

The Story of Stone Soup

The Story of Stone Soup Once upon a time, there was a great famine (which means there wasn't enough food to go around). The people in one small village didn't have enough to eat, and definitely not enough to store away for the winter. People were afraid their families would go hungry, so they hid the small amounts of food they did have. They even hid their food from their friends and neighbors. One day a wandering soldier came into the village. He asked the different people he met about finding a place to eat and sleep for the night.

"There's not a bite to eat in the whole county," they told him. "You better keep moving on."

"Oh, I have everything I need," he said. "In fact, I would like to make some stone soup to share with all of you." He pulled a big black cooking pot from his wagon. He filled it with water and built a fire under it. Then, he reached slowly into his knapsack and, while several villagers watched, he pulled a plain gray stone from a cloth bag and dropped it into the water.

By now, hearing about the magic stone, most of the villagers were surrounding the soldier and his cooking pot. As the soldier sniffed the stone soup and licked his lips, the villagers began to overcome their lack of trust.

"Ahh," the soldier said aloud to himself, "I do like a tasty stone soup. Of course, stone soup with cabbage is even better."

Soon a villager ran from his house into the village square, holding a cabbage. "I have this cabbage from my garden," he said as he held it out for the soldier.

"Fantastic!" cried the soldier. The soldier cut up the cabbage and added it to the pot. "You know, I once had stone soup with cabbage and a bit of beef, and it was delicious."

The butcher said he thought he could find some beef scraps. As he ran back to his shop, other villagers offered bits of vegetables from their own gardens--potatoes, onions, carrots, celery. Soon the big black pot was bubbling and steaming. When the soup was ready, everyone in the village ate a bowl of soup, and it was delicious.

The villagers offered the soldier money and other treasures for the magic stone, but he refused to sell it. He had many offers for a cot to sleep on that night. The next day he traveled on his way.

Ask: What is the moral of the story? (Hint: By working together, with everyone contributing what they can, a greater good is achieved.)

Questions for discussion:

1. Was the stone magic? Why do you think that?
2. Do you think the soldier made stone soup before? Do you think he knew what would happen?
3. Were the villagers selfish or selfless?
4. What do you think the villagers gained in addition to a good meal?

(Adapted from the classic folktale from the Aarne-Thompson folktale system)