

# Lisa's Talking History Book

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**CHARACTERS:** Narrator, Lisa, Lady Chocolate, Mr. Shovel, Watermelon Gal, First Ribbon, Second Ribbon, Third Ribbon, First Glass Bead, Second Glass Bead, Third Glass Bead, Quadrant, Psaltry, Meticulous Journal

**PROPS:** box of books, talking history book, cup with hot chocolate, spade, watermelon slice, 3 boards of streamers ranging in colors of reds, pinks, and white, 3 plastic balls, quadrant, meticulous journal

**SETTING:** a room in Lisa's house

**Narrator:** Our story opens with Lisa sitting on the floor looking into a box of old books. Her mother purchased this box at an auction yesterday and brought it home.

**Lisa:** *(examining a few different books in the box and leafing through a few pages)*

I wonder why Mom spent money on this box of old books. *(picking up one to examine it closer)* Now here's an interesting title "Magical Talking Foods and Objects from History." What kind of book could this possibly be? I guess I'll take a look at this one. *(She takes the book and goes to sit facing the audience on a chair nearby. She opens the book to the first page.)*

**Lisa:** *(reading aloud--can be pasted into the front of the book for Lisa to read these lines)*

Introduction to the Reader: This informative book will tell you about some of the things that were significant to settlers as they traveled on the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in 1775-1776. But don't be too surprised when some surprising things happen while you are reading this book.

**Lisa:** *(looking up and talking to herself)* I wonder what *that* means? *(turns to the next page)*

**Lady Chocolate:** *(walks in carrying a big cup of hot chocolate)* Good day. Well it's about time that someone opened our book. We all have been so bored locked up inside for so many years. Nobody has even been interested in opening this talking history book for such a *long* time.

**Lisa:** Who are you?

**Lady Chocolate:** Why, I am Lady Chocolate. Can't you tell that I am something special?  
*(extending her cape to show it off)*

I sure am glad you finally opened our book. I have been dying to tell someone how important I was to the travelers on Juan Bautista de Anza's colonizing expedition of 1775-76. They were headed to Alta California on the first overland route to establish more settlers in that part of Northern New Spain.

**Lisa:** Why were **you** so important?

**Lady Chocolate:** Why, they wouldn't think about going anywhere without me. I was the hot drink of choice, long before people drank a lot of coffee around here (*twirls around and then leaves*).

**Lisa:** That's news to me. I thought coffee has always been the most popular hot beverage. (*turns another page*)

**Mr. Shovel:** (*enters carrying a spade*) You (*looking in the direction of Lady Chocolate and extending his hand in her direction*) are not nearly as important as **I** (*extending shovel forward*) was on Anza's expedition of 1775-1776! Don't you know that those thirsty travelers used us shovels to dig water holes in the dry arroyos of the desert? Why some of those holes were about as deep as a man was tall. In those days that was about five feet or so. Because of me, they found enough water for everyone to survive at that point on their journey! How can you beat that? (*leaves*)

**Lisa:** (*talking to audience*) I must admit this is a *very* unusual book. Let's see what else this book has. (*turns another page*)

**Watermelon Gal:** (*enters carrying a big slice of watermelon, looking very glamorous and vain*) Mr. Shovel (*extending hand towards direction of Mr. Shovel*) may think he is so important, and I guess he was, but he and all his brothers sure aren't as lovely as **I** am. All the other watermelons and I were **most** welcome when we appeared along that journey. We were beautiful sights!

**Lisa:** You were? How was that?

**Watermelon Gal:** Did you know that we were gifts from the Yuma Indians, the Quechans, to the people on the Anza Expedition? We tasted so good to all those tired folks. They hadn't had fresh fruit for a very long time! And you know, our color is the most luscious color in the world. We **are** beauties, can't you tell? (*leaves*)

**Lisa:** Well, well, that watermelon gal sure is stuck on herself! But I must admit, if I hadn't had any fresh fruit in a long time, I would be very glad to have some tasty juicy watermelon. That must have been a real treat to all those people. (*Lisa looks at the book again.*) Let's see. . .the next page is about ribbons. I wonder how ribbons fit into the Anza Expedition? I can't imagine how.

(*Three ribbon people each carrying in a board of streamers.*)

**First Ribbon:** We helped Commander Anza when he recruited settlers to come along. He promised them beautiful ribbons from our family.

**Second Ribbon:** Everyone liked the idea of getting ribbons, especially those people who had never ever had any before. Remember most of the people who joined the expedition were poor people hoping for a better life in Alta California.

**Third Ribbon:** Ribbons could be used for their hats or hair or to decorate other things. They were issued several yards of ribbon, and even children got some. So you see, we made the settlers happy and we also helped to convince them to go on that long journey. Don't you think *that* is important?

*(Ribbons walk away.)*

**Lisa:** *(turns a page in the book and looks at it with a puzzled face, then looks up)* Beads?? What are glass beads doing in this talking history book?

*(Three beads walk in each carrying a shiny single colored ball--not small.)*

**First Glass Bead:** Did you know we glass beads played an important part in Anza's Colonizing Expedition?

**Second Glass Bead:** Yes, we most certainly did, more than once!

**Third Glass Bead:** Many in our bead family were taken along to give as gifts or rewards to the Indians along the way. We were great peacemakers. The natives loved receiving colorful glass beads.

**Second Bead:** Sometimes we were used as a form of payment to them. They really did like us.

*(Beads walk out.)*

**Lisa:** I see there are more pages. This book sure is an interesting way to learn history. *(turns page)* I wonder what this talking history book will show and tell me now?

**Quadrant:** *(A child walks in carrying a quadrant.)* You can't quit reading our wonderful book until you hear about me. I am a quadrant *(holding it forward)*, an important instrument on Anza's historic expedition. Because of me, people could know where they were along the way. I told about latitudes on the journey. I made it possible for good maps to be made to help further travelers get to Alta California. Now that was important! *(walks out as psaltry enters)*

**Psaltry:** *(A child walks in carrying a psaltry and with musical notes hanging from his/her neck.)* All of you are special in some way I know. But let's face it, none of you can make music like I do. Commander Anza specially requested that the priest, Padre Font, bring **me** along. Anza's expedition was not going to be without music at some time. The natives along the way had never heard anything like me before. I have a *very* special quality you know. *(leaves and journal walks in)*

**Meticulous Journal:** You all may think you are so important, but I have you beat as far as history goes! Without **me**, a meticulous journal that the Spanish priest, Padre Pedro Font, kept, people today would not know as much about what actually happened on Juan Bautista de Anza's Colonizing Expedition of 1775-1776. Can't you see how important **I** am? *(walks off)*

**Lisa:** (closing the talking history book and gets up.) This is some book! A history book whose pages actually talk! (enthusiastically) I've got to show this book to my friends. They're not going to believe this! They're not going to believe how it tells us some things about the Colonizing Expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza. A talking history book! Wow!!

(Cast comes out for song "Historical Things." Chorus sings somewhere in background or at side of stage.)

## Historical Things from the Anza Expedition

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♩ = 100

G C G C

1. Beads and seeds and tools and rib - bons were all part of  
 2. Cho - co - late was brought a - long to drink, and e - ven  
 3. Some things ap - peared a - long the way, e - ven some  
 4. A me - ti - cu - lous jour - nal and e - ven

3

1. an ex - pe - di - tion led by Juan Bau - tis - ta  
 2. an im - por - tant in - stru - ment of the day,  
 3. mel - ons, gifts of food from the Yu - mas  
 4. a psal - try are part of An - za's true sto - ry,

5

D7 G D7 G

1. de An - za, de An - za.  
 2. a qua - drant, qua - drant.  
 3. and Pi - mas, mas  
 4. true sto - ry in his - to - ry.

**THE END**

**List of Props for “Lisa’s Talking History Book”**

1. box of books (to be provided by the group producing the play)
2. watermelon slice
3. talking history book
4. chocolate cup poster board
5. quadrant
6. psaltry and musical stole
7. meticulous journal
8. glass beads (plastic balls)
9. ribbons on covered fabric board
10. shovel

**List of Costumes for “Lisa’s Talking History Book”**

1. Watermelon Gal
2. Lady Chocolate

## Historical Notes for “Lisa’s Talking History Book”

Various items played a significant role in the colonizing expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza in 1775-1776.

When recruiting potential settlers for the expedition, many of whom were poor, Anza promised them beautiful ribbons among other things. These were items that they were not used to having and were helpful to him in convincing the people that they would have a better life upon arrival in Alta California.

The Franciscan priest, Padre Pedro Font was asked to use the quadrant provided to the expedition. It was something he did know how to use. In those days, it was considered an advanced technological instrument, which enabled travelers to determine latitudes along the journey. This information was helpful for the expedition to know its positions and also in making maps for themselves and future travelers.

Anza also requested that Padre Font bring a stringed musical instrument, something like a zither, called a psaltry, which the priest knew how to play. It was played during religious services. It was something that the natives along the way had never seen or heard before, and was sometimes used to entertain them.

In order to cross the desert, Anza broke the expedition up into three groups. This was necessary so that travelers would find enough water in the dry arroyos along the route. If the total expedition had traveled across the desert together, it would have been disastrous as the supply of water was very low.

Shovels were used to dig wells deep enough to find water. Sometimes these were about five feet deep or so. Very little water was usually found, but enough for survival. By the time the next group arrived at these places, the water level would have risen enough for them to get water as well.

The travelers did not drink coffee on the expedition. Instead the hot beverage considered a necessity was a drink made using chocolate.

Melons played a part in the true story of this colonizing expedition. At one point, natives shared many melons with travelers on the expedition, which were most appreciated.

Glass beads were brought along and used by the expedition when they had encounters with natives. Sometimes the beads were used as gifts or in payment for service rendered.

The journal that Padre Font kept was quite detailed and has been a wonderful source of information about many facets of the colonizing expedition of 1775-1776.

### References

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Historical Consultants

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