



DOGS IN HATS CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING
110 E. SCHILLER ST., SUITE 307
ELMHURST, IL 60126
WWW.DOGSINHATS.COM

CONTACT: Peter Alfini
PH 630.834.8420
FX 630.834.8430

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

the HICCUPotamus

by AARON ZENZ

There was a hippopotamus
Who hiccupped quite a-lotamus
And every time he got'emus
He'd fall upon his bottomus

Imagine yourself in his shoes: purple and rotund, with hiccups so powerful they blast fish from the water and send bystanders flying. That's life for the Hiccupotamus – a little guy with a big problem. And his problem is getting bigger as more and more of his animal friends find themselves victims of his ailment. The cake-covered elephant, the cement-soaked centipede, the dental floss-entangled rhinoceros... maybe *they* can find a cure – if they could only get their hands on him first.

Much of the story's amusement comes through the infectious ring of the poem's nonsense words. Author and illustrator Aaron Zenz acknowledges THE HICCUPOTAMUS finds its roots in the works of Nash, Lear, and Seuss. He was compelled to write this, his premiere book, after becoming smitten with its rhyme scheme. "The first verse came so naturally," Zenz recounts. "It was infectious. I couldn't get it out of my head." Finishing THE HICCUPOTAMUS was a different story. It would take another eight years to squeeze the rest of his tale into the unforgiving rhyming patterns he had established.

The illustrations are striking due to the unusual methods and materials Zenz has chosen. He creates the artwork using only colored pencils. More accurately, he "mis-uses" them, pressing extremely hard as he colors, resulting in very detailed, glossy, vivid images. In fact, he went through 119 pencils and broke 251 pencil tips in creating THE HICCUPOTAMUS.



Aaron Zenz lives in Spring Lake, Michigan with his wife Amity and three children. For years he has enjoyed communicating with kids of all ages through art lessons and Sunday School classes. He has worked as a fine artist, graphic designer, multimedia designer, toy designer, and illustrator. He holds an art degree from Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan. THE HICCUPOTAMUS is his premiere picture book.

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AUTHOR BIO

Aaron Zenz lives in Spring Lake, Michigan with his wife Amity. He has three children and a fourth on the way, due to be released around the same time as *The Hiccopotamus*. He grew up in Jackson, Michigan and graduated from Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan where he received a degree in art.

While in Hillsdale, Zenz honed his skills as a writer -- contributing articles and serving as editor for two campus publications. He went on to write the short story *Chicken Nickel* which appeared beside the works of authors like Lewis Carroll, C.S. Lewis, and Arnold Lobel in Karen Santorum's highly-praised collection of stories, *Everyday Graces*.

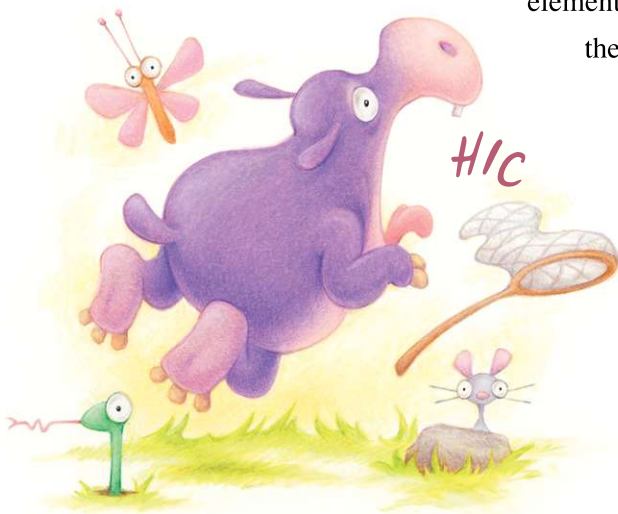
As an artist, Zenz works regularly in a variety of media including pen & ink and computer illustration, but he loves creating artwork with colored pencils for the control and vibrancy they allow. "People are *always* shocked the first time I tell them that the image they are looking at was created solely with colored pencil. I haven't come across another colored pencil artist who uses them the way I do." Zenz likes to say he "mis-uses" the pencil, applying extreme pressure when he colors, resulting in images that are dense and rich. It also results in hundreds of broken pencil tips and numerous trips to the art supply store.

Zenz's diverse work experience gives him a unique approach to illustration. He has worked as a cartoonist, fine artist, graphic designer, multimedia designer, toy designer, newspaper illustrator, and regularly teaches art lessons to local home schooled children. "My experience designing toys leads me to think of my characters and their environments three-dimensionally. My multimedia experience helps me to think sequentially -- adding in the elements of time, cause, and effect. Teaching children (and learning from them) *always* opens my eyes to new ways of thinking..."

This may be Zenz's first children's book, but he is no stranger to the format. He began collecting and studying picture books in college and now has a library housing over 1400 children's books.

"I love them. They are a great means of expression. I love reading them and I love making them."

For more about Zenz and his work, you can visit his website at www.aaronzenz.com





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SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR AARON ZENZ

Author of *The Hiccupotamus*

How did you become interested in writing children's books?

Is it true that you wrote *The Hiccupotamus* over the course of eight years? What were you doing all that time?

The rhyme scheme is like nothing I've read before -- you've inserted all sorts of outrageous nonsense words. Was it challenging to fit your story into such a crazy rhyming pattern? What was the process?

The poem reads a lot like something from Lewis Carroll or Ogden Nash. There is even something Suess-like about it. Were they inspirations to you?

You both wrote and illustrated *The Hiccupotamus*. Does one task come easier to you than the other?

The images are just bursting with deep, vibrant color, but I know you used colored pencils to do the illustrations...how is that possible?

Not many artists work in colored pencil -- especially using them the way you do. How did you get started?

I'm intrigued by your work history: toy design, developing educational computer software, cartooning.... Does any of that history shape the way you crafted this children's book?



I know Dogs in Hats is a fairly new publisher. Can you tell me a bit about them? How did they come to want your story?

You have a deep love for traditional animation. Your characters – although just residing on pages in a book – seem very animated. Any connection?

At the end of the book, you've added something truly original. You crafted biographies for the "actors" who played the characters in the book. They are hilarious! Where did that idea come from?

Any more children's books up your sleeve?



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10 Common Hiccup Cures:

1. Holding Your Breath
2. Receiving a Scare
3. Drinking Water
4. Drinking Water Upside Down
5. Eating a Spoon of Sugar
6. Breathing into a Paper Bag
7. Gargling
8. Being Tickled
9. Exhaling All Your Air and Holding It
10. Telling the Hiccupper You Will Give Them \$10
If They Hiccup One More Time (stops them cold)

10 Less Common Hiccup Cures:

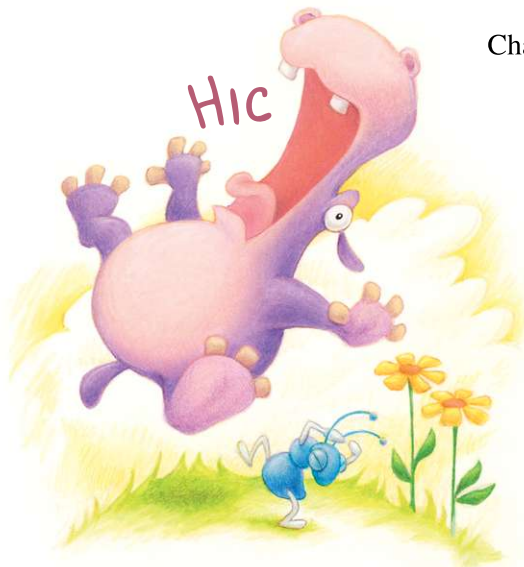
1. Pulling on your tongue
2. Lifting your uvula with a spoon
3. Smelling fumes from a lit candle
4. Eating a lemon wedge with tabasco sauce
5. Drinking water from a glass with a spoon in it,
while letting the spoon handle rest on your face
6. Squeezing the end joint of your index finger
7. Rubbing your collar bones
8. Blowing on your thumb like a balloon
9. Thinking of all the bald men you know
10. Throwing a lit match into a glass of water and
then drinking the water

Method preferred by author Aaron Zenz's mother: Drinking upside down from the backside of a glass. Says it works every time.

Method preferred by author Aaron Zenz's children: Eating a spoon of peanut butter. Say it works every time.

Method preferred by author Aaron Zenz himself: Bending over and touching his toes, swallowing as much air as he can possibly hold, standing upright so all the pressure goes to his diaphragm, and then holding it in until he gets dizzy. Says it works... almost every time.

From the Guinness Book of World Records: Longest Attack of Hiccups



Charles Osborne (1894–1991) of Anthon, Iowa, USA, started hiccupping in 1922 while attempting to weigh a hog before slaughtering it. He was unable to find a cure, and continued hiccupping until February 1990, a total of 68 years!

Osborne led a normal life in which he had two wives and fathered eight children. The only discomfort from his hiccupping, he claimed, was the constant risk of losing his false teeth.

During the first few decades, he hiccupped up to 40 times a minute, slowing to 20 a minute in later years. He finally stopped in 1990 – after an estimated 430 million spasms – and died the following year.