



**Experiencia Teatral/Experience Theater**  
**Study Guide**  
*(Guía de Estudio)*



*La Caja de Sorpresas*  
*(The Box of Surprises)*

por/by Juan Enrique Acuña

## **Summary of the Play**

In a place not too far away, and well-known by everyone, there's a little house where a pretty girl lives; pretty, but also moody. Her name is Pintatoda. One day, when she wakes up in a bad mood, it's hard to be around her. She hates the flowers, she hates the animals, she hates her friends – she hates everything ... She's mean to everyone, and even mistreats Cólera, her favorite wooden horse.

Her best friend, Amiga, runs in, bothered by all the noise Pintatoda is making. Amiga tries to tell Pintatoda that being angry won't help her, but Pintatoda is too moody to talk with. After Pintatoda storms off, Amiga decides that she'll never understand Pintatoda, and that maybe the audience can help cure Pintatoda's bad mood. Then, she remembers that a friend of hers, Melusino, who is a great magician, may have a good answer, and goes to find him.

Melusino invents special games and his magic succeeds in creating an invisible box. Once Pintatoda shows interest in this, they make the box visible, and out of it come some very special guests who will only play with Pintatoda if she's in a good mood.

Finally, after a lot of games, and some learning, Pintatoda finds out that only through kindness, patience and good deeds can she get what she wants. And sometimes, what she really wants isn't even what she thought she wanted in the first place!

Pintatoda learns that everything deserves respect, no matter how little or unimportant it seems. She learns that there's a reason to obey older people. She also learns that sharing can be fun, that feeling thankful can be a good thing, and that love only comes from loving.

## Vocabulario/Vocabulary

### Personajes(Actores y Títeres) Characters(Actors and Puppets)

(pair-so-NAH-hays)

<b>Pintatoda</b> ( <i>pean-tah-TOE-dah</i> )	Paints Everything
<b>Amiga</b> ( <i>ah-MEE-gah</i> )	Friend
<b>Mago Melusino</b> ( <i>MAH-go may-loo-SEE-no</i> )	Magician Melusino
<b>Fantasmio</b> ( <i>fan-tas-MEE-no</i> )	Little Ghost
<b>Girasol</b> ( <i>hee-rah-SOLE</i> )	Sunflower
<b>Amapola</b> ( <i>ah-mah-POLE-ah</i> )	Poppy
<b>Mariposa</b> ( <i>mar-ee-POE-sah</i> )	Butterfly
<b>Sol</b> ( <i>SOLE</i> )	Sun
<b>Nube</b> ( <i>NEW-bay</i> )	Cloud

### Vocabulario Importante Important Vocabulary

(vo-cah-boo-LAR-ee-oh eem-pore-TAN-tay)

#### Head Start – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

<b>Abracadabra</b> ( <i>ah-brah-kah-DAH-brah</i> )	Magic Word
<b>Cabra</b> ( <i>CAH-brah</i> )	Goat
<b>Caja</b> ( <i>CAH-ha</i> )	Box
<b>Flores</b> ( <i>FLOOR-es</i> )	Flowers
<b>Pintura</b> ( <i>peen-TOUR-ah</i> )	Paint (noun)
<b>Sorpresas</b> ( <i>sore-PRAY-sass</i> )	Surprises
<b>¿Qué pasa?</b> ( <i>KAY PAH-sah</i> )	What's going on?
<b>Tengo Sueño</b> ( <i>TAYN-go SWAY-nyo</i> )	I'm sleepy

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

<b>Aburrido</b> ( <i>ah-boor-EE-dough</i> )	Bored
<b>Derecho</b> ( <i>day-RAY-chowe</i> )	The Right ( <i>I have the right</i> )
<b>Dormidas</b> ( <i>door-ME-dahs</i> )	Asleep
<b>Maldito</b> ( <i>mahl-DEE-tow</i> )	Darned
<b>Pincel</b> ( <i>pean-SELL</i> )	Brush
<b>Títere</b> ( <i>TEA-tay-ray</i> )	Puppet
<b>Todo el mundo</b> ( <i>TOE-dough el MOON-dough</i> )	The whole world

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

<b>Enfermedad</b> ( <i>ain-fair-may-DAHD</i> )	Illness
<b>Nervioso</b> ( <i>nair-vee-OH-so</i> )	Nervous
<b>Obedecerme</b> ( <i>oh-bay-day-SAIR-may</i> )	Obey me
<b>Sinvergüenzas</b> ( <i>seen-vair-WUAIN-thas</i> )	Shameless
<b>Titiritero</b> ( <i>tea-tea-ree-TEAR-oh</i> )	Puppeteer

**Vocabulario de Teatro** Theater Vocabulary  
(vo-cah-boo-LAR-ee-oh day tay-AT-row)

<b>Autor</b> (ow-TORE)	Playwright, Author	The person who wrote the play.
<b>Actor/Actriz</b> (ac-TORE / ac-TREESTH)	Actor/Actress	The people who are onstage, acting as different people.
<b>Director</b> (dee-wreck-TORE)	Director	The person who selects the actors and tells them where and what to do.
<b>Escena/Escenario/ Escenografía</b> (ais-SANE-ah / ai-sane-ARE-ee-oh / ai-sane-oh-grah-FEE-ah)	Scene/Stage/Scenery	All words related to the stage: The scene is the location where each part of a play takes place; the stage is the place where the actors work, and the scenery is what they act in front of.
<b>Maquillaje</b> (mah-key-YAH-hay)	Makeup	What the actors wear to make them look different. All actors, both women <i>and</i> men, wear stage makeup to make them more visible from the audience.
<b>Musicalización</b> (moo-sea-ca-lee-tha-sea- OWN)	Music Design	Selecting what music is used for the play.
<b>Producción</b> (pro-duke-sea-OWN)	Production	The people who organize everything about the play, including who will direct it, who will design and build the set, and where the costumes come from.
<b>Utilería</b> (oo-tea-lair-EE-ah)	Properties	Everything that an actor uses onstage (such as Pintatoda's watering can).
<b>Vestuario</b> (vais-too-ARE-ee-oh)	Costumes	What the actors wear.

## **Pre-Performance Activities**

### **For Grades PreK-1:**

1. Language: Go over the simpler vocabulary so the students understand the words used.
2. Literature/Listening: Read the synopsis of *La Caja de Sorpresas* to your students.
3. Geography: Show your students where Argentina and Costa Rica are on a map or a globe. Ask students where their families are from, and color countries of origin on a blank world map (or use push pins on a large wall map). If students don't know their backgrounds, tell them to ask at home and bring in the information.
4. Biography: Using the Biographical sketch of Juan Enrique Acuña, tell your students a little about his life. Ask your students if they think they'd like to meet him, and what they think they like or don't like about him.
5. Art: Have the students make their own "caja de sorpresas" out of shoe boxes.
6. Memory Work: Ask students about prior theatrical experiences. Has Teatro de la Luna been to your school before?
7. Social Interaction: Work with students on the proper way to behave in a theater.

### **For Grades 2-3:**

1. Language: Go over vocabulary. Have students pronounce the words in Spanish and English.
2. Geography/Culture: *La Caja de Sorpresas/The Box of Surprises* was written by an Argentinean who lived many years in Costa Rica. Give students copies of the Argentina and Costa Rica sheets from this Study Guide. Have children find the two countries on a world map or globe. How far apart are they? Compare their sizes with the United States. Discuss some of the differences between the two countries. Have students research and draw country flags for Argentina and/or Costa Rica.
3. Biography/Literature/Writing: Read the biographical synopsis of playwright Juan Enrique Acuña to students, or have them read it for themselves. Ask students to write a one-page story about Sr. Acuña. Suggestions: Maybe the student meets Sr. Acuña somewhere. Maybe the student goes back in time to be in a class with him. Maybe the student teaches Sr. Acuña about puppets ...
4. History: Using Juan Enrique Acuña's timeline, show students some of the many things that happened or were invented during his life. Using the library or a computer, have students look up how people dressed in the year Sr. Acuña was born and when he died. How different did people look?
5. Math: Using the timeline, figure out how old Sr. Acuña was during specific years. How old would he be if he were alive today?
6. Art/Writing: Have students create simple puppets from cereal boxes, toilet tissue cores or other 'found' objects. Ask students to create short puppet plays in class and perform for each other.
7. Literature/Reading: Read a simple, short play in class, and, time permitting, have students act it out.

### **For Grades 4-6:**

1. Language: Go over the vocabulary. Have students learn the theatrical terms in Spanish.
2. Literature/Reading: Have students read the synopsis of the play and discuss the characters.
3. Language/Reading/Literature: If your class is bilingual, have them read the play out loud in Spanish, revolving roles so everyone in class gets a chance to read. If there are words students don't understand, explain them or ask students to look them up.
4. Biography: Have students read the playwright's biographical sketch. Do they know of any famous people who lived about the same time?
5. History: Look at the playwright's timeline. Using the library or computer lab, have students find other historical events during the playwright's life. Create a large, more detailed timeline, letting students add the information they find.

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6. Math: Using the timeline, figure out how old Sr. Acuña was during specific years. How old would he be if he were alive today?
7. Current Events/History/Logical Thinking: Ask students to create a personal timeline. They can include national, international and personal events.
8. Art: The play takes place in front of a small house with a garden. Ask the students to draw their own set design for the play (or, as an alternative, they can make models of the set design they think is best with clay, cardboard, or other found objects).
9. Geography/Culture: The playwright is from Argentina, and lived many years in Costa Rica. Look at the geographical pages in this Study Guide with the students. Ask students to find Argentina and Costa Rica on a map. How far are the two countries from each other? Discuss some of the differences between Argentina and Costa Rica. Have students research each country's specific costumes, food or culture. Possibly hold an "Argentina" or "Costa Rica" day, where students try to dress in costume, and have a party with special food typical of the country. You might do this on the day Teatro de la Luna comes to your class with a workshop, or when your class sees *La Caja de Sorpresas*.

### **Post Performance Activities**

#### **For Grades PreK-1:**

1. Critical Thinking: Was the *Caja de Sorpresas* like students thought it would be? Discuss differences and/or similarities.
2. Art/Writing: Draw a character from the play. Practice writing that character's name.
3. Social Interaction/Language: Ask class to agree on a favorite character. Compose a class letter to that character.

#### **For Grades 2-3:**

1. Critical Thinking: Was the play like the synopsis? How was it the same? How was it different?
2. Literature: Discuss what the play was about. What did each character want?
3. Writing: Ask the students to write a letter to their favorite character. Ask them to fill out the Student Evaluation form.
4. Art: Ask students to draw a scene from the play.

#### **For Grades 4-6:**

1. Critical Thinking/Literature: Discuss how the play differed from what they thought it would look like, and how it was the same. Did the actors add to or subtract from the written characters? Was the set design similar to what they had created?
2. Writing: Ask students to pretend they are one of the characters from the play and write a short paragraph, as that person, about their feelings for the other characters. Ask students to fill out the Student Evaluation form.
3. Art: Have students design their own puppets that could be used in the play.

## **Biography**

### **Juan Enrique Acuña**

*Author/Playwright*

Born in Argentina in 1915, Juan Enrique Acuña first thought he would study Law and the Humanities. However, in 1936, he left these studies to explore writing, including writing editorials, journalism, literature and theater.

Beginning in 1944, he switched back and forth from working for newspapers to working for theater, and he became a member of Argentina's Independent Theater Movement. Then, he discovered his true happiness – puppets – when a puppet theatre put on some of his early plays.

He founded “Titiritaina”, a puppet theater, in 1955. Later, his puppetry workshops and courses became so popular they quickly filled up. He showcased his new plays during these courses.

From 1961 until 1963 he was in Czechoslovakia, making his puppet building skills better at the University of Prague. He returned to Argentina, but soon moved to Costa Rica in 1969, where he started another puppet theater, M.T.M. Although we have no exact date when he wrote *La Caja de Sorpresas (The Box of Surprises)*, it probably dates from his time in Costa Rica.

Mr. Acuña returned to Argentina in 1987, where he died in June of 1988.

## Time Line Juan Enrique Acuña

1915	Bayer Aspirin invented	JUAN ENRIQUE ACUÑA born July 15
1916	Keds sneakers & Lincoln Logs introduced	
1917	President Kennedy was born	
1918	World War I ended	
1919	Dial telephones invented	
1920	Dodgers & Braves play longest game – 21 inn.	
1921	John Glenn, US astronaut & Senator, born	
1922	U.S.S.R. founded	
1923	Milky Way & Butterfingers Candy Bars began	
1924	1 <sup>st</sup> Macy's Thanksgiving Parade	
1925	Malcolm X born	
1926	1 <sup>st</sup> Winnie-the-Pooh story printed	
1927	Charles Lindbergh flies nonstop over Atlantic	
1928	Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin	
1929	NY stock market crashes October 24	
1930	Scotch Tape invented, 'Blondie' comic strip	
1931	'Babar the Elephant' first printed	
1932	F.D. Roosevelt elected President	
1933	1 <sup>st</sup> 'King Kong' movie; 1 <sup>st</sup> FM radio	
1934	Shirley Temple becomes movie star at 6	
1935	Elvis Presley born; 1 <sup>st</sup> Toyota cars	Begins to write & work in theater
1936	VW Beetle first introduced	
1937	Walt Disney's 'Snow White' 1 <sup>st</sup> long cartoon	
1938	1 <sup>st</sup> Superman comic book	
1939	Start of World War II	
1940	M&Ms introduced; 1 <sup>st</sup> Jeep	
1941	Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, attacked by Japanese	
1942	Boxer Muhammad Ali born	
1943	Beatrix Potter dies; 'The Little Prince' printed	Wrote his 1 <sup>st</sup> play, began to work with puppets
1944	George Lucas born; Anne Frank betrayed	
1945	World War II ends; 1 <sup>st</sup> atomic bomb	
1946	1 <sup>st</sup> bikini swimsuit; Slinky introduced	
1947	Stephen King born; transistor invented	
1948	Velcro invented; Apartheid in S. Africa	
1949	China becomes Communist; 1 <sup>st</sup> TV sitcom	
1950	Korean War begins; 1 <sup>st</sup> 'Peanuts' comic strip	
1951	1 <sup>st</sup> 'I Love Lucy' on TV	
1952	1 <sup>st</sup> Mad Magazine; 'Charlotte's Web' written	
1953	Korean War ends; Joseph Stalin dies	
1954	'The Fellowship of the Ring' published	
1955	Play-Doh invented; Disneyland opens	
1956	NY Yankee Don Larsen pitches perfect game	
1957	USSR sends dog Laika into space; 1 <sup>st</sup> Frisbee	
1958	1 <sup>st</sup> video game; Pelé Brazil's soccer superstar	
1959	Cuban revolution; 1 <sup>st</sup> Barbie doll	
1960	J.F. Kennedy elected president; 1 <sup>st</sup> laser	Went to Czechoslovakia to study puppetry
1961	Yuri Gagarin 1 <sup>st</sup> man in space	
1962	Marilyn Monroe dies; 1 <sup>st</sup> Beatles single	Came back to Argentina
1963	Kennedy assassinated; 'I have a Dream' speech	
1964	'Charlie & the Chocolate Factory' published	
1965	Malcolm X dies; Lava Lamp; 1 <sup>st</sup> miniskirt	
1966	'Star Trek' airs; Walt Disney dies	

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1967	1 <sup>st</sup> heart transplant; 1 <sup>st</sup> Super Bowl	
1968	M.L. King, Jr. & Robert Kennedy killed	Moves to Costa Rica, starts puppet theatre
1969	Man steps on moon; 'Sesame Street' starts	
1970	World Trade Center opens; 'Doonesbury' starts	
1971	Pablo Neruda wins Nobel Prize	
1972	U.S. leaves Vietnam; Watergate scandal	
1973	J.R.R. Tolkien dies; 1 <sup>st</sup> supermarket bar codes	
1974	Pres. Nixon resigns; 1 <sup>st</sup> pocket calculators	
1975	Lyme disease discovered; 1 <sup>st</sup> home computers	
1976	1 <sup>st</sup> 'Rocky' movie; 1 <sup>st</sup> videocassette recorders	
1977	Elvis Presley dies; 1 <sup>st</sup> 'Star Wars' movie	
1978	1 <sup>st</sup> test tube baby; 1 <sup>st</sup> 'Garfield' cartoon	
1979	Iran Revolution; USSR invades Afghanistan	
1980	R. Reagan elected president; 1 <sup>st</sup> inline skates	
1981	IBM PC introduced; MTV begun	
1982	'ET' movie; Vietnam Memorial opens	
1983	1 <sup>st</sup> US woman in space	
1984	1 <sup>st</sup> woman VP candidate; 'The Terminator'	
1985	Nintendo video games; Titanic found	
1986	Chernobyl meltdown; Challenger disaster	
1987	'Married...with Children' TV show	Moves back to Argentina
1988	Pan Am Flight 103 terrorist attack; Faxes	<b>JUAN ENRIQUE ACUÑA</b> dies June 13

## Costa Rica Facts

Costa Rica is in Central America, between Nicaragua and Panama to the north and south, and with the Caribbean Sea to its east and the North Pacific Ocean to its west. The climate is considered to be tropical and subtropical. The wet season is May through November, and the dry season is December through April.

Scientists have discovered that people lived in the area that is now Costa Rica over 10,000 years ago. On the west coast, there are thousands of circular stones created by these prehistoric residents, ranging from the size of a baseball to the size of a minivan. An ancient city that had aqueducts was recently found east of San Jose, and some beautiful gold and jade work was being made in the southwest as far back as 1,000 years ago.

The first European explorer was Christopher Columbus, who landed on September 18, 1502, during his fourth trip to the New World. He was greeted by canoes full of Carob Indians, who wore golden bands in their noses and ears, which caused a later Spaniard to describe the area as 'Costa Rica', or 'Rich Coast'.



Unlike many of its Central American neighbors, Costa Rica is doing fairly well. It is mainly an agricultural country, but it also has some technology and tourism. The standard of living is rather high. Many people own land.

Costa Rica is a little smaller than West Virginia, but it has almost 4 million people living there. Most of the people (96%) over 15 can read and write. Spanish is the official language, but many people speak English also.

There are four volcanoes in Costa Rica, two of them active. All four volcanoes are near the capital city of San Juan, which is close to the center of the country. The most recent eruption was the volcano Irazu, in 1963-65. Hurricanes sometimes visit the eastern part of the country, and there have been some earth-quakes. The low lands often flood during the rainy seasons, causing landslides.

Costa Rica's government is a democratic republic. It celebrates its national holiday on September 15. That's the date in 1821 when it received its independence from Spain. Costa Rica has seven provinces (like states). There is no permanent military in Costa Rica.

Most information taken from "CIA – The World Factbook" website at [www.cia.gov/publications/factbook/geos/cs.html](http://www.cia.gov/publications/factbook/geos/cs.html) and the Geographia website at [www.geographia.com/costa-rica/history.htm](http://www.geographia.com/costa-rica/history.htm)

## Argentina Facts



Argentina is in the southern part of South America. It is the second largest country in South America. The Atlantic Ocean is on its east side, Chile on its west, and on the north are Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay. Argentina is the country closest to Antarctica. Its climate is considered to be temperate. It is very dry in the southeast, and sub-antarctic in the southwest. The Andes Mountain range runs along Argentina's west border.

While Spanish is the official language, many people also speak English, Italian, German and French. About 38,740,800 people live in Argentina. 97% of the people over 15 can read and write.

Argentina is divided into 23 provinces and one independent city. The capital city is Buenos Aires. Almost 1/3 of the population lives there. Argentina got its freedom from Spain on July 9, 1816. It celebrates its national holiday on Revolution Day, May 25.

Argentina has many natural resources, exports a lot of its farm products, and makes many different manufacturing products. However, over the last ten years, Argentina has had a lot of trouble with rising prices, jobs, and budget deficit. At least 37% of the people live in poverty.

There were two native people in Argentina before European colonization: in the northwest, near Bolivia and the Andes, were the Diaguita. Further south and to the east were the Guarani. They developed agriculture, and were important in cultivating maize (corn). These people were also able to successfully oppose the Spanish invasion for awhile. The first Spaniard to land in Argentina in 1516, Juan de Solis, was killed. In spite of resistance, the Spanish were finally able to found Buenos Aires in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the main native people are the Quechua in the northwest and the Mapuche in Patagonia.

Argentina's culture has been affected by its European settlers, who practically wiped out the native cultures. The Basque and Irish took charge of raising sheep, the Germans and Italians began farms, and the British developed the country's roads, railroads and political structure. Today, there are Jewish and Anglo-Argentine communities throughout the country; small communities of Japanese, Chileans and Bolivians; and districts of Paraguayan and Uruguayan residents.

Information for this was taken from the CIA World Factbook website at [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ar.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ar.html) and the Geographia website at [www.geographia.com/argentina/histroy.htm](http://www.geographia.com/argentina/histroy.htm).