



Stone Soup

By Jon J Muth

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Award-winning artist Jon J Muth retells the favorite tale of a selfish community who is tricked into creating a delicious soup from stones. Set in China in Muth's hauntingly beautiful watercolors.

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.

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Stone Soup By Jon J Muth Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #418189 in eBooks
- Published on: 2010-11-01
- Released on: 2010-11-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 1-3-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. In his author's note, the reteller details the elements of Chinese folklore that he incorporated into the story as well as the symbols from Eastern culture used in the artwork. However, Muth's decision to alter the motivation of the tricksters also depresses some of the humor in the story and gives it a moralistic tone. In addition, the likelihood that these initially suspicious and reclusive villagers would become truly happy people as a result of their own gullibility is slim. This is a beautifully executed book with a flawed story line.

Grace Oliff, Ann Blanche Smith School, Hillsdale, NJ

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From [Booklist](#)

K-Gr. 2. Muth freshens a familiar folktale with a change of setting. Three Zen monks arrive in a Chinese mountain village where hard times have made villagers distrustful of strangers and selfish toward one another. Undeterred by a lack of welcome, the monks set about preparing dinner soup, which, as the story traditionally goes, draws the villagers from their sheltered homes with ingredients to enrich the pot, thereby reinvigorating the community. The muted, unexceptional telling is less successful than the expressive pictures, which bloom in color as the soup thickens; the misty grays and blues of the mountains and empty village square gradually become vibrant, climaxing in a spread of villagers eating at a crowded, seemingly endless table, enjoying food and one another's company beneath the glow of red lanterns. A note at the back explains Muth's change of venue. An unusual version that kids will want to compare to other adaptations of the story. *Stephanie Zvirin*

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Review

"Delicious and satisfying." -- *The Horn Book*

* "With the same aesthetic grace he displayed with Tolstoy's *The Three Questions*, Muth here transports a classic tale to rural China. The setting not only allows his evocative, impressionistic watercolors to play over mist and mountains but also affords an opportunity for Buddhist underpinnings. ... And while the tale of "Stone Soup" can be told to make fools of the villagers, here it becomes an offering as generous as Muth's villagers turn out to be. -- *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"[Muth's] His respect for Chinese people and their culture makes this serving of fusion cuisine delicious and satisfying" -Horn Book

"Muth's characteristic watercolor illustrations. . . are expertly done and convey a distinct sense of place." - School Library Journal

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Diana Castillo:

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Kenneth Flowers:

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