



## CUBS IN THE TUB

*The True Story of the Bronx Zoo's First Woman Zookeeper*

by Candace Fleming  
illustrated by Julie Downing

HC: 9780823443185 • E-Book: 9780823448104 • Ages 4-8

NEAL PORTER BOOKS

### About the Book

**Fred and Helen Martini longed for a baby, and they ended up with dozens of lion and tiger cubs! Snuggle up to this purr-fect read aloud about the Bronx Zoo's first female zookeeper.**

When Bronx Zookeeper Fred brought home a lion cub, Helen Martini instantly embraced it. The cub's mother lost the instinct to care for him. "Just do for him what you would do with a human baby," Fred suggested . . . and she did. Helen named him MacArthur, and fed him milk from a bottle and cooed him to sleep in a crib. Soon enough, MacArthur was not the only cub bathed in the tub! The couple continues to raise lion and tiger cubs as their own, until they are old enough to return them to zoos. Helen becomes the first female zookeeper at the Bronx Zoo, the keeper of the nursery.

### Classroom Discussion

- Nonfiction gives real facts. Look at the cover of the book. How does it reveal that the book is nonfiction? What is a zookeeper? Look at the illustrations on page 4. What are Fred's duties at the zoo? Discuss other possible duties of a zookeeper.
- Take a look at the illustration on page 3. Point out Helen and Fred Martini. How does the street scene and the silhouettes in the window reveal the couple's desire for a baby? Study the illustrations on page 5. What things does Helen do to plan for a baby?
- Explain why Fred thinks Helen is the right person to care for the lion cub. How does Helen treat MacArthur like he is a human baby? Explain how she makes use of all the baby supplies and equipment that she bought for the baby the couple never had.
- Discuss why the illustrations on pages 12–13 are presented as photographs. Why does Helen keep track of MacArthur's firsts? What is significant about the photographs hanging on the wall (p. 15)?



- Discuss Helen’s thoughts when MacArthur is sent to a zoo in another city. What does the illustration on page 17 reveal about MacArthur’s feelings. How do the gray days make Helen sadder? What makes her happy again?
- Fred brings home triplet tiger cubs. How does caring for Raniganj, Dacca, and Rajpur compare to caring for MacArthur? What makes their care more difficult? Study the illustrations on pages 26–27. What kinds of mischief do they create in Helen and Fred’s apartment? Helen is serving tea to a visitor. Describe the lady’s reaction to the triplet cubs. How is the woman with the baby puzzled by what’s going on next door?
- How does Fred know that it’s time to return the cubs to the zoo? Explain why Helen goes with them. Discuss how the cubs and Helen have trouble being away from one another. How does this give her a new idea?
- Describe Mr. Crandall’s reaction to the zoo nursery that Helen creates. Why is he convinced that the cubs need Helen? Explain the following statement: “Helen had mothered her way into becoming the first woman zookeeper at the Bronx Zoo” (p. 41).
- Read “A Quieter Kind of Hero” (pp. 46–27). Explain why Helen is called a “quiet hero.” Discuss what Helen meant when she said the nursery resembled “Noah’s Ark.”

Guide prepared by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

## About the Creators

**Candace Fleming** is the author of more than twenty distinguished books for children, including *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia*, winner of, among other awards, the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* for Nonfiction. She received the NCTE Orbus Pictus Award and a Sibert Honor for *Giant Squid*. Her books with Holiday House include *Cubs in the Tub* and *Honeybee*. She lives in Chicago with her husband, Eric Rohmann, illustrator of *Honeybee* and many other award-winning books.



Photo Credit Scott Fleming

**Julie Downing** has illustrated more than forty-five picture books, including *Cubs in the Tub* by Candace Fleming, as well as *The Fire Keeper’s Son*, *Tessa Takes Wing*, and *First Mothers*. She has won many awards, including a Parents Choice Award, the New York Public Library’s Best Books Award, APAAL Best Illustrated Book, and the Irma Black Silver Medal. Her work has been featured in the SCBWI Original Art Show. Julie teaches illustration to undergraduate and graduate students at the Academy of Art University. She lives in San Francisco.

