

SHADOWS, STRINGS & OTHER THINGS:
THE ENCHANTING THEATRE OF PUPPETS

MAMULENGO

PUPPETS OF NORTHEAST BRAZIL



TEACHERS' RESOURCE GUIDE
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THIS TEACHERS' RESOURCE GUIDE WAS CREATED ON THE ANCESTRAL, TRADITIONAL AND UNCEDED LANDS OF THE SQUAMISH, TSLEIL-WAUTUTH AND MUSQUEAM NATIONS

OVERVIEW

These colourful characters are from a form of popular puppet theatre called Mamulengo found in northeastern Brazil, especially in the state of Pernambuco.



Prevalent in marginalized communities—with ancestral ties to colonized Indigenous peoples and transplanted African slaves—mamulengo performances are entertaining events that can last all-night long, with puppeteers (mamulengueiros) using 70 to 100 puppets in one staging.



HISTORY



During the 17th century, Brazil was the world's leading sugar exporter. Around 560,000 Central African slaves arrived in the country in that period of time.

In 1888, slavery was legally abolished in the whole country, when Isabel, Princess Imperial of Brazil, promulgated the "Golden Act" (Lei Áurea). By that time around four million slaves had been transplanted from Africa to Brazil.

The population in Pernambuco is a result of two centuries of racial mixing between Indigenous Peoples of the region—the Tupinambás, Tabajaras, Caetés and Tapuias—and the descendants of European colonizers and African slaves.



It is believed that the origin of Mamulengo was influenced by Pastoral performances (pastorais) and Nativity Scenes (presépios de fala) which appeared in Brazil in the 17th century. Franciscan friar Gaspar de Santo Agostinho set up the first of the latter in Olinda, Pernambuco.

These traditions evolved into folk performances—like Mamulengo—which lost their religious meaning during the 19th century.

Mamulengo reflected (and still does) the colonial situation where those in power—landowners, military, clergy—exploited and repressed the common people.

To this day, Mamulengo performances take place in public in various cities in Pernambuco; especially during the Carnival season in February, where giant Mamulengos lead the parades in the city of Olinda.

CHARACTERS



BENEDITO

- Also known as "the black cowboy", he's the most popular protagonist
- Very modest yet very cunning
- He is an excellent fighter, frequently beating his opponents
- He is employed at the farm of the rich landowner João Redondo

JOÃO REDONDO

- Also known as "the Captain" and Mané Pacaru
- Main representative of the elite and political power
- He is a rich and arrogant landowner
- He wants to buy everything the government is selling
- He is married to Quitéria and they have a daughter called Rosita



QUITÉRIA

- Quitéria is the charming wife of landowner João Redondo
- She is also popular antihero Simão's lover
- Wears a nice colourful dress, jewellery and a head ornament
- She is a strong and independent woman who likes dancing

SIMÃO

- Popular anti-hero who belongs to the working class
- Employee at the landowner's farm
- He is a clever and lazy servant always betraying his boss through trickeries, including the conquest of Quitéria
- He wins over women by dancing
- He likes sticking out his tongue and winking



THE DOCTOR

- Presented as "Doutor Sabe Nada" (Doctor Knows Nothing)
- Always shown as a charlatan who never cures his patients
- He loves giving injections, no matter what the illness may be
- Together with other figures like the Priest and the Lawyer, the Doctor is used to display the arrogance of the dominant group

CHARACTERS



THE DEVIL

- Has a coarse face and horns
- He is always dressed in red and black
- Appears to tempt the humans and to carry the "sinful" to hell
- He is portrayed as a playful character

THE OX

- Plays an important role in rural society
- Can be the symbol of both hope and oppression
- Accompanies popular antiheroes like Benedito and Simão



THE INSPECTOR

- Commander of the police force
- Portrayed as a corrupt man
- He asks other characters for licenses and permits to present the show
- Always accompanied by The Sergeant

THE SNAKE

- Incarnates an evil spirit and enters into fights with humans
- Always linked to the idea of Original Sin
- Snake scenes are full of movement and jokes
- The snake can swallow a character whole



DEATH

- A hieratic figure, Death makes the audience shiver
- often appears with long arms and heavy wooden hands, a white face, and dressed in a white or black tunic
- Moves slowly usually with a high-pitched crescendo sound in the background

STORIES

The shows consist of short sequences (passagens), romantic and heroic episodes from popular stories and skits that expose the inequalities, hardships and dramas of everyday life—profiling stock characters, like the ones presented before—spun together with humour, satire, lively music and audience commentary and backchat.



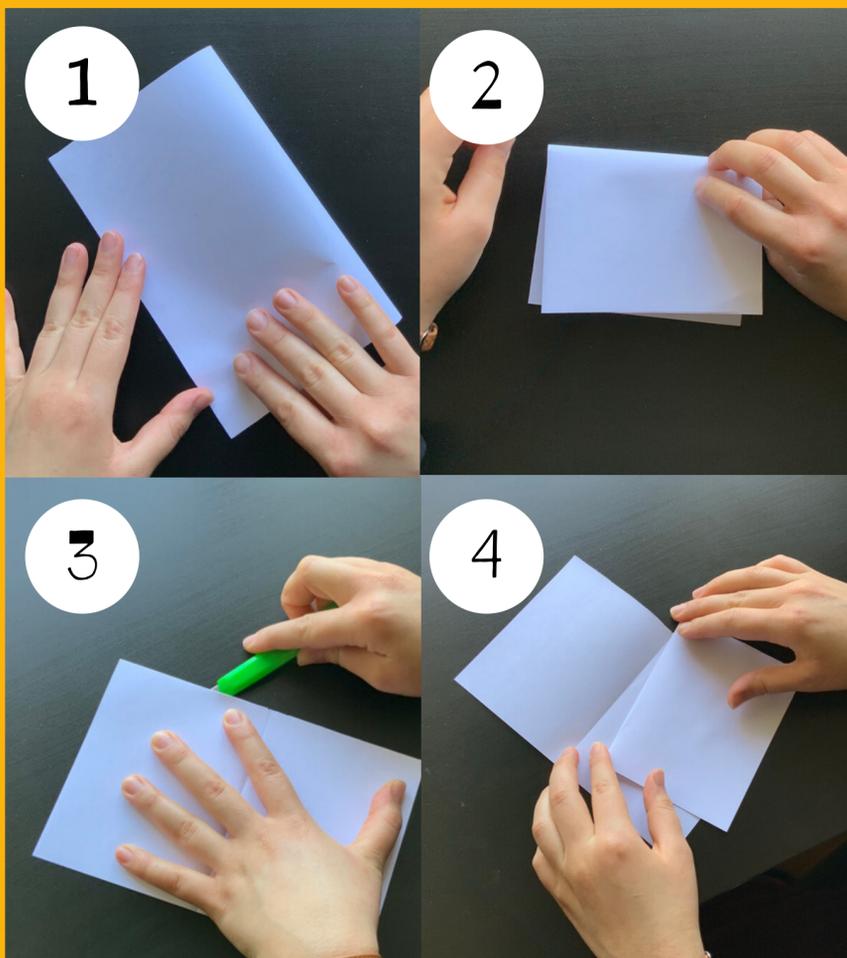
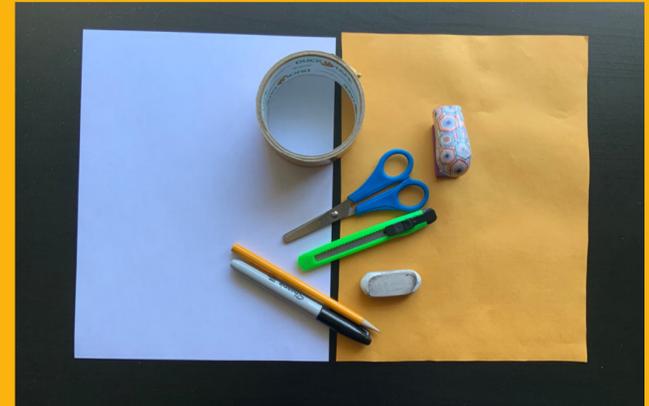
Some of these stories can be found in written form in the *Literatura (or Folheto) de Cordel*, a type of popular poetry published as small paper books or pamphlets which hang on strings (cordel). They are written, illustrated, printed, sold and read aloud by members of the popular classes in Northeast Brazil. The origins of the *Literatura de Cordel* can be traced back to the Epic Poetry of Medieval Europe. The long narrative poems about extraordinary people and heroes gradually evolved into ballads that were tailored for a wider audience and passed on orally. The themes usually revolve around popular history, myths, fables, anecdotes and critical commentary. The *Folhetos de Cordel* are written in verse form and illustrated with woodcut prints.

STORIES: ACTIVITY!

MAKE YOUR OWN FOLHETO DE CORDEL!

YOU WILL NEED:

- 1 sheet of paper
- 1 sheet of colour paper
- box cutter or scissors
- stapler or tape
- pencil and eraser
- black marker



STEP 1:

Fold the paper in half widthwise

STEP 2:

Fold in half widthwise again

STEP 3:

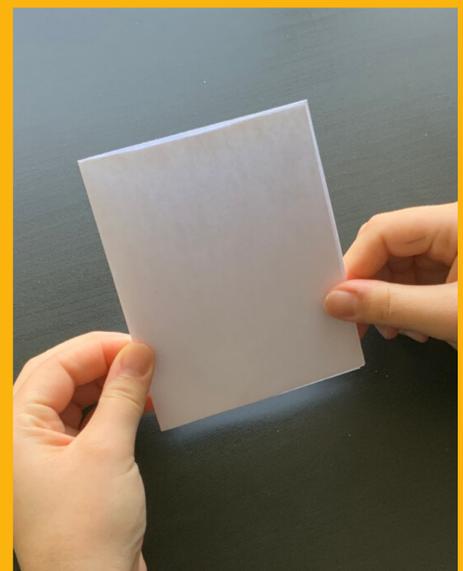
Unfold the last fold only and with a box cutter or scissors cut the paper following the folded line lengthwise

STEP 4:

Make sure you have two separate pieces of paper

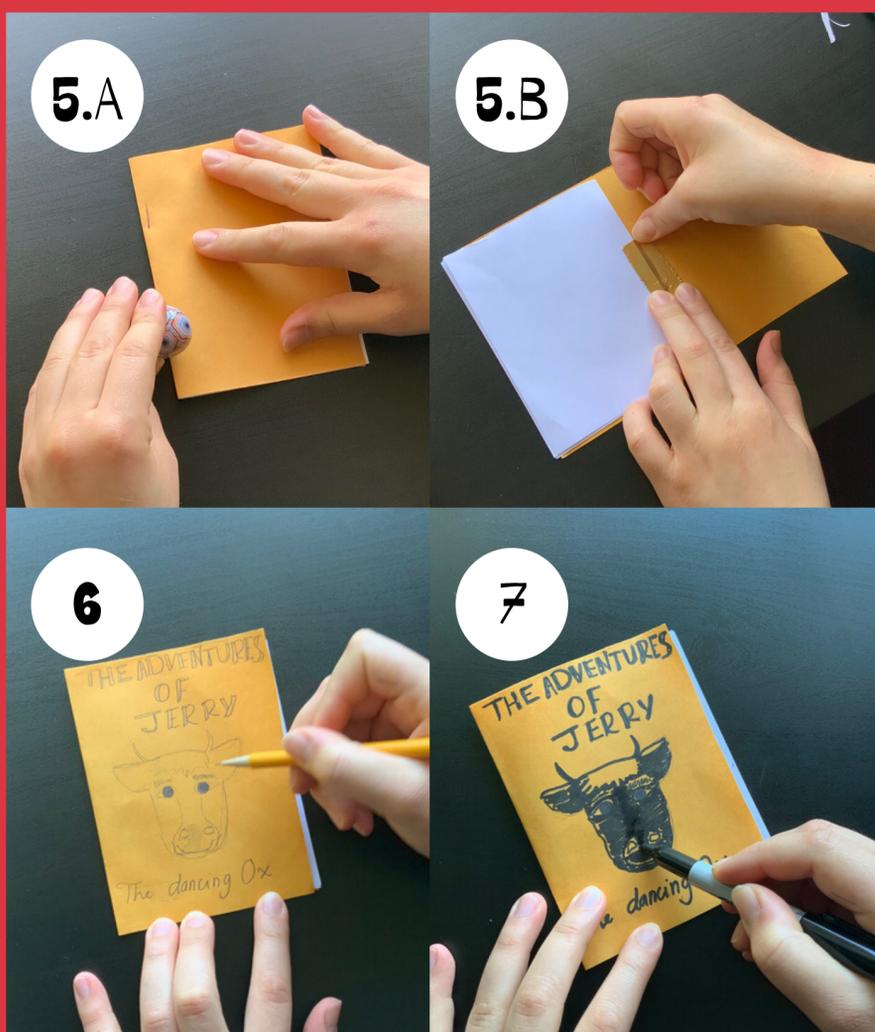
NOW YOU HAVE A 4-PAGE UNBOUND BOOKLET!

Note: you can use more than one sheet of paper to make longer booklets.



STORIES: ACTIVITY!

FOLLOW STEPS 1 TO 4 USING THE COLOUR PAPER TO MAKE THE COVER



STEP 5:

OPTION A: Staple the booklet twice as close to the edge as possible

OPTION B: Put tape on the inside of the booklet to hold the paper to the cover and back cover, and in between the pages that need it - refer to picture

STEP 6:

Once you know what your folheto de cordel will be about, draw the cover in pencil

STEP 7:

Ink the cover with a black marker. To resemble woodcut printing, do not fully colour everything. A marker running out of ink is a great tool to achieve the effect

STORIES: ACTIVITY!

NOW YOU CAN FILL THE PAGES OF YOUR FOLHETO WITH A STORY OF YOUR OWN!
DRAW OR WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW.

WHAT/WHO DO YOU WANT YOUR STORY TO BE ABOUT?

IT'S HELPFUL TO THINK OF YOUR STORY IN TERMS OF WHAT HAPPENS NEXT...FOR EXAMPLE:

JERRY, THE DANCING OX, WANTS TO GO TO THE DISCO BUT HIS FRIENDS WANT TO GO TO THE MOVIES INSTEAD... WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

DRAW OR WRITE YOUR IDEAS IN THE BOXES BELOW.

THE PLACE

THE CHARACTERS

THE OBJECTS

THE EVENT

THE MAGIC

THE SOLUTION

MATERIALS



Mamulengo puppets can be divided into two main kinds: glove and rod puppets. Their heads, hands and sometimes arms are carved in mulungu wood, a type of light wood found in Northeast Brazil. The puppet maker's job is to carve out what's unnecessary to reveal the creature in the wood. Sometimes the original shape of the wood is used as inspiration for what the puppet's features will be.

Cloth is used to make the body, legs, arms and garments of the puppets.

Usually facial features are made simply through carving and painting, but other materials can be used.

Seeds, marbles or recyclable bottle tops represent eyes; animal or human hair is used for that of the puppets; hats and other accessories are made of recyclable plastic or metal packaging. The puppet makers use any material available.

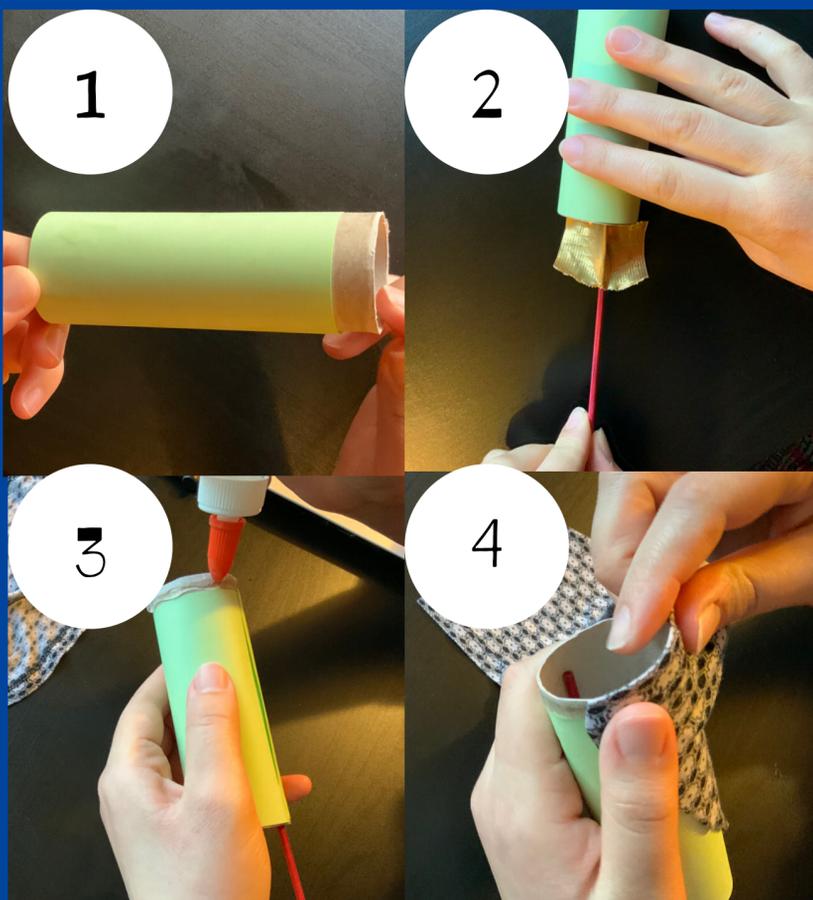


MATERIALS: ACTIVITY!

MAKE YOUR OWN PUPPET FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS!

YOU WILL NEED:

- toilet paper roll
- piece of old cloth (t-shirt/ rag)
- colour paper
- wooden stick
- pencil & eraser
- marker
- scissors
- glue
- tape



STEP 1:

Cover the toilet paper roll with a piece of colour paper

STEP 2:

Place a piece of tape on the wooden stick and insert it in the toilet paper roll, sticking the tape to the inside

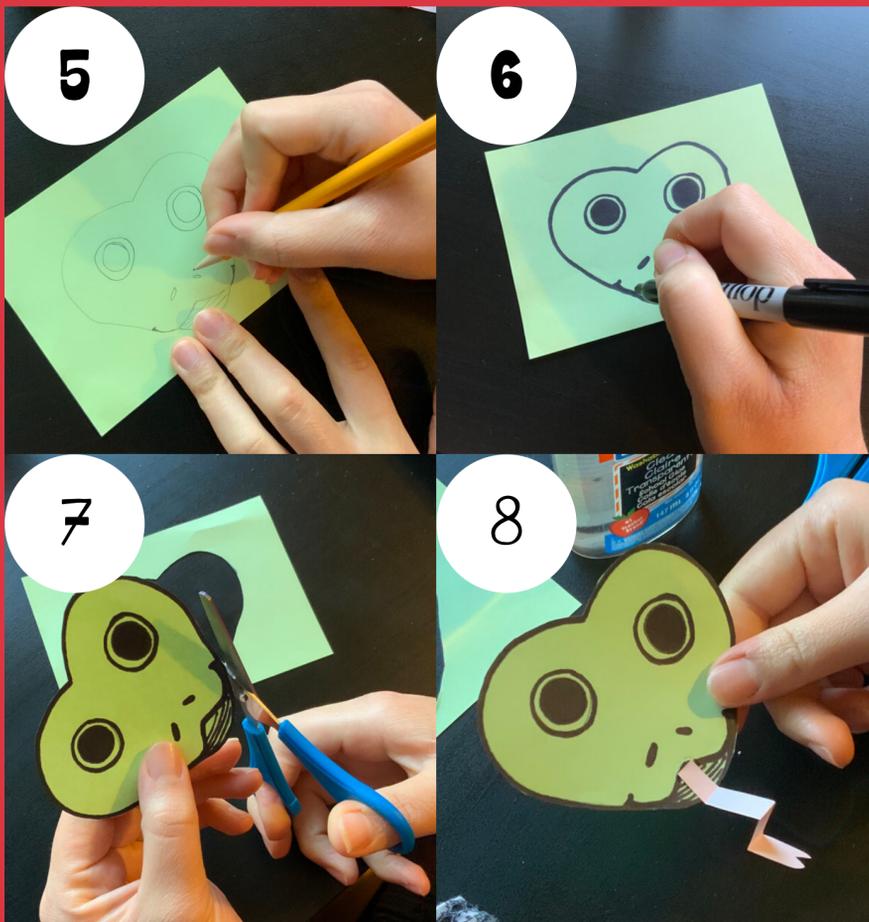
STEP 3:

Put glue around the top of the toilet paper roll

STEP 4:

Attach the piece of cloth to the roll

MATERIALS: ACTIVITY!



STEP 5:

Draw the face of your puppet character on a colour sheet of paper with pencil

STEP 6:

Ink your drawing with a marker

STEP 7:

Cut out your drawing

STEP 8:

Add details with paper or candy wrappers, like a tongue or eyelashes

STEP 9:

Glue your character's head to the clothed toilet paper roll...

YOUR PUPPET MADE WITH RECYCLED MATERIALS IS READY TO PERFORM!



PUPPETEERS

A group of puppeteers (mamulengueiros) usually consists of the main puppeteer (the Mestre), the assistant (the Contra-mestre), and a person who functions as an intermediary between the puppets and the public (the Mateus).



MESTRE JOSÉ LOPES DA SILVA FILHO



MESTRE CHICO DE DANIEL



MESTRE JOSÉ LOPES MAKING A PUPPET (USUALLY PUPPETEERS ARE ALSO THE PUPPET MAKERS)

But the puppeteers are not simply performers, they immerse themselves in the characters. They use different voices for each puppet and sing popular songs. Voice plays a central role in maintaining the interest of the public and demands great vocal versatility from the puppeteer.

How many different voices can you make?

THE SHOW

The show takes place in the open and the stage is a pop-up booth (empanada), made of brightly coloured, floral-printed cloth.



Shows are based largely on improvisation, so participation from the public is required. Some members of the audience have conversations with the puppets, approach the booth and even offer them food or drink.

Musicians accompany the performance by playing during and in between scenes and by providing characteristic sounds of specific puppets and situations. The music played in the shows are Northeast traditional rhythms such as côco, forró and baião.

Mamulengo shows are all about laughing together as a way to deal with the hardships of everyday life and criticize those in power.

THE NAME

WHAT DOES THE WORD MAMULENGO MEAN?

WHERE DOES THE NAME COME FROM?

The etymology of the word is unclear, but it is believed that it originated with the Portuguese phrase "mão molenga", meaning "soft hand," great for giving lively movements to a puppet. However, according to some researchers the word *mamu* could be a diminutive form of Manuel, the first name of an important puppeteer better known as Mané (diminutive of Manuel) Gostoso, while the ending *lengo* could have a link to the expression "lenga-lenga," meaning "incessant movement or speech." Yet the term mamulengo may also be derived from mulungu, the wood used for the making of the puppets.

MEANING OF ETYMOLOGY, NOUN
the study of the origin and history of words

DRAW OR WRITE YOUR ANSWERS IN THE BOXES BELOW.

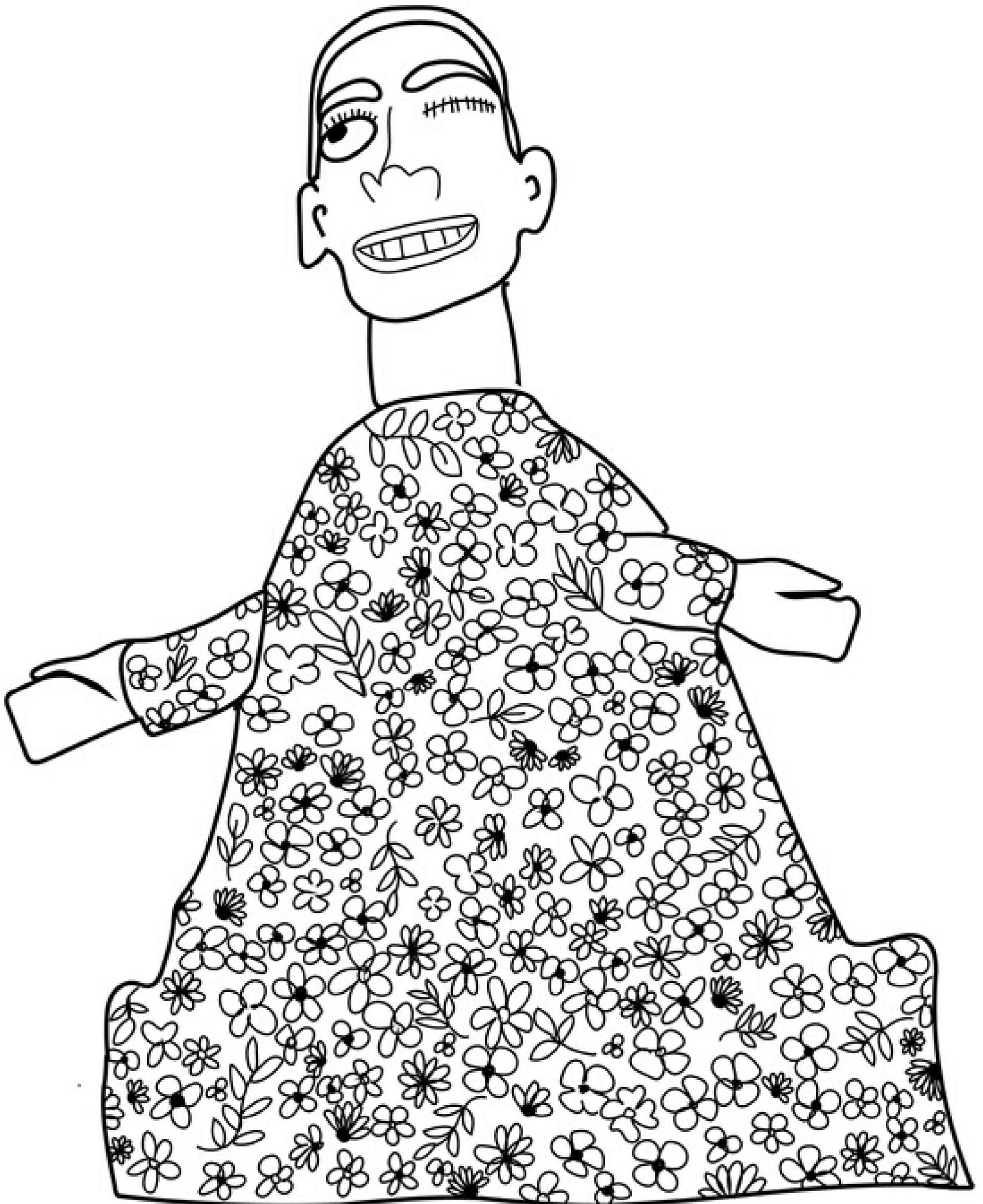
WHAT DOES YOUR NAME MEAN?

WHERE DOES YOUR NAME COME FROM?

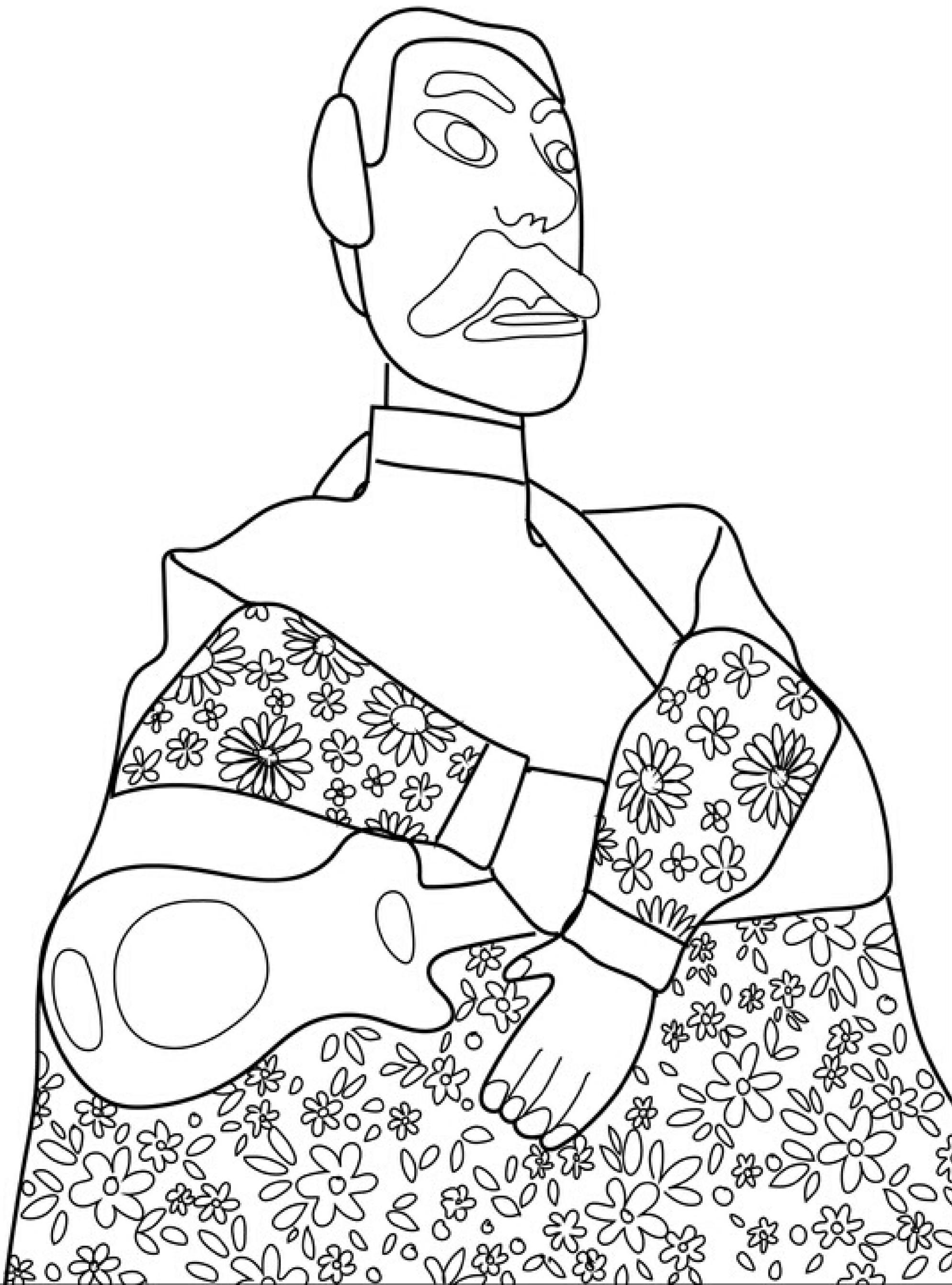
COMING UP NEXT, THERE ARE COLOURING PAGES OF MAMULENGO CHARACTERS! FEEL FREE TO GIVE THEM A NAME!



MY NAME IS _____



MY NAME IS _____



MY NAME IS _____

RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES

Arte com Papel

<https://www.artecomapel.com/wp/como-fazer-um-cordel/>

Cambridge dictionary

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/etymology>

DLTK's Crafts for Kids

<https://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/tproll.html>

Elisabeth den Otter

<http://www.elisabethdenotter.nl/site2/brazil/mamulengo.html>

Visit Brasil

<https://www.visitbrasil.com/attractions/museu-do-mamulengo.html>

World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts

<https://wepa.unima.org/es/mamulengo/>

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Shadows, Strings & Other Things: Puppeteers & puppet makers. Vancouver:
MOA, 2019.

PHOTO CREDITS

Front Cover - Mamulengo Puppets: Chota e Filho, Priest, Quitéria, Tapagé de Cachoeira, Zé Sodoneiro, MOA

Page 3- Mamulengo Puppets: Benedito, Quitéria, MOA

Brazil map, public domain: <https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/map-pernambuco-in-brazil-vector-28488151>

Mamulengos, public domain: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/460985711852756172/>

Page 4 - Presépio de Fala, public domain:

<https://franciscanos.org.br/vidacrista/especiais/preseprio-uma-tradicao-franciscana/>

Sugar Cane plantation, public domain: <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/359/6383/1476>

Carnival de Olinda, public domain: https://fotospublicas.com/bonecos-gigantes-na-terca-feira-de-carnaval-em-olinda/32359510143_621ee519of_k/

Page 5 - Mamulengo Puppets: Benedito, João Redondo, Quitéria, Simão, The Doctor, MOA

Page 6- Mamulengo Puppets: Devil, Ox, Inspector, Snake, Death, MOA

Page 7- Mamulengo Show, public domain:

http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar_es/index.php?

[option=com_content&view=article&id=988%3Amamulengo&catid=48%3Aletra-m&Itemid=1](http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar_es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=988%3Amamulengo&catid=48%3Aletra-m&Itemid=1)

Literatura de Cordel, public domain:

<https://brasilecola.uol.com.br/literatura/literatura-cordel.htm>

Page 8,9,12,13- Daniela Rodriguez Chevalier

Page 11- Mulungu wood, public domain:

<https://www.visionecurativa.it/prodotto/mulungu-erythrina-verna/>

Mamulengo Puppets: Casimiro Coco, João Cacunda, Chota e Filho, MOA

Page 14- José Lopes, public domain:

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Chico de Daniel, José Lopes, WEPA: <https://wepa.unima.org/es/mamulengo/>

Page 15- Empanada & Musicians, public domain:

<http://12pp3.blogspot.com/2011/12/o-que-e-uma-empanada-afinal.html>

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Page 17, 18, 19- Colouring Pages, Anna Nielsen