



## Stone Soup

*Jon J. Muth (Illustrations)*

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Three strangers, hungry and tired, pass through a war-torn village. Embittered and suspicious from the war, the people hide their food and close their windows tight. That is, until the clever strangers suggest making a soup from stones. Intrigued by the idea, everyone brings what they have until-- together, they have made a feast fit for a king!

In this inspiring story about the strength people possess when they work together, Muth takes a simple, beloved tale and adds his own fresh twist.

## Stone Soup Details

Date : Published March 1st 2003 by Scholastic Press

ISBN : 9780439339094

Author : Jon J. Muth (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Stone Soup for online ebook

### Courtney Spicer says

Muth, J., (2003). Stone Soup. New York: Scholastic Press

Stone Soup is the story of 3 brothers who are monks and have been traveling. They are weary, and questioning things such as what makes someone happy. They come to a village, where the villagers seem angry and do not communicate well with each other. They are shut up in their houses and will not help the monks find a place to rest. The monk brothers decide to make a pot of stone soup, as they are hungry, and a little girl watches. She is curious as to why they are boiling stones in such a small pot. She offers the use of one of her mother's larger pots for the monks to use to boil their stones. The villagers watch from their homes, and are intrigued by this act of kindness. They wonder too, what are those monks doing? One by one the villagers emerge from their homes....and the rest is to be read by you!

This story is a traditional fable, that has been told by many authors in several stories. This particular version has amazing watercolor drawings that are from the perspective of the monks, inside the soup bowl, the outside looking in, and scenes of the village. All of the pictures contain a black cat, which is funny because one of the things the monks were speculating before entering the village was a cat's whiskers! It is traditional because it has a very clear beginning, middle, and end. It has a light moral, and the story is very vague. It can take place almost anywhere, in any culture. It has 3 monks, a wise and curious child, and the story spans a very short time. It is a timeless piece loved by many children.

The 1948 version of Stone Soup, written by Marcia Brown, won the Caldecott Honor Book award, which is given to the most distinguished American picture book from the previous year. This book is a timeless classic, and many authors and illustrators expanded and reimagined this fun and light fable.

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### Heather Singh says

Stone Soup by Jon J Muth is a classic story about sharing and kindness. I have read many versions of this story and it is always one of my favorite folktales. Muth's version has beautiful, tranquil watercolor artwork that is just as much part of the story as the words in the book.

The story opens with three monks; Hok, Lok, and Siew on a trek, they are discussing what makes one happy when they come across an unhappy village. The monks venture inside only to be turned away by all the inhabitants. The monks decided to make stone soup. This curious scene brought out a child. She then brought a pot and even helped the monks find the stones. Their good deed and the little girls willingness to help set the entire village in motion. The monks are able to entice the villagers out of their homes and to share their things with everyone else. The theme of this book could be about helping your neighbor, or paying it forward. The more someone gave in the story the more the next person wanted to help.

Jon J Muth is an award winning (Caldecott Honor Book) author and illustrator. Stone Soup is the winner of National Parenting Book Award. The art and story telling are something that will stay with the reader for years to come.

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## **Natalie says**

### Fractured Fairytale

This is one of my favorite versions of this folktale to read to children in k-4. In this book there are three monks traveling together when they come across a village. One, presumably the eldest, monk wants to illustrate to the other two "what makes people happy". When they enter the village they are not greeted by a single person. The monk set to work trying to entice people out of their homes by claiming that they will make a soup out of stones. The lessons in this tale are more explicit and the story is more about sharing and communing together than about trickery.

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## **Jenna Woods says**

Stone Soup, version by Jon J. Muth, is a folktale that has been adapted through many generations and cultures. Each version teaches a village of people the importance of sharing even their littlest of possessions to help each other and in turn make something even greater. Stone Soup qualifies as a folktale because it is a human story passed down through generations of oral and written tradition. Stone Soup can be sub-categorized as almost a trickster tale because, in this version, the monks trick the selfish townspeople to pull all the materials together to make an excellent stew they can all enjoy together. I believe that this folktale can be used for almost any grade level in elementary school, the underlying moral themes can make for decision for older grades and the possibility of actually making a hands-on "Stone Soup" recipe will engage students of all ages.

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## **Brad says**

Of all the books I read my kids Jon J. Muth's Stone Soup is far and away my favourite.

Not only is it a beautiful retelling of a classic tale, it is the finest telling of the tale I have ever seen. Muth's watercolours are exquisite: sparing, richly detailed, perfectly moody and expressive.

And his choice of setting is sublime. Muth sets his version in a small walled village at the base of a mountain in China. Three monks come to the town one morning and start making stone soup, drawing the villagers -- suspicious from many hardships -- out of their homes and into each other's hearts.

Muth's telling is simple and lovely, and it generates the spirit of community better than any other telling of Stone Soup I've seen.

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## **Catherine Miner says**

In this folktale, three monks are traveling through a mountain discussing what true happiness is. They come across a village where the villagers are not friendly to outsiders or to each other – no one wants anything to do with the monks, and they do their best to avoid them. The monks decide to teach the villagers a lesson on how to be happy by making stone soup. The villagers become curious and begin to join the monks in making the soup.

The story opens in a pretty common way, with the main characters having a discussion amongst themselves, and closes with the monks telling the “moral of the story.” The setting of the story is an Asian village. The main characters are the three monks, and there are many villagers that are minor characters. The theme of the story is that when people give of themselves and work together for one purpose, they can achieve true happiness. The plot of the story involves the monks “tricking” the villagers into making the soup and in turn teaching them a lesson. There are several motifs in this that appear in many folktales, including the heroes (the monks) who teach a moral lesson to the unsuspecting villagers, and the moral lesson that they learned.

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### **Sarah Jane says**

**Summary:** A classic fable is wonderfully retold in Jon Muth's “Stone Soup”. This beautiful watercolor rendition follows three monks as they travel through a mountain landscape and stumble upon a small village. As the monks enter the village, no one is to be found. Doors are locked and windows shut tight as the monks decided that the villagers need to learn how to make “stone soup”. A brave girl approaches and questions the monks. After she retrieves a bigger pot for the soup, the curious villagers begin to appear and what follows is an important lesson about generosity, sharing, and the importance of community.

The plot and motifs present in this version of stone soup include travelers coming into a town, the making of stone soup, and the villagers learning an important lesson. This version takes place in a Chinese mountain village with three monks as the travelers. The watercolor illustrations compliment the setting of this story quiet wonderfully as it reminds one of the tradition of Chinese watercolor. The airiness of the watercolor also adds to the mountain landscape as you feel you are among the clouds in the first few pages of the book. As the villagers begin to gather around their curiosity and playfulness can be seen in the illustration. The warmth can be felt from the red glow of Chinese lanterns as everyone gathers around for the feast. The themes of this story can be clearly interpreted. As the monk states at the closing of the story “To be happy is as simple as making stone soup” one might surmise that generosity, sharing, and coming together as a community can make us all a lot happier

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### **Stacy says**

After experiencing Muth's Stone Soup as a read-aloud, kindergarten students had the following conversation:

Student 1: "I noticed, this book didn't win an award."

Student 2: "It should have."

Student 3: "Let's give it an award."

Student carefully cut out his own version of the Caldecott award and taped it to the cover.

Student 4: "Now everyone who reads it will know that it won an award."

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## **Racheal says**

What's all this socialist mumbo jumbo?

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## **Christi says**

The opening of the story introduces the main characters- the monks Hok, Lok, & Siew. The introduction of the characters as an opening for a story has global roots, and sets up the folktale so that details are not wasted. The end of the story states the moral of the tale, that is the importance of sharing what you have to make a more plentiful whole. Though the moral was obvious, it was not stated in "the moral of the story..." style of Aesop's fables.

The primary setting is a village full of distrustful people who isolated themselves. The monks started their journey on the road before they came upon the village. The village represents the familiar, lending a universal theme that this isolation can happen anywhere.

The main characters are Hok, Lok, & Siew. They are monks and are considered to be wise. They are joined by a little girl. Slowly, the rest of the villagers come and join, such as the scholar.

The monks travel and come upon a village that was distrustful and isolated. The monks see this and decide that they are going to teach the village how to make stone soup. Slowly, the villagers make their way out to the center of the town to see the monks make stone soup. The collaborative effort of the soup, where each member of the village contributed, was started by a curious little girl. As everyone contributes, they come together as a village to eat and share stories. They learn how to share and how to care for one another again, and the wonderful things they can gain by doing so.

Motifs of the story include strangers coming into a distrustful town, and tricking the villagers, though the treachery is for the sake of a moral outcome. The concept of inedible objects in soup bringing together a community can be found in other cultures.

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## **Amy says**

I enjoyed this book, but I'm not sure that my niece did. She struggled a lot with figuring out why anyone would want to eat soup made with stones, so I'd have to say that the larger point presented in this great story was lost on her. We may try this one again when she's a little older.

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## **Melissa Overland-mckay says**

3 monks; Hok, Lok, and Slowe travel through the mountains of China, finding a distraught village and make themselves known. Hok, Lok and Slowe work together to make their favorite delicious stone soup and in the process the village comes together to enhance the soup. At first the monks come into the village alone with no help and no acknowledgment from the villagers. But it only takes the curiosity of a young girl for the other villagers to realize the kindness of these monks and the enlightenment that they would bring to the

village. Learning that sharing and coming together will always make everyone happier. The 3 monks leave the village a changed place with their message learned.

John Muth the author of this book does a terrific job in creating a masterpiece of culture, moral and a light storyline. In the book John is able to illustrate such a great message in a light upbeat way. John use of watercolors and simple illustrations of the characters and the environment around them, his descriptive words of the characters only help to enhance the storyline and the simplistic illustrations let the words stand out more. The illustrations throughout the book also help to tell the story by showing light glances into the culture of the village and the descriptions of the characters. This book is captive in its words, light with its illustrations but tells the reader a grand story; overall it is a terrific book for any age.

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### **Sawyer Dombrowski says**

In this book, there were three main characters that consisted of the three monks. Their names were Hok, Lok, and Siew. They were walking along a mountain when they ran into a village that they could see down below. The village people were weary of newcomers because of all the problems they have had with strangers in the past. Not being discouraged, the three monks started cooking soup in the courtyard of the village to try and join everyone together.

The opening was not your typical "Once upon a time". It started off by saying "Three monks traveled along a mountain road". The closing also wasn't your typical "...and they lived happily every after". It ended by subconsciously explaining the moral of the story. The setting started in the mountains but quickly moved to the "village" where the remainder of the story took place. The main characters were the three monks, and also all of the village people helped tie the story together. The theme was based around the idea that sharing is what makes the world go around and causes happiness for those who participate. I feel as though in this story the motif was the monks. They were the heroes and peacemakers of the story. The plot was redundant to those of other traditional stories because there was a problem, but they brought everyone together and ended happily with a lesson being taught.

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### **Edwin Reyes says**

The book Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth is about three monks who come across a village. The village has grown accustomed to not being comfortable with strangers or new people to the village ever since the war. The village is protected by a wall and a gate. When these three monks cross by the village they noticed the gate was open, but when they walked through the village, no one was to be seen. All of the doors were shut and all of the windows were closed. Then the monks came across a little girl within the village. A girl so young she was not acting like the other villagers hiding and avoiding the monks. She instead began to talk to them; she even became to help them.

The story takes place in what looks to be an ancient China. They live in a village with many similarities to the Chinese culture. There were also no cars and an emperor to help provide us with a time. The main characters are the three monks and the little girl with the rest of the villagers playing a minor role. Towards the end of the book they discuss what they have learned from the monks, which appears to be some of the theme. They thanked the monks for teaching them to share with each other as it benefits everyone. The monks shared with

the their recipe to make the soup while the villagers shared their ingredients. It also should be noted that if it wasn't for the little girl being so welcoming they would have never known about the soup. The other villagers treated new faces with a negative point of view because of the recent war, but that is not how you should treat any new face that you see; the little girl showed us this.

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### **Jeanene DeFine says**

Stone Soup is a traditional story involving a town who has gone through some hardships. The towns people don't live as a community anymore and doesn't interact with each other. The town is soon visited by three monks who feel they need to bring happiness back to the towns people. They decide to introduce them to their stone soup. They begin to brew their stone soup and towns people come out of their homes to see what the monks are doing. The story evolves into a lesson of community and friendship. It is a warm read that will leave you a feeling of happiness as the monks intended.

The author takes a traditional story and places it in China. The illustrations in the book take you to ancient China and introduces the reader to a rich and colorful world. The illustrations represent the authors style of story telling. The author introduces the reader to three protagonist characters in the beginning of the story. The plot of the story can be considered a conflict with the monks and the towns people. The author's theme for his story is to bring communities together. The point of view of the story is in the monks perspective. Stone Soup is an excellent representation of traditional literature and Jon Muth's illustrations brought it all together.

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### **Kelly says**

“Stone Soup” is a very old folktale with variations and retellings set in countries around the world, in various historical periods, and featuring different characters. Most versions feature hungry strangers who persuade locals to share their resources, and often there is a lesson of cooperation and generosity, even in times of hardship and scarcity.

In my preschool classroom (of 3 to 5 year olds), we spent several weeks investigating a series of illustrated children's books based on this folktale about making soup from stones (or cactus needles or nails). Through focused engagement with geographically-, culturally-, and historically-specific retellings of the folktale, we have been able to integrate literacy, geography, cultural studies, cooking, dramatic and constructive play, and scientific inquiry into our classroom life.

Jon Muth's *Stone Soup* was my favorite version in our series, as it had richly nuanced illustrations and kindhearted characters. In addition, it focused more on lessons of compassion, empathy, and caring than the other versions.

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### **Kate says**

A touching book based on a folk tale common in many cultures (with different variations) about how working together and sharing can create happiness and a bond within a community.

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## **Angela Bailey says**

**Title / Author / Publication Date:**

Stone Soup. / Jon Muth. / 2003.

**Genre:** Fiction - Folktales.

**Format:** Picturebook - print.

**Plot summary:**

"Three wise monks trick a poor, frightened community into finding happiness by teaching them the magic of generosity" (NoveList).

**Considerations or precautions for readers advisory:**

generosity, selfishness

**Review citation:**

"Muth has taken this old tale and transplanted it from its traditional European setting to China. The tricksters are no longer hungry travelers or soldiers but Buddhist monks. Their goal in fooling the villagers is not to fill their own stomachs but rather to enlighten them about the happiness that comes from sharing. Muth's characteristic watercolor illustrations, with their striking use of misty hues contrasted with bright primaries, are expertly done and convey a distinct sense of place" (Grace Oliff in School Library Journal).

**Section source used to find the material:**

Best Books for Children Preschool through Grade 6 (9th ed.)

**Recommended age:** Ages 4 - 8.

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## **Aladdin Jones says**

Three wise travelers set sail on an adventure to figure out what is it that makes people happy in their lives. Jon Muth uses his captivating skills of illustration and imagery to depict what he believes to be the answer to this lifelong question. This tale is one that talks about how much of an impact people can have with one another if they were to befriend one another rather than having malice or strife against each other. While yes, it is comforting at times to be alone and think to yourself, I believe Muth is making a "call to action" statement and wants his readers to go out and greet some new people. In today's day and age, some believe that networking is an ideal method for becoming happy/successful in life. If a group of people come together to work on/develop a project...who knows how tremendous the outcome can be. Although this book was written back in 2003, its lesson of teamwork can still be applied to today. This could also be a good book for schools to integrate into their reading curriculum. It could bring about a wave of dismantling "cliques" within the younger grades and combatting the presence of bullying.

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### **Elliott Dietrich Mattison says**

The best retelling of this classic story that we've seen. Reading the insights on the back page really bring what the author is doing to life.

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