Hippos Go Berserk! by Sandra Boynton

As Fun For The Parents As For The Kids!

How dull, to be one hippo all alone... until the one calls two other hippos on the phone. Soon three more hippos are at the door, bringing along another four. Before the night is through, a houseful of hippos (and one beast) has joined the one hippo for a boisterous bash. All through the hippo night,

Hippos play with great delight.

But at the hippo break of day,

The hippos all must go away.

In clusters of nine, eight, seven, six, and so on, the hippos depart, finally leaving the one hippo alone once more, [missing] the other forty-four. The well-loved Sandra Boynton wrote this tribute to silliness in 1977, inspiring generations of the very young to learn to count. Lively, cute new illustrations complement this edition, with big numbers (one through nine, and nine through one) boldly placed on the corner of each page. The sturdy board book will withstand lots of eager counting fingers, and maybe even a berserk hippo or two. Boynton's familiar style can be seen in scads of other delightfully nonsensical titles, including Barnyard Dance! and Moo, Baa, La La La!. (Ages 3 to 7) --Emilie Coulter

My Personal Review:
The most entertaining counting book, I've seen, Sandra Boynton pulls out all the stops (and all the hippos) in this hilariously inventive tale of a hippo happening. It all beings with one lonely hippo, who calls two hippos on the phone. Three hippos at the door [then, next page] bring along another four. Before long, seven hippos arrive in a sack. Eight hippos sneak in the back. Nine hippos come to work. ALL THE HIPPOS GO BERSERK! Berserk here, means 45 hippos (9 + * + & ... + 1) all in the initial hippos house, tooting horns, tearing down a hippo portrait (drawn like Whistler's mother, if Whistler were a hippo), eating cake, and being served by those nine
working hippos. When morning comes, the hippos leave, in as many
different ways as they arrived: By Greyhip bus, wagon train (!), helicopter,
and wheelbarrow.

We've come to expect Boynton's wonderfully whimsical, rounded style, but
she adds several humorous details (e.g. a hippo dancing on the roof), and
very cleverly associates the numbers with the hippos. Most counting books
are very static, a number, say 5, and five of some item on that page. I
suppose a more advanced presentation is that the numbers are related in
some thematic way. However, Boynton doesn't limit herself to the one page
per number formula; she writes a continuous story, in which new guests-
the ones associated with that page's number--mingle with previous arrivals.
She accomplishes this by distinguishing the new, number-relevant guests
through their costumes or by color differences. This format may require
more cognitively than simpler books, but Boynton's Hippos GO Berserk is
so entertaining that it stands alone as pure entertainment; its value counts
much more than the traditional style.

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