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## Stone Soup Independent Readers

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Once, long ago and far away, there was a little village in an old forest. The villagers loved their village and loved the jobs they did to support it. There were fruit and vegetable farmers. They would harvest all of the wonderful fruits and vegetables to take to the market. There was a dairy farm with cows and chickens. The dairy farmer would feed the chickens, milk the cows, gather the eggs and make the butter and cheese to take to the market. There were also butchers who prepared the meat for the people to eat. They would unload the meat from their carts and hang it on a big butcher hook. Then they would chop and slice the meat and wrap it up for the market.

The village also had a bakery filled with tasty treats. Each morning the bakers would knead the dough to make the bread, mix the batter for cookies and cakes, and place the pans in their big oven until everything was baked. Then they would wrap it to sell at the market. There was also a school in the town where all of the children went to learn from a kind and wise teacher. She taught them many lessons that they would need as they grew up.

Every Friday afternoon was market day in the village. All of the villagers would go to the town square and sell their goods. They would set up their tables and greet the other villagers asking, "How are you doing today?" Even school would let out early on Fridays. The children would hurry to the village square to get a glass of milk from the dairy farmers and a big chocolate chip cookie from the bakers.

These villagers were very friendly to one another, but not to everyone. You see, this village did not like strangers. One Friday, as the sun was setting and the villagers were closing the market, some of the children saw an old traveler coming towards the village gate. She was carrying a large bag over her shoulder. The children ran out to see her and asked, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" And the old traveler said, "I am a traveler who has traveled from far away. I am very tired and very hungry. May I come into your village to eat something and rest for a bit?" Well, the children didn't know what to say, so they ran back to the village and told the people what they saw.

All of the villagers got very upset and started to argue. The head farmer stood up and said, "I'll take care of this!" He marched to the village gate with all the other farmers following and asked the traveler, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" The traveler replied, "I am old and I have traveled from far away. I am very tired and very hungry. May I come into your village to eat something and rest for a bit?" The farmer turned red in the face and said, "Absolutely not! We do not like strangers in this village." And the villagers said, "That's right, we do not like strangers." And the old traveler begged, "Oh please, won't you let me stay?" And the whole village said, "No! Get out!" The head farmer slammed the village gate and locked it with a big key. The old traveler picked up her heavy sack and started down the road into the forest.

The villagers were quite happy with themselves for getting rid of the stranger. They all went into their houses, slammed their doors shut and locked them. Then they closed their windows and locked them too. Then they settled down to sleep.

The old traveler was walking into the dark forest. As she walked, she heard the leaves crunching under her feet and the twigs cracking. She heard the wind blowing through the trees and the birds calling. She heard the sound of the squirrels and raccoons scurrying. A bear was growling as it looked for food. Far away a wolf howled. The traveler was afraid. She gathered twigs and wood. She sat down on a huge rock and took out a big match. She lit the match and started a fire. Then she sat back on the rock to go to sleep.

At dawn, the traveler saw the sun beginning to rise. She heard a stream running down the hill. She opened her sack and pulled out a big soup pot. She carried it to the stream and scooped up a lot of water. She placed the pot on the fire. The water on the bottom of the pot began to sizzle and pop.

Back at the village the children had woken up. They were very curious about what happened to the old traveler. They snuck out of their houses and ran toward the forest. As they got close to where the old traveler was, they heard her singing, "Stone soup, stone soup, put it in a pot. Stir it all together and serve it nice and hot." They didn't want her to know that they were there, so they hid behind the trees and bushes, getting closer and closer. But the old traveler was very wise and she knew that they were spying on her. She walked over to a big stone. She picked it up and dusted it off. Then she dropped it into the boiling water.

The children were now very curious. They had to find out what the traveler was doing so they walked up to her and asked, "What are you doing?" And she replied, "I am making stone soup." The children said, "Stone soup! That sounds crazy!" And the traveler replied, "It's not crazy, it's delicious." And she kept on stirring the boiling pot, singing, "Stone soup, stone soup, put it in a pot. Stir it all together and serve it nice and hot." They wanted to taste the delicious soup, so they asked, "May we have some stone soup?" The traveler said, "Well, the thing about stone soup is you have to put something in the pot before you can take something out."

The children looked in their pockets to see what they had to put in the soup. The first child pulled out a piece of his cookie from the market and dropped that into the pot. The next child found a tootsie roll and dropped that into the pot. The third child pulled a lolly pop from her pocket and dropped that into the pot. The last child didn't have any cookies or candy in her pockets, but she did have a piece of lint. She looked at the traveler who just smiled at her and she dropped the lint into the pot. The children asked, "Now can we have some stone soup?" And the traveler said, "It won't be ready until noon. Come back with your bowl and a spoon and you can have some stone soup."