

# The Anzas' Gift

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**CHARACTERS:** Narrator #1, Narrator #2, Señora Anza, Juan Bautista de Anza, Pablo, Carmen, Padre Font, Soldier, Chief Palma, Muleteer, Mule, Woman, María (young girl)

**PROPS:** material for tapestry and tapestry needle, basket of yarns, quadrant, stick horse, soldier's shield, muleteer stick, lariat, long material for fake river (two or three children needed to hold the material), plain cloth doll

*(Señora Anza is seated with a large piece of material, which overflows from her lap to the floor. She has yarn and a threaded tapestry needle in her hand. A basket full of yarn is on the floor as well.)*

**Narrator #1:** The year is 1776. Señora Anza is at home. Her husband, Don Juan Bautista de Anza Jr., has recently returned from his colonizing expedition into the province of Alta California. The expedition had traveled over 1200 miles from its official starting point at Tubac to the Bay Area of California.

**Narrator #2:** This expedition was a major accomplishment for Anza. He had found an overland route to the northernmost province of New Spain on his first expedition in 1774. Then afterwards he took 300 people on this second expedition to the far northwestern frontier. Two hundred-forty of them were people who went to permanently settle there.

*(Don Juan Bautista de Anza enters.)*

**Anza:** It has been a hot day out there today. I am glad to finally be home. *(takes off hat and puts it down or hangs it up)* My dear wife, what are you doing? You look puzzled.

**Señora Anza:** I have been sitting here for quite a while trying to think of some way to decorate this piece of material. Did you remember that your goddaughter María Juana, *tu hijada*, is getting married in a few months? I think we should give her a **very** special gift.

**Anza:** You are right, she is my goddaughter, and the daughter of my very good friend. I agree, her wedding gift should be something special. What are you planning to do with that material? *(extending his hand towards it)*

**Señora Anza:** Well, I would like to make a special tapestry for her. This material would be perfect for that kind of project.

**Anza:** She could hang it somewhere in their new *casita*. I'm sure their house will have some blank walls.

**Anza:** Why don't you stitch some flowers? You love all kinds of flowers.

**Señora:** I thought about doing that, but that is so common. Several of my *amigas* have done similar things. I want my tapestry to be original. Something very special from the two of us. (*Her eyes light up and her expression changes.*) I just got an idea! I could make a tapestry showing something about your recent successful colonizing expedition!

**Anza:** You mean like people who played a role in some way?

**Señora Anza:** Why yes, that is a **great** idea! Now tell me, who do you think should go into this tapestry?

**Anza:** (*scratching his head*) This is going to be a most unique tapestry I must admit. Well. . . there are several interesting people who should be in your project.

**Señora Anza:** Who are they? I want to get started today. I have everything I need. (*pointing to basket of yarn on floor*)

## Scene 2

(KNOCK, KNOCK) (*Anza goes to the door and answers it.*)

**Anza:** Well, look who's here! My favorite niece and nephew. So nice to see you both. *Bienvenidos.* Come in, come in.

(*Pablo and Carmen enter.*)

**Pablo:** Hello *Tío*, we heard that you have been back from your colonizing expedition for several days now. We came to see you. We are glad you got back safe and sound.

**Anza:** Well, yes I am! Now you came to visit at a very good time. I was just about to tell your *Tía* about some of the people that were important to the expedition. Why don't you sit down with us and listen awhile? (*Anza sits on chair.*)

(*Pablo and Carmen nod their heads and sit on the floor.*)

**Carmen:** What are you doing *Tía*?

**Señora Anza:** (*stands up and shows the blank tapestry*) I am starting to work on a wedding gift for our goddaughter. Do you remember Maria Juana? I am going to stitch a tapestry that is about your uncle's colonizing expedition and its people. (*She sits back down.*)

**Carmen:** What a wonderful idea, and what a great gift that is going to be!

**Anza:** I will try to give you as good a description of them as I can. Hopefully, you will be able to see them in your mind so that you can stitch them into your tapestry later.

**Señora Anza:** I am going to do my best. I will listen well.

**Anza:** We could get started with Padre Pedro Font, a Spanish Franciscan priest. He was assigned to oversee all the spiritual matters of our expedition. Try to picture him in his gray Franciscan habit.

*(Padre enters. Señora Anza, Pablo and Carmen “freeze” but look as though they are listening intently when the various people enter.)*

**Padre Font:** Not only did I say mass for the people and lead them in other prayers and songs, but I knew how to use a quadrant and record latitudes. *(shows quadrant he is carrying)* That is something very important when one is traveling in new places. Sometimes it is easy to become disoriented, especially traveling on the desert. I was able to record our positions so we would know where we were and not be going around in circles. *(Padre leaves.)*

**Anza:** Then there were the soldiers on horseback. They wore thick leather coats for protection and carried shields.

*(Soldier enters riding a horse and carrying a shield.)*

**Soldier:** What about us? We soldiers were very important to the expedition. We provided a military escort so everyone would be safe on this dangerous journey. We definitely should be in your tapestry. *(marches away)*

**Anza:** I mustn't forget to tell you about the Indian muleteers. They were in charge of all the mules. They were easy to spot as they wore red headbands.

*(Muleteer walks in with a muleteer stick and with a mule walking on all fours.)*

**Muleteer:** All of us muleteers were very valuable to the expedition. We loaded and unloaded all supplies on and off the backs of all the mules, twice a day. Handling these mules was no easy job!

*(They leave as a vaquero comes in carrying a lariat and riding a stick horse.)*

**Vaquero:** Don't forget about us vaqueros. We wore chaps, something like a leather protective apron. Some people call us cowboys. We took care of 1000 head of livestock that went along. That was no easy job either. We deserve to be represented in this tapestry. *(leaves)*

**Anza:** Then there was our friend, Chief Salvador Palma, leader of the Quechan tribe, the Yumas. He and his people really helped us cross the Colorado River.

*(Muleteer, mule, vaquero and soldier come to center stage to sing. Chorus in background or at side somewhere sing as well. At second verse, Chief Palma comes out to stand center stage. He extends hand toward some children carrying a long piece of material (fake river). They cross the stage and leave after song.)*



*(Woman and daughter carrying a doll walk to center of the stage.)*

**Señora Gonzales:** María, you have been such a good girl helping out with all the work we have to do on this expedition. I am proud of you.

**Girl:** Mamá, I am so glad you let me bring my doll. She helps me too.  
*(They leave.)*

**Señora Anza:** Juan, you have given me some good ideas for my tapestry. The members of your expedition were an interesting group of people. I could almost see them standing here right before me. My tapestry will certainly be unusual.

**Carmen:** *Tío* Juan, what other people went on the expedition?

**Anza:** *(stands up)* Well, a great many were people of mixed blood.

*(Mestizo enters.)*

**Mestizo:** I am a mestizo. I have mixed blood, Indian blood and Mexican or Spanish. *(leaves)*  
We were part of this expedition too.

*(Mulatto enters.)*

**Mulatto:** You *(extending arm to the mestizo)* were not the only people with mixed blood who went on this historic expedition. I am a mulatto, and many other mulattos went along too. We are descendants of black slaves who intermarried with Spanish and Mexicans. *(looking at Señora Anza)* Don't forget about us! *(leaves)*

**Pablo:** Oh, *Tío*, I could see these people in my head. Now I know that several different kinds of people traveled on your expedition or else they helped along the way.

**Señora Anza:** You know Juan, I think we had better stop right here. I am going to run out of room, or else I will need to find a bigger piece of material.

**Juan:** Okay, I do understand, but somehow you have to make room for the Native American interpreters to be represented. There were some Indians along the way who helped translate for us. They gave us valuable information about what to expect along the way.

**Pablo:** What did they do?

**Anza:** They made it possible for us to communicate with other natives we met as we traveled. The interpreters certainly helped us. Other natives helped us too along the way. Did you know that the Pima, Salinan and Chumash tribes were some of those who provided us with food when we needed it? You should stitch natives from different tribes into your tapestry.

**Carmen:** *(talking to Pablo)* We sure picked a good time to come visit. Now we have a good idea about some of the people who played a role in our uncle's colonizing expedition.



### **List of Props for “The Anzas’ Gift”**

1. Blank Tapestry
2. Felt stick horse
3. Quadrant
4. Soldier’s shield
5. Lariat
6. Basket of yarn (to be provided by the group producing the play)
7. Muleteer stick
8. Cloth doll
9. The Colorado River

### **List of Costumes for “The Anzas’ Gift”**

1. Anza in field wear
2. Señora Anza
3. Padre Font
4. Soldier
5. Muleteer
6. Mestizo
7. Mulatto
8. Señora Gonzales
9. Girl Maria
10. Mule

## Historical Notes for “The Anzas’ Gift”

Juan Bautista de Anza’s wife, Ana María Pérez Serrano, did not take part in his two expeditions. She stayed at their home in Tubac while he was gone. They had no children.

The purpose of the Second Expedition led by Anza was to establish a permanent Spanish-speaking settlement in Alta California. It was vital that families be part of the expedition to insure that settlers would stay in the area. Thus it was that women and children were among the travelers on this perilous journey.

The members of the expedition came from a variety of backgrounds and different settlements. Different cultures were represented among the travelers. Some were *criollos*, that is, descendants of Europeans who had been born in New Spain. Anza himself was a *criollo* of Basque heritage. Others were of mixed blood. Mestizos had indigenous ancestors as well as Spanish or Mexican blood. Others with mixed blood were mulattos, who were descendants of African slaves brought earlier to New Spain.

Indian muleteers took care of the many mules on the expedition. All supplies had to be loaded and unloaded on and off the backs of the mules daily. Vaqueros (cowboys) watched over all the livestock. Soldiers escorted the expedition, and all were told to bring their families. Indian guides and interpreters played important roles as well.

The only true Spaniard on the expedition to Alta California was the Franciscan priest, Padre Pedro Font, who served as chaplain and geographer.

The Colonizing Expedition of 1775-1776 led by Juan Bautista de Anza was characterized by diversity amongst its members. The establishment of the permanent settlement brought new customs and traditions to Alta California

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