

Stone Soup

One day a poor old man was walking along when he came to a village. As he approached it, the villagers thought, 'here is a beggar and we don't have much ourselves'. They started going towards their homes, hoping he would go away and they would not have to share anything.

The old man called out that he was hoping for somewhere to sleep and a meal. The villagers told him to go away and that they had not got enough to eat themselves. The old man told them he had everything for a meal and that he was thinking of making stone soup for everyone. He took a stone out of his pocket and an iron cooking pot out of his bag.

He started to build a fire and fill the pot with water. He put his stone into the boiling water. The villagers came out of their houses and watched as the old man sniffed the contents of the pot and licked his lips. 'That is good,' he said, 'it just needs a pinch of salt and some parsley.'

'I can give you some,' a villager responded, and she returned with parsley, salt and a cabbage.

'Thank you,' remarked the old man, 'I once had stone soup with cabbage and some carrots and it was really delicious.'

Then another villager said, 'well, as it happens I do have a few carrots.' He returned with some carrots and a turnip. So it went on until there were potatoes, onions and mushrooms. Someone even had some loaves of bread. When it was ready everyone sat down and enjoyed a really lovely soup. There was enough for the entire village.

When the old man left the next morning, one of the villagers, stopped him and said, 'I would like to buy your magic stone. You have given us the greatest of gifts the secret of how to make soup from stones. We shall never forget.'

The old man replied. 'The stone is not the greatest gift, but sharing is. It is only by sharing that we may make a feast.'