ABCs. Then take one page of the story and cross off on your ABCs all the letters you find in the story!





## Fiona Plays Soccer

Author and Illustrator: Richard Cowdrey with Donald Wu

### About the Book

Flamingo and Fiona the hippo find a soccer ball! They show their friends who also want to play soccer with them. The meerkats, Flamingo, Fiona, monkeys, and Seal all go to the park to play soccer together.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did you think Fiona had found when she saw something black and white at the zoo?
2. What happened to the ball when Flamingo kicked it the first time?
3. Trace the ball's journey from when Fiona found the ball in the bushes. Where did it go next?
4. Do you play soccer or another game with a ball? What do you think of Fiona's playing?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

**Let's Play!** Get a ball of any kind, round up a sibling or a friend, and try out your skills! Practice what Fiona and her friends did on page 29—kicking the ball, bouncing the ball, and then rolling the ball to each other. What are some other fun things you can do with the ball? Be careful not to hit each other, to practice your aim, and to practice your speed! You can have so much fun with a ball and friends!

**Observation Skills:** Go on a walk like Fiona and Flamingo! They were looking around and observant. This means that they noticed things as they walked. What do you notice? Maybe you'll find a coin on the sidewalk. Or maybe you'll find a colorful leaf or flower. Look for shapes in the clouds! Look for something green, red, blue, and then yellow. Be as observant as Fiona and Flamingo! At dinner tell the rest of your family about all your neat discoveries!

**Beach Ball Letter Names:** We can have all kinds of fun with balls! Get a beach ball and write letters all over it. Toss the ball to each other and then name the letters your fingers are touching!

Find more ideas for ball fun here: <https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/preschool-activities-with-balls/>

**Same and Different:** Watch this short clip called "Hippos Playing Soccer": [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3U596sEyek&ab\\_channel=julioohara](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3U596sEyek&ab_channel=julioohara)

What is different about this hippo playing soccer than Fiona and her friends playing soccer? (Answer: It's a pink ball, not a soccer ball. Just one hippo is playing and not a whole bunch of friends. This hippo is playing in the water not on land! The hippo pushes the ball with her mouth.)

What is similar to Fiona's playing soccer? (Answer: They are all having fun! They are playing with a ball. They are zoo animals. The seal played with the ball in the water.)

