

# Sofi and the Magic, Musical Mural

## Sofi y el mágico mural musical

by Raquel M. Ortiz

When Sofi walks through her barrio to the local store, she always passes a huge mural with images from Puerto Rico: musicians, dancers, tropical flowers and—her least favorite—a vejigante, a character from carnival that wears a scary mask.

One day on her way home from the bodega, she stops in front of the mural. Is one of the dancers inviting her to be his partner? “Okay, let’s dance,” Sofi giggles, and suddenly she’s in Old San Juan, surrounded by dancers and musicians. She begins to dance and sing with her new friends, but her happiness turns to fear when the vejigante spins her around and around! What does he want from her? How can she get away?



### About the Author

*Raquel M. Ortiz was born in Lorain, Ohio and both of her parents are from Puerto Rico. Raquel has been studying and writing about Puerto Rican and Latin American art, literature, and music for many years. She has also created textbooks and educational material for children in Puerto Rico and the U.S.A. In 2013 she created the documentary Memories on the Wall: Education and Enrichment through Community Murals with 8<sup>th</sup> graders from Global Tech Prep and the artist María Domínguez. Raquel has a Ph.D. in Anthropology, and is a professor at Boricua College and lives with her family in Brooklyn, New York.*

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## SUGGESTED VISUALS

- Map of Puerto Rico / the Caribbean
- Vejigante mask or photograph of a vejigante mask from Loíza Aldea and/or Ponce, Puerto Rico
- Photograph of a mural (preferably El Pueblo Cantor) and <http://mariadominguez.com/ITWCS.html>
- Instruments: maracas, bongos, güiro, and pandereta

## COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

### BEFORE READING

- *Show the students paint and paintbrushes. Ask them to identify things or places that can be painted.*
- *Explain to students what a mural is. Share with them that a community mural is a mural designed by a group of people. Mention that community murals are commonly found in urban areas such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Ask the students if they have ever seen a mural. If so, invite them to describe the mural.*
- *Show the students the following instruments: maracas, bongos, güiro, and pandereta. Ask what kind of music can be made with these instruments.*
- *Ask the students if they have ever participated in Carnival. Explain that Carnival is an annual celebration of life that many countries all over the world celebrate. Explain that the African tradition of parading and moving in circles through villages in costumes and masks is an important aspect of Caribbean Carnival celebrations.*
- *Provide a brief overview of the story. Mention that mural-making projects are common in many schools. Prompt the students to talk about what themes they would be interested in painting for their own mural.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*What things or places can be painted?*

*How would you describe murals you've seen?*

*What would you paint a mural about?*

*What kind of music can be made with the instruments in the story?*

*Do you like to dance and sing?*

*Would you like to participate in Carnival?*

## AS READING PROGRESSES

Point out that Sofi lands in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. Then, Sofi flies east to El Yunque, a tropical rain forest and south to the Caribbean Sea.

Questions to ask to assist students in making personal connections  
with the main character while reading:

*Do you have a mural in your neighborhood?*

*What does it look like?*

*Have you ever been to Puerto Rico or a Caribbean island?*

*Do you know how to dance?*

*Have you ever wanted to fly?*

*Where would you fly to?*

AFTER READING, WORK ON IMMEDIATE STORY RECALL.

ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

*Who was the main character?*

*What were the settings in the story?*

*What happens in the beginning of the story?*

*What happens in the middle?*

*What happened at the end?*

*What was your favorite part of the story?*

## AFTER READING

- Discuss sequencing and terms associated with sequencing (i.e., first, then, next, finally) as the class reviews how Sofi enters the mural and where she travels when she is in the mural.
- Review the adventure that Sofi had while inside the mural. Sing the songs in the story and practice the bouncy side-to-side plena move that Sofi and the vejigante danced.
- Listen to plena music. See if the students can identify some of the instruments that were shown, and mentioned, in the story.
- Give each student a large sheet of paper and invite them to draw a mural of a place that they would like to visit. Remind them to have some kind of action happening in their mural that they can join in.
- Plan to celebrate Carnival. Learn Carnival songs. Make masks in the style used in Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico.
- Create a list of words. Review vocabulary such as “murals,” “east,” “south,” “island” and encourage students to work on sentence construction by making up sentences with select words.

## ORAL AND/OR WRITTEN LANGUAGE ASSIGNMENT

Use the following prompts to develop public speaking and writing skills. Encourage students to draw a picture to illustrate their answers.

- *Our parents let us do certain things all by ourselves. What are you allowed to do alone? Tell or write about some of those things. (Now that I am older my Mom/Dad/Grandmother lets me...).*
- *When we were little we were afraid of things that we are no longer afraid of. Now that you are big, what are you no longer afraid of? Tell or write about one thing that frightened you when you were little.*
- *Sofi left her neighborhood and traveled to a different place far away. If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?*
- *Write a letter to the author.*

## OTHER FOLLOW-UP / EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- *As an art activity have students create a mask for Carnival.*
- *As a pre-writing activity listen to the sound of the following instruments: maracas, bongos, güiro, and pandereta. List words that describe them and the sounds they make. Have students write a description of their favorite instrument and a song about that instrument.*
- *Reread the book and decide if it is reality or fantasy. Compare this story to other stories that are similar.*
- *Study the geography of Puerto Rico. Locate the three places that Sofi visited. Then map Sofi’s voyage and note all of the cities that Sofi flew over during her adventure.*
- *Listen to a recording of the plena “La plena que yo conozco” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEtv3ZJSjek>). Use your desk as a pandereta and keep the beat of the plena. Watch part of the documentary “Plena” (<http://www.prfrogui.com/home/plebomba2.htm>) and try to keep to the beat.*

## VOCABULARY

Caribbean Sea  
eastward  
gurgling  
inviting  
island  
mural  
plaza

plunge  
rain forest  
sapphire  
shocked  
sneaky  
south  
trickster

tropical  
usual  
vegetation  
vibrant

## CONNECTING WITH THE INTERNET

**Documentary, Memories on the Wall Education and Enrichment through Community Murals, directed by Raquel M. Ortiz Rodriguez, 2013.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdI42PZB-Wg>

**Teaching Guide, Memories on the Wall Education and Enrichment through Community Murals, created by Raquel M. Ortiz Rodriguez, 2013.**

<http://centrop.r.hunter.cuny.edu/education/puerto-rican-studies/centro-teaching-guide5>

**“La plena que yo conozco”:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEtv3ZJSjek>

**Plena documentary:**

<http://www.prfrogui.com/home/plebomba2.htm>

**Vejigante Activities and Information:**

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/teodoro-vidal-collection-of-puerto-rican-history>

<http://elyunque.com/vejigante.htm>

<http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=39>

# LYRICS TO SONGS

## SONGS FROM SOFI AND THE MAGIC, MUSICAL MURAL / SOFI Y EL MÁGICO MURAL MUSICAL

The plena music that I know  
is not from China, it comes from home.  
Because the plena was born in Ponce  
It's from the barrio of San Antón.  
Because the plena was born in Ponce  
It's from the barrio of San Antón.

La plena que yo conozco  
no es de la China ni del Japón.  
Porque la plena viene de Ponce,  
viene del barrio de San Antón.  
Porque la plena viene de Ponce,  
viene del barrio de San Antón.

*Toco-toco, toco-toco, Vejigante eating coco!*  
*Toco-toco, toco-toco, Vejigante eating coco!*

*¡Toco-toco, toco-toco! ¡Vejigante come coco!*  
*¡Toco-toco, toco-toco! ¡Vejigante come coco!*

*Vejigante wants to play*  
*in red and yellow she'll have her way.*

*Vejigante está pintao'*  
*de amarillo y colorao'*

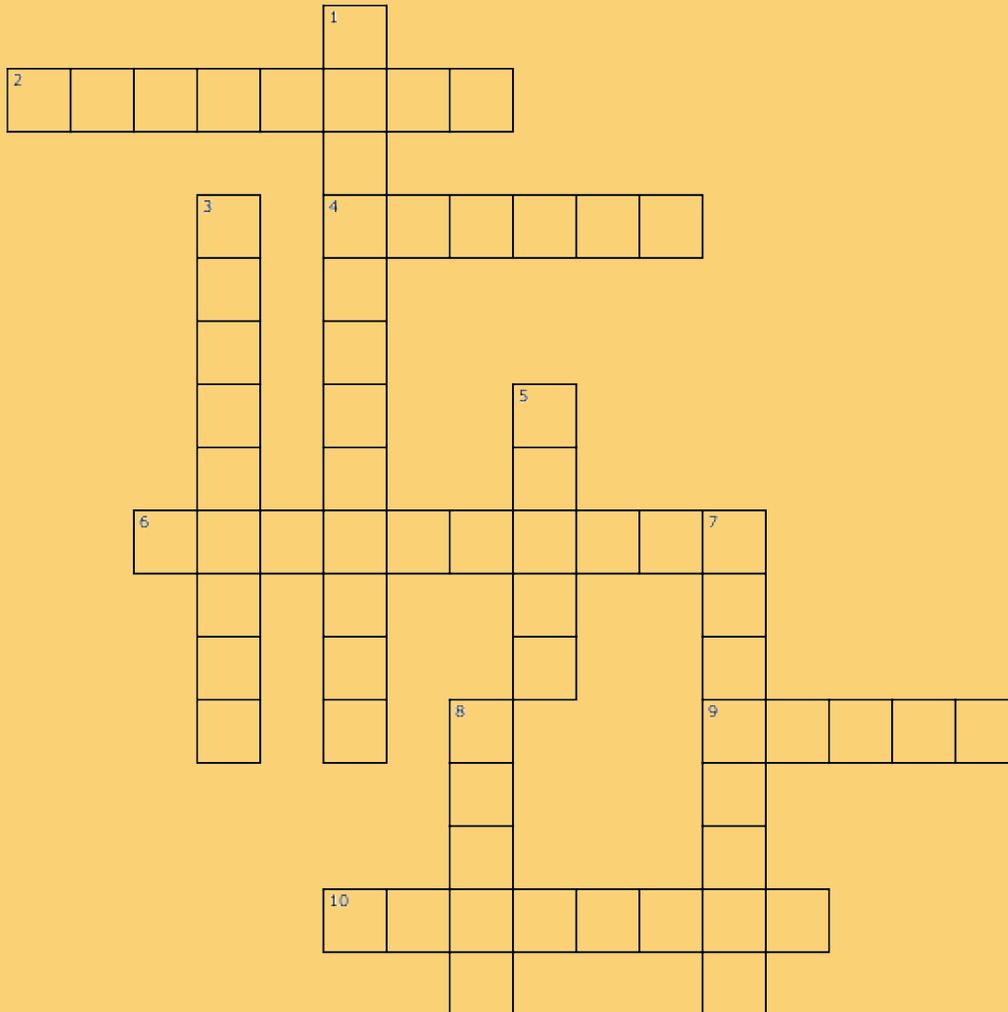
## CALL AND RESPONSE

Toco, toco, toco, toco  
Prucutá, prucutá  
Vejigante a la bolla  
Vejigante comió mango

Vejigante come coco.  
Y bueno que 'ta.  
Pan y cebolla.  
Y hasta las uñas se las lambió

## CROSSWORD ACTIVITY: 2ND GRADE, 3RD GRADE

### Sofi's Magical Crossword Puzzle



#### Across

2. The first direction Sofi flew.
4. A piece of land surrounded by water.
6. One of the places that Sofi visited where there were waterfalls and parrots.
9. The Puerto Rican song and dance that Sofi learned.
10. A type of celebration.

#### Down

1. The body of water that Sofi wanted to plunge into.
3. A masked trickster that sneaks up on Sofi.
5. A large painting on a wall.
7. The type of fish in the painting.
8. An instrument made out of a gourd.

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