

# STONE SOUP

## STONE SOUP

by Jon J. Muth

Ages: 4-8; Grades: PreK-3

Themes: Generosity, Community, Eastern Culture

Running Time: 12 minutes

## SUMMARY

The traditional story of **Stone Soup** is retold in China. The tricksters are three monks, searching for the meaning of happiness. They come upon a village whose people have become hardened and untrusting. The monks pique the villagers' curiosity by boiling three stones in a small pot. As a few villagers slowly offer to add to the pot, the soup grows more and more delicious. Everyone soon discovers that the more they give, the more they get. And the monks find that happiness can be found in the most simple of endeavors.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify the elements of a folktale.
- Students will connect the text with the value of generosity.
- Students will compare and contrast different versions of the same story.

## BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce students to the folk tale genre. Explain that folk tales deal with the legends, customs, superstitions, and beliefs of ordinary people. They usually originated as stories that were passed orally through generations. There can be multiple variations of the same folktale, often from different cultures. Elicit background knowledge about folktales. Guiding questions:

- What folktales do you know?
- What happens in the folktales that you know about?
- What do you like about folktales? What don't you like?

Read aloud several well-known folktales. Identify the main elements of folktales: trickster characters; a problem

to solve; often, but not always, an element of magic or fantasy. Make a chart with these elements and guide students to fill it in for the fairy tales that you read aloud. Encourage children to look and listen for these elements as they view the movie.

Discuss the character value of generosity. Explain that generosity is the quality of giving and sharing with others. Guiding questions:

- Who is someone in your life who has been generous to you? What did he/she give you?
- What kinds of things can be given? What else, beyond material things?
- When have you been generous with others? How did it make you feel?
- Is being generous ever hard? Why?

Tell students that they are about to watch a movie about three monks who trick villagers into being generous. Encourage students to watch and listen for how the villagers change from the beginning of the story to the end.

## AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Read aloud other versions of Stone Soup. Suggested titles:

- *Stone Soup* by Ann McGovern and Winslow Pinney Pels
- *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown
- *Stone Soup* by Heather Forest
- *Stone Soup* by Tony Ross
- *The Real Story of Stone Soup* by Ying Chang Compstine
- *Stone Soup: A Traditional Tale from Sweden* by Alison Hawes
- *Cactus Soup* by Eric A. Kimmel
- *Nail Soup* by Eric Maddern
- *Bone Soup* by Cambria Evans

As you read, use a Venn Diagram or a T-chart to compare these stories with the movie. Discuss why the authors chose to change major elements or characters in the stories.

Guiding questions:

- How are the characters in the stories different than the characters in the movie?
  - How is the plot different? How is it the same?
  - How does the setting affect the plot and characters?
- Make stone soup in class! Start with a walking field trip to select the perfect stone. Send home a note to families, asking them to provide one item for the soup (preferably already cut up!). In the note, highlight the other activities and discussions that the class has been having around the Stone Soup stories. Invite the parents to come share some of the stone soup on the day you make it. Prepare the soup in class in a crock pot or on an electric burner. Encourage each child to add his/her ingredient and take a turn stirring the pot.

Use the experience of making stone soup together to write your class's own version of the story as a shared writing activity. Compose the story together and write it on large chart paper, leaving a space for an illustration on each piece of paper. Practice reading the story from beginning to end with the students. Then, break the students into small groups and give each group a page of the story to illustrate. Hang the story in the room for students to practice reading.

## OTHER RELATED TITLES FROM WESTON WOODS INCLUDE:

*Chicken Little*, by Rebecca Emberley and Ed Emberley  
*Do Unto Otters (A Book About Manners)* by Laurie Keller  
*Seven Blind Mice*, by Ed Young  
*Stone Soup*, by Marcia Brown  
*The Stone Cutter*, by Gerald McDermott  
*Strega Nona*, by Tomie dePaola  
*The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!*, by Jon Scieszka, ill. by Lane Smith

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