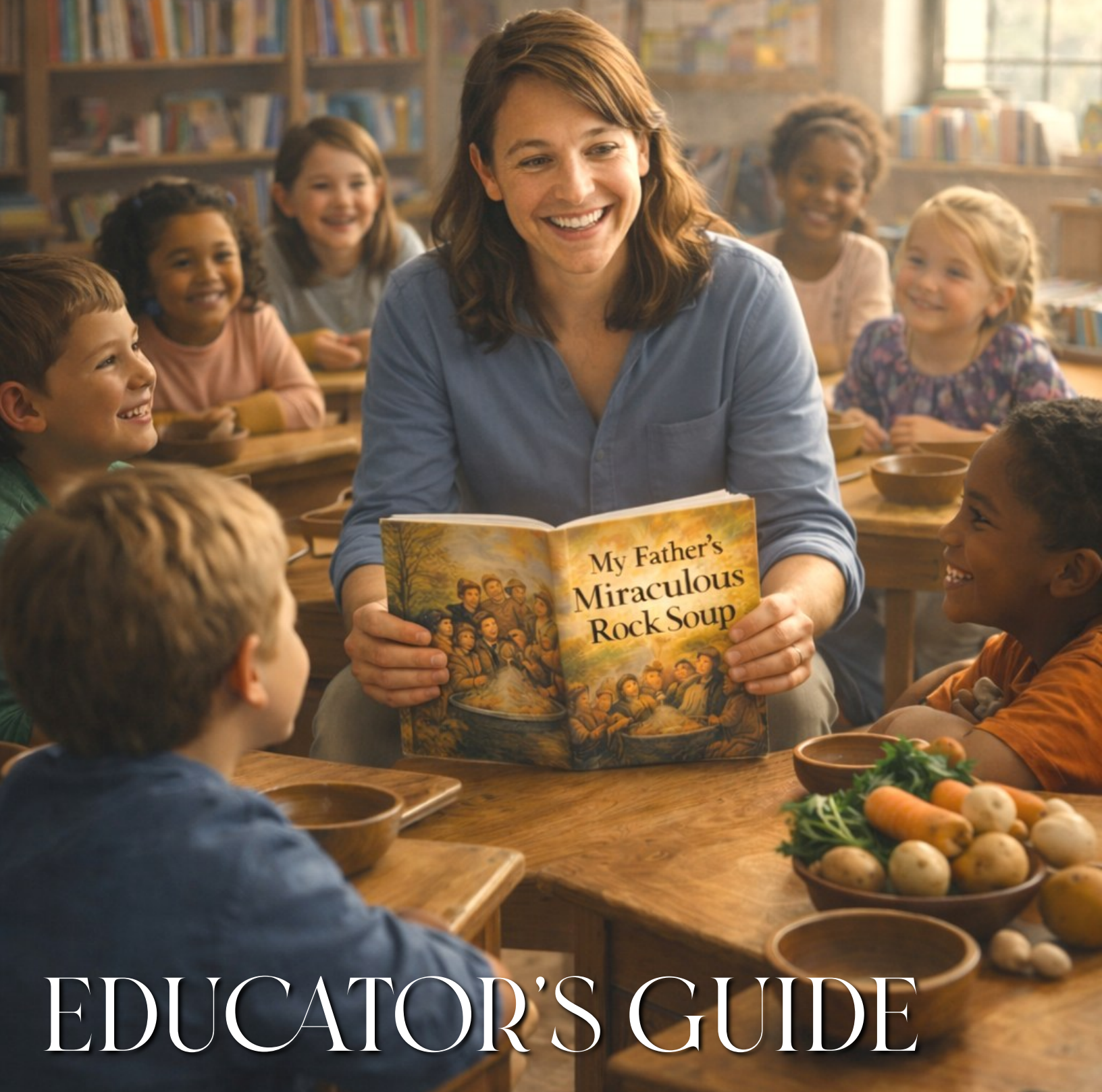


My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

**Donald
Rubbo**
with
Cheryl Lynne Rubbo



RUBBO

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My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup

Educator's Guide

For Teachers · Librarians · School Garden Programs · Homeschool Families

By Donald and Cheryl Lynne Rubbo · Grades PreK–6 · Free to Download and Share

"Go find me a rock, and I'll teach you how to cook."

— Admondo Rubbo, the Bronx, 1965

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Educator's Guide is a free resource for teachers, librarians, school garden educators, and homeschool families using My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup in classroom, library, and home learning settings.

It contains: a book summary and curriculum connections · pre-reading and post-reading activities · 20 leveled discussion questions · the Rock Soup classroom cooking activity · a writing workshop · cross-curricular connections · a family take-home letter · and information on how to spread the message.

All activities are reproducible for classroom use. Please share freely with colleagues, parents, and school communities.

Part 1: About the Book

Book Summary

My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup is a luminous, full-color children's storybook by Donald and Cheryl Lynne Rubbo — a deeply personal reimaging of the beloved Stone Soup folktale, unfolding across three interconnected stories.

STORY 1 — "FINDING THE ROCK" (THE BRONX, 1965)

Eight-year-old Donald's father, Admondo — a warmhearted artist who fills their modest Bronx apartment with creativity and love — sees Donald baking, and says to his son: "Go find me a rock, and I'll teach you how to cook." What follows is Donald's first lesson that miracles are never in the mundane — it's in the generosity of people willing to share what they have so that everyone can eat.

STORY 2 — "THE SOLDIER'S PLAN" (A WAR-TORN EUROPEAN VILLAGE)

A weary soldier, journeying home from war, arrives in a village that was traumatized by fear and scarcity. Drawing on his ingenuity and the curiosity of the villagers, the soldier coaxes the cautious people — each clutching what little they have — to open their storehouses and their hearts. Together they transform meager ingredients into a feast of nourishing abundance.

STORY 3 — "MAKING ROCK SOUP WITH MY DAD" (BACK IN THE BRONX)

Donald and his father go shopping for fresh vegetables, return to the kitchen, and pour, chop, stir, season to make Rock Soup together for the family, with Donald's fuller understanding of the love that the pot really holds. The story closes with warmth, intergenerational love, and a recipe the readers can make at home.

"This story was born at the crossroads of memory and imagination. I wrote it to honor my father's love and creativity, and to give every child a kitchen to belong to."

A Note from Donald to Educators

Dear Teacher, Librarian or Parent,

My father was the most generous, creative man I ever knew. He taught me that miracles don't come from having more — they come from sharing what you have. He taught me this in a small Bronx kitchen, with a rock, when I was eight years old.

I have carried that lesson for sixty years. This book is my way of passing it on to your students and children.

The themes in this story — generosity, community, faith, the shared meal, the intergenerational transmission of love and wisdom — are not abstract. They live in every kitchen, every classroom, and every table where people gather and eat together.

I hope this guide makes it easy to bring My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup into your classroom, library, garden or home. And I hope that with this, your children and students make the soup.

With love and gratitude,
Donald Rubbo
Cheryl Lynne Rubbo

Part 2: Curriculum Connections

My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup connects richly to standards across multiple subject areas and grade levels.

English Language Arts

- ◆ Reading Literature: Key Ideas — Identify the central message; describe characters and how they respond to challenges
- ◆ Reading Literature: Craft and Structure — Analyze point of view; compare the structure of two stories (Stone Soup folktale vs. personal memoir)
- ◆ Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge — Compare to other versions of Stone Soup; connect illustrations to text
- ◆ Speaking and Listening — Participate in collaborative discussion; retell the story; present personal connections
- ◆ Writing — Narrative writing (personal memory); opinion writing; informational writing (history of Stone Soup)
- ◆ Vocabulary — Context clues; multiple-meaning words; figurative language (metaphor, simile)

Social Studies & History

- ◆ Community and belonging — What makes a community? How does sharing create community?
- ◆ World War II — The European village setting introduces age-appropriate discussion of wartime scarcity and resilience
- ◆ Italian-American culture and immigration history — The Bronx in the 1960s; immigrant family traditions
- ◆ Family and intergenerational relationships — How traditions, values, and stories pass from parent to child
- ◆ Civic values — Generosity, cooperation, trust, and the common good

Health, Nutrition & Physical Education

- ◆ Nutrition education — Soup as whole food; vegetables and broth; fresh vs. processed food
- ◆ Cooking as a life skill — Following a recipe; measuring; kitchen safety
- ◆ Food systems — Where does food come from? Farm to table; school gardens
- ◆ Community health — How shared meals support mental and physical wellbeing

Visual Arts

- ◆ The AI-assisted illustrations — How did Donald direct each image? The relationship between artist and tool
- ◆ Pop Art — Don Rubbo Sr.'s legacy; the movement's history; famous Pop Art artists
- ◆ Color, mood, and meaning — How does the illustrator use color across the three story settings?

School Garden Programs

SPECIAL CONNECTION: MY FATHER'S MIRACULOUS ROCK SOUP AND THE SCHOOL GARDEN

This book was written with school gardens in mind. The vision at the heart of our Campaign, The Great American Cooking Revival, is a generation of children who grow tomatoes on Monday, harvest them on Wednesday, and chop them into soup on Friday.

See Part 4 for the complete School Garden Rock Soup Activity.



Part 3: Discussion Questions

Twenty leveled questions in four groups: Before Reading, During Reading, After Reading, and Going Deeper. Use for whole-class discussion, small groups, literature circles, or written response journals.

Before Reading — Build Background & Curiosity

1. Have you ever heard the story of Stone Soup?

If yes: Tell us what you remember. If no: What do you think a story called "Rock Soup" might be about? What would make a rock miraculous?

2. What is a "miracle"?

Have you ever seen or experienced something that felt miraculous — something surprising and wonderful you didn't expect?

3. Look at the cover of this book. What do you notice?

What clues does the cover give about when and where the story takes place? What do the colors and title make you wonder?

4. This book has three parts. Why might an author tell one story in three different settings?

What might be the same across all three? What might be different?

During Reading — Comprehension & Close Reading

5. (After Part 1) Why does Admondo say to Donald, "Go outside and find a rock, and I'll teach you how to cook"?

What is the lesson he is really trying to teach? Do you think Donald understands it fully at first?

6. (After Part 1) What does the word "miraculous" mean in the title?

Is the rock actually miraculous? What is the real miracle in the story? Can something ordinary really become miraculous? How?

7. (After Part 2) The soldier arrives in a village where people are afraid to share. Why?

What changes their minds? Is it the rock — or something else? What does it feel like to be live in a community where people don't trust each other?

8. (After Part 2) Compare the village in Part 2 to the Bronx neighborhood in Part 1.

What is similar about the two communities? What is different? How do the illustrations show these differences?

9. (After Part 3) Why does the story return to the Bronx at the end?

What has changed about Donald between Part 1 and Part 3? What does his father's lesson and then making the soup together at the end mean?

After Reading — Theme, Response & Reflection

10. What is the most important lesson in this book?

How would you say it in your own words — in one sentence? Compare your sentence with a partner.

11. Have you ever been in a situation where people worked together and created something bigger than any one person could alone?

What was it? How did it feel? How is that situation like Rock Soup?

12. Donald's father teaches him with a story, a cooking lesson and feeding the family.

What is the difference between being told something and being shown something? Who in your life has taught you something important by doing it with you?

13. The book is set in two very different times and places.

Why do you think Donald Rubbo chose these settings? What do they have in common? What does setting a story in wartime communicate?

14. The illustrations in this book are AI-assisted — created by a computer tool under Donald's artistic direction.

Does knowing that change how you feel about them? Why or why not? What is the difference between a tool and the artist who uses it?

Going Deeper — Critical Thinking & Extension

15. The original Stone Soup story is a folktale. Donald Rubbo's version is a personal memoir turned children's story. What is the difference?

Which feels more powerful to you — the anonymous timeless folktale of Stone Soup, or the personal story of My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup with real names and places? Why?

16. Donald Rubbo has written that America has a "cooking crisis." Do you think this is true?

What evidence do you see in your own life or community? What would help? Do you think a children's book can be part of the solution?

17. The soldier in Part 2 is a stranger who changes a community. Is he manipulating the villagers — or helping them become who they want to be?

Can a trick be kind? Where is the line between manipulation and inspiration?

18. Food is central to this story — but the book is really about something much larger than soup.

What does food represent in this story? Why do shared meals hold such power — in this book, in your family, in cultures around the world?

19. This book is part of the Rubbo's Campaign: "The Great American Cooking Revival." What would it mean for America to "revive" cooking?

Do you think this is possible? What would need to change? What role could a children's book play?

20. If you could add a fourth part to this book, where would it be set, and what would happen?

Would you set it in your own community? Your school kitchen? What would the miracle in your Rock Soup story be?

Part 4: Classroom and Library Activities

Activity 1 — The Rock Soup Classroom Cook

GRADE LEVEL · TIME · MATERIALS

Grade Level: K–6 (adapt as needed)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Materials: Large pot + heat source · Cutting boards and age-appropriate knives · Vegetable broth (teacher provides) · One vegetable, herb, or seasoning per student (assigned in advance) · Bowls, spoons, napkins · One small rock (washed)

STEPS

1. One week before: Send home the Family Letter (Part 7). Assign each student one ingredient to bring.
2. On the day: Read Part 1 of the book aloud as a class.
3. Place the rock in the pot. Add the broth. Say together: "The miracle is never in the rock. It's in what we're willing to share."
4. Each student comes forward, names their ingredient, and adds it to the pot.
5. Cook the soup together. While it simmers, read Part 3.
6. Serve and eat together. Reflect.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What did it feel like to add your ingredient to the pot?
- Was there a moment when you could smell or see something change?
- Who in your family has made a shared meal like this? What do you remember?
- What was our miracle today?

Activity 2 — Stone Soup Story Comparison

Students compare My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup to another version of the Stone Soup folktale, analyzing structure, theme, and craft.

GRADE LEVEL · TIME

Grade Level: Grades 2–6 · Time: 45–60 minutes

Materials: My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup + at least one other Stone Soup version (Marcia Brown, Jon J. Muth, or Ann McGovern)

- ◆ Read both books over two sessions
- ◆ Students complete a comparison chart (reproducible in Part 5): setting, characters, what starts the soup, why people share, the central miracle, the theme
- ◆ Whole-class share: What is the same across all Stone Soup stories? What is unique about the Rubbo's version?
- ◆ Students write: "Which version of Stone Soup is most powerful — and why?"

Activity 3 — My Miraculous Memory Writing Workshop

Students write their own personal narrative: a memory of a time when they witnessed or participated in an act of generosity, community, or sharing.

GRADE LEVEL · TIME

Grade Level: Grades 2–6 · Time: 60–90 minutes across 2 sessions

- ◆ Session 1 — Brainstorm: Read Donald's note to educators aloud. Discuss: What memories do YOU carry? Students complete the Miracle Moments brainstorm sheet (Part 5)
- ◆ Session 2 — Draft: Students write "My Miraculous Memory" narrative. Encourage: Start in the middle of the moment. Use sensory details — what did you see, hear, smell, taste, feel?
- ◆ Optional: Bind into a class "Book of Miraculous Memories"

Activity 4— The Community Ingredient Map

Students map the "ingredients" of their own community — the people, places, traditions, and contributions that make it what it is.

GRADE LEVEL · TIME

Grade Level: Grades K–5 · Time: 45 minutes

- ◆ Draw a large empty pot on chart paper. Ask: "What are the ingredients of OUR community?"
- ◆ Brainstorm: people (teachers, families, neighbors), places (school, park, library, faith community), traditions, values
- ◆ Each student contributes one "ingredient" — writing or drawing it on a sticky note
- ◆ Debrief: What does our community pot look like? What would be missing if any one ingredient were removed?

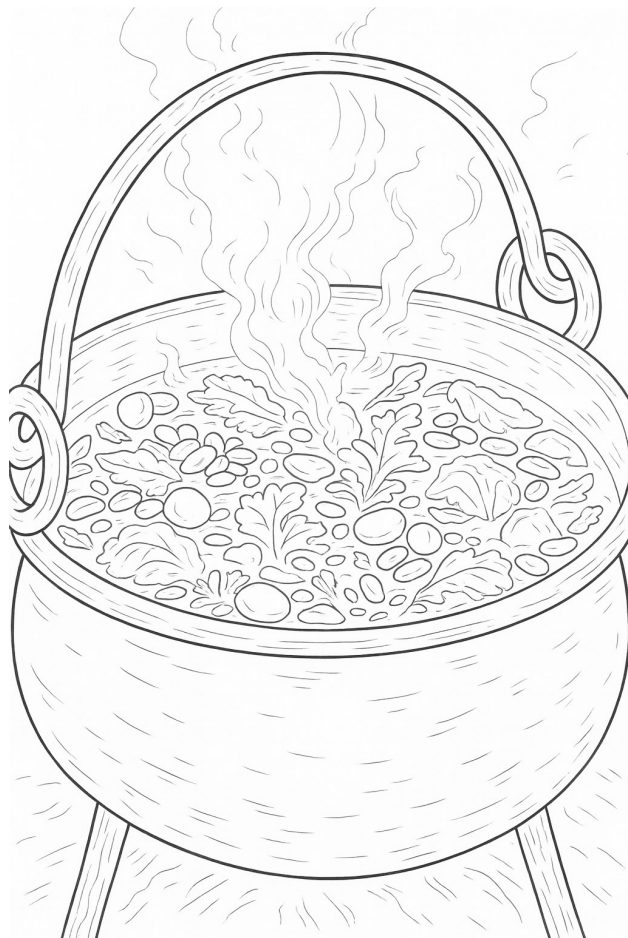
Activity 5 — School Garden Rock Soup

The ultimate extension — students grow the vegetables, harvest them, and cook the soup themselves. Designed for school garden programs.

GRADE LEVEL · TIME

Grade Level: K–6 · Time: 2–4 weeks (growing) + 1 cooking day

- ◆ Week 1: Read the book as a class. Plant seeds or seedlings for Rock Soup vegetables
- ◆ Weeks 2–4: Students tend their plants and continue discussing the book's themes
- ◆ Harvest Day: Students harvest their vegetables. Each says: "This is my ingredient. This is what I grew for our soup."
- ◆ Cooking Day: Follow the Rock Soup recipe (Part 6). Cook together, eat together, reflect
- ◆ Final reflection: "What is the miracle we made?"

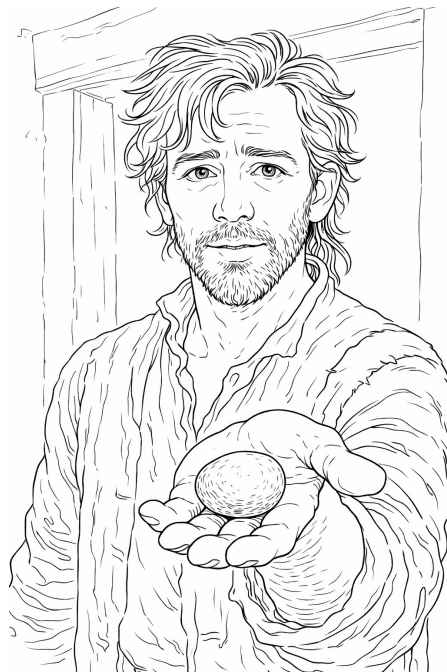


Part 5: Reproducible Materials

These pages are reproducible for classroom use

Reproducible 1 — Stone Soup Story Comparison Chart

Compare	My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup	Other Version (title: _____)
Setting	<i>The Bronx 1965 + WWII European</i>	
Main Characters		
What starts the		
Why do people		
The central miracle		
The theme in one		
Which moved me		



Reproducible 2 — Miracle Moments Brainstorm Sheet

MY MIRACULOUS MEMORY — BRAINSTORM

A "miracle" in this story doesn't mean magic — it means something surprising and wonderful that happened because people were generous.

Think about your own life. Have you ever seen or experienced a moment like that?

1. A time someone shared something with you that they didn't have to:

2. A time you shared something with someone else:

3. A time a group of people worked together and made something better than any one person could:

4. A time someone taught you something important by doing it WITH you, not just telling you:

5. A time a meal — cooking it, eating it, or sharing it — felt like more than just food:

Circle the memory that feels the most alive. That's the one to write about.

Reproducible 3 — My Rock Soup Recipe Card

MY ROCK SOUP RECIPE

My name: _____

What I brought to the pot: _____

What our class added together:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How the soup smelled: _____

How the soup tasted: _____

The miracle in our Rock Soup was: _____

I would make this soup again for: _____

Part 6: Admondo Rubbo's Rock Soup Recipe

In bringing *My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup* to life in your classroom, consider having a simple rock or stone to pass around for the students to hold in their hands—a tangible symbol of possibility, imagination, and shared contribution. Let it become a centerpiece of reflection, a quiet invitation for students to see how something ordinary can spark something extraordinary.

However, while the story celebrates the idea of cooking with a “rock,” it’s important to honor both creativity and safety: **do not place the rock into the pot of soup during your lesson.** Natural stones can contain moisture or structural weaknesses that may cause them to crack or even burst when heated. Instead, let the rock remain displayed along with the cooking ingredients—where its true power lives—in the story it inspires: that what we bring, no matter how small, has the power to nourish many.

KITCHEN SAFETY FOR CLASSROOMS

- Always supervise cutting — use age-appropriate tools
- Assign roles: cutters, stirrers, ingredient-namers, taste-testers, story-readers
- Discuss allergies in advance — the recipe is naturally vegan and gluten-free
- Check school food preparation policies before cooking in the classroom

Admondo Rubbo's Rock Soup

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil	1 medium onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced	2 medium carrots, sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced	1 medium red potato, quartered
3 stalks fresh parsley	1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 bay leaf	Rubbo Salt, and pepper, to taste
1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped (optional, for garnish)	

Feeds a family of four.

What's needed:

Large skillet	2 pots, one large one smaller
Wooden spoon	Knife and cutting board

Note: Put the two pots on the stove, fill with water. You'll put all the ends, skins and trimmings from the vegetables into the smaller pot, to make the vegetable broth. Cook, simmering, while the soup base is cooking.

Rock Soup:

- Prepare the mirepoix vegetables
- Slice ends of onion, remove skin and dice into small cubes
- Remove garlic cloves from the bulb, rub off the papery skin, and mince
- Remove the stalks from the parsley, chop the leaves
- Mix together and place in a small bowl
- Prepare the vegetables:
- Wash celery, carrots and potatoes

Chop vegetables into small pieces

Note: Mix the chopped vegetables together, divide in half and place in two bowls.

Prepare the Soup Base:

- Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
- Add one bowl of the chopped vegetables, add a pinch of Rubbo Salt and a pinch of ground black pepper.

Sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened and translucent, stirring occasionally.

- Add the sauteed vegetables to the larger pot of water.
- Simmer the Soup:
- Bring the soup to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a low simmer.
- Cover the pot and let it simmer for 25-30 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.

Add the second bowl of (raw) chopped vegetables.

- Finalizing the Rock Soup:
- Strain the vegetable stock, discard the cooked scraps and add the vegetable broth to the soup.
- Taste the soup and adjust seasoning with additional Rubbo Salt if needed.

Serve:

- Ladle the soup into bowls. Garnish with freshly chopped parsley if desired.

Serve hot with crusty bread.

NOTE: This recipe is like a blank canvas, feel free to add any ingredients you desire.

Suggestions: Dumplings, meat (poultry, beef, lamb, pork), seafood (fish, shellfish), Zucchini, Peppers, Cabbage, Parsnips, Turnips, Beans, (cannelloni, pinto, etc.), Barley, Tomatoes

**"TO FEED MORE PEOPLE," MY FATHER
ALWAYS SAID, "JUST ADD WATER."**

Part 7: Family Take-Home Letter

Reproducible for classroom use. Customize the bracketed fields before sending home.

DEAR FAMILIES,

Our class is reading *My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup* — a luminous children's storybook by Donald and Cheryl Lynne Rubbo, set in a 1965 Bronx kitchen and a war-torn European village. At its heart, it is a story about what happens when people share what they have: small offerings become a miraculous feast, and a frightened community becomes a generous one.

We will be reading and discussing this book as part of our unit on [insert unit topic].

— THE ROCK SOUP CLASSROOM COOK —

On [DATE], our class will make Rock Soup together — just like in the book. Each student will bring one ingredient to contribute to our class pot.

Your child's assigned ingredient is: _____

Please send this ingredient, washed and ready to cut, on [DATE].

— HOW YOU CAN CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION AT HOME —

- Ask your child: "What is Rock Soup about?" and "What did you bring to our class pot?"
- Make the Rock Soup Recipe together at home (free download at myfathersrocksoup.com/educators)
- Share a memory of a time your family cooked together, or a meal that felt like a miracle

— ABOUT THE BOOK —

My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup · Hardcover \$29.99 · Kindle \$8.99 · Available on Amazon
More information: myfathersrocksoup.com

Thank you for being part of our community pot.

With warmth,
[TEACHER NAME] · [SCHOOL / CLASS] · [DATE]

Part 8: Help the Book Reach More Classrooms

Reproducible for classroom use. Customize the bracketed fields before sending home.

THREE WAYS TO HELP THE BOOK REACH MORE CLASSROOMS

1. LEAVE AN AMAZON REVIEW — An honest review from a teacher or librarian is the single most effective way to help other educators find this book.

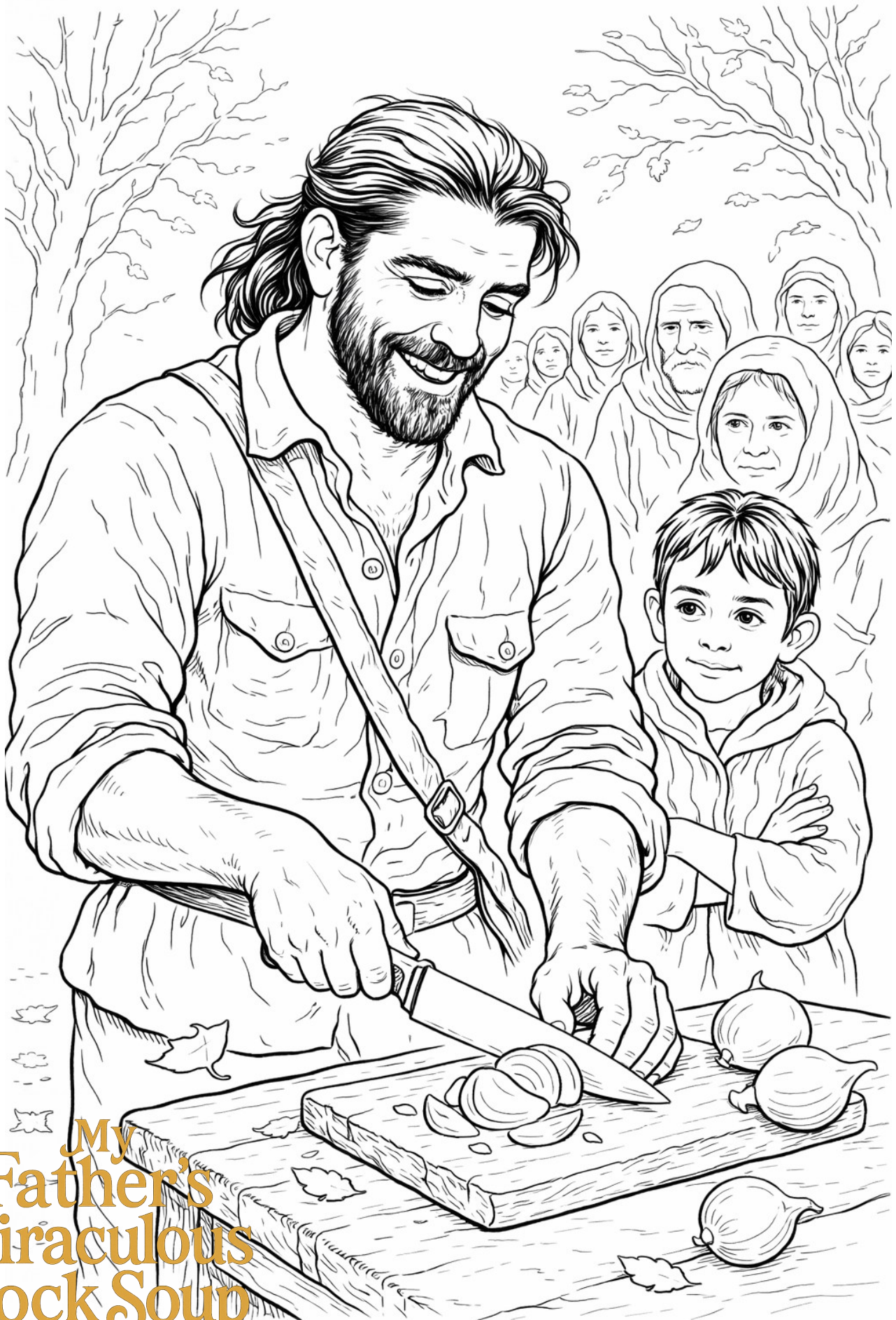
→ amazon.com/My-Fathers-Miraculous-Rock-Soup/dp/B0FY56SDF8

2. SHARE THIS GUIDE — Forward to a colleague, post in a teacher group, or mention at a staff meeting. The guide is free and reproducible.

3. REQUEST THE BOOK FOR YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY — Ask your librarian to add it to the collection.



"Let's teach America to cook again. One family. One kitchen. One pot of soup."



My Father's Miraculous Rock Soup