

AGE GROUP 1: GRADES 2-6

**LEARNING ABOUT
THE LION KING**





ACTIVITY

WHO'S WHO IN THE ZOO?! (OR ON THE PRIDELANDS, IN THIS CASE!)

Let's see if you can work out which characters in THE LION KING say which sentences! These are images of the most memorable and important characters in THE LION KING. You will also see some sentences, or what actors call 'lines of dialogue' delivered by key characters; when we write about theatre, we call these 'character quotes'. MATCH up the character quotes with the image of the performer playing this character.



'Simba, being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble.'

* Hint: When the character quote is in CAPITAL LETTERS, it means that the actor sings *this* as a lyric in a song.





MUFASA



ZAZU



TIMON



SCAR



NALA



RAFIKI



SIMBA



SHENZI



PUMBA

'Life's not fair, is it? You see, I shall never be king. And you...'

'Hey! If it weren't for those lions, we'd be running the joint.'

'Look inside yourself, Simba. You are more than what you have become.'

'Right. So how we gonna ditch the dodo?'

'The question is: who are you?'

'Well, as far as brains are concerned, I got the lion's share. But when it comes to brute strength, I'm afraid I'm in the shallow end of the gene pool.'

'Simba, being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble.'

'I'VE NEVER SEEN A KING OF BEASTS WITH QUITE SO LITTLE HAIR'

'Everything's destroyed. There's no food, no water. If we go back together, we can do something about it.'

'I'M A SENSITIVE SOUL THOUGH I SEEM THICK-SKINNED'

'When the world turns it back on you, you turn your back on the world.'

'IN YOUR REFLECTION HE LIVES IN YOU'

'My Dad just showed me the whole kingdom! And I'm gonna rule it all!'

'I CAN SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING AND THEY DON'T HAVE A CLUE'

'I guess even kings get scared, huh?'

MEANINGFUL MASKS & MAKEUP

In many African cultures, masks are far more than decorative objects; they are powerful, functional works of art designed to be worn, used, and brought to life. Sitting still on a shelf, a mask might seem like a simple carved object. But the moment it is worn in a ceremony or used to tell a story, something remarkable happens... it transforms, takes on energy, and seems to breathe. Just as in THE LION KING, many African masks are designed to sit over the entire head rather than just covering the face, giving the wearer a completely new identity. These masks serve extraordinary ceremonial purposes: welcoming a young man into adulthood, driving away evil spirits, and connecting the visible world with invisible, supernatural forces that surround us. So powerful is this connection that some African masks are called 'spirit traps', and are believed to be capable of capturing and holding something beyond the physical world.



When it came to designing the masks for each of the iconic characters in the show, our physical, natural world was very important to the show's director, Julie Taymor. She says: 'Because we're doing three-dimensional theatre, I didn't want the faces to look flat; I wanted them to have a kind of depth, like wood has. So I used texture and organic materials, fibres, wood – things that would make it less cartoon-like... Disney animated characters are so expressive – they're animals, but they're very human animals. I had to play with keeping some of the 'character' of the Disney characters, so that they're recognisable. But then, I was also very inspired by African masks, which are much more abstract*, much more stylised*, much more essential, less soft and round.'

Alongside the masks in THE LION KING, the creative team uses another powerful tool to transform human performers into animals: stage makeup. The animal masks don't cover the actors' faces; instead they sit on top of the head like a headdress, so the audience can see both the animal mask AND the human face at the same time. But here's the exciting part: the human face underneath isn't left plain. Detailed, boldly coloured makeup transforms each actor's face to blend with their animal character, so the actor's face the audience sees is itself a work of art. Swirling patterns, dramatic lines, and rich colours inspired by African art traditions are painted onto the actors' faces, making the boundary between human and animal beautifully blurry. Each mask and its matching makeup is carefully designed to show the most important trait* of that character's personality.

So Mufasa's makeup look might feel powerful and regal, while Scar's appears dangerous and scary. When the audience can see both the actor showing emotion through their decorated face underneath the mask, AND the mask above it at the same time, the makeup and the mask are working together to create something magical that Julie Taymor calls the 'Double Event'.





ACTIVITY

Now it's YOUR turn to become a mask designer AND to explore the role of make designing for the stage, just like Julie Taymor did for THE LION KING! Your challenge is to DESIGN your own Lion King-inspired mask AND a matching makeup design. THINK carefully about these questions before you put pencil to paper:

- Which animal means something to you and your culture, and would make a great animal character?
- What is their most important trait*? Are they brave, sneaky, gentle, fierce, or funny?
- What colours, shapes, and patterns will you use on both the mask AND the face to show that trait*?
- How will the mask and makeup work together — will the colours match, contrast, or mirror each other?
- What patterns or designs from your culture might you include to honour the artistic traditions that inspire you?

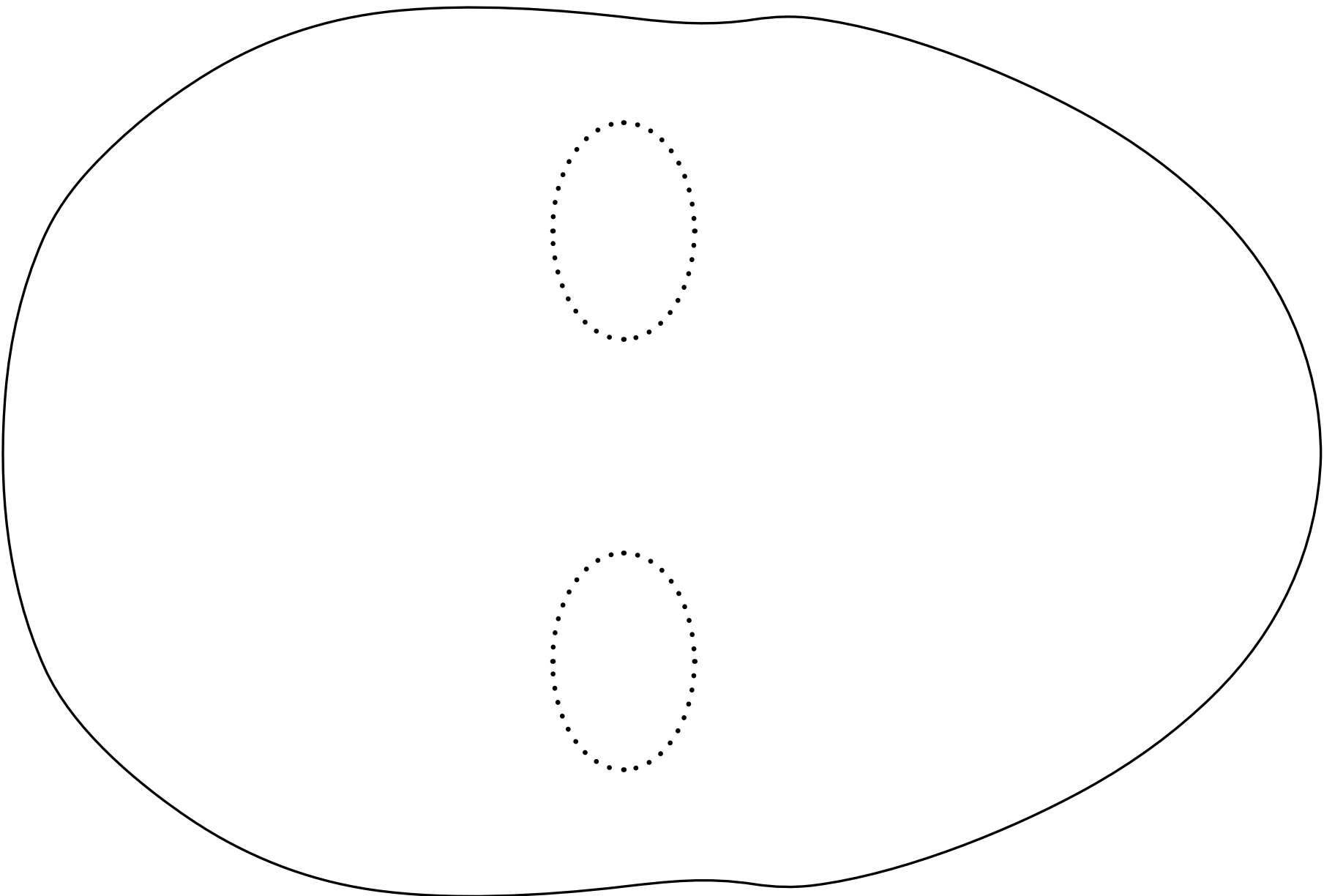


Once you have BRAINSTORMED some answers to the above questions, use the template on the next page to DRAW your design, Remember: your mask and makeup design should tell your character's whole story at a single glance!

For a little inspiration, enjoy this up close and personal footage of the makeup application process for the character of Rafiki.

And to witness the process of 'Scarification' which takes place before every show, watch the video titled An Actor Prepares in the Behind the Scenes Series at this link.





PLAYING WITH PUPPETRY

When you come to see THE LION KING, you will notice a lot of moments where puppets bring animal characters to life on stage and throughout the audience. In fact, the show features more than 230 puppets in total, and it took over 37,000 hours to make the puppets and masks alone, before even starting on the set and costumes! Some of these incredible puppets are very large and take many people to make them move, like the captivating* elephant, operated by 4 actors at the same time! Other puppets are very simple and can be operated by just one actor; for example, the beautiful shadow puppet of Simba we see running across the savannah.

The tallest animals are the 5.5 metre giraffes in the song 'I Just Can't Wait to be King' and the smallest animal in the show is the 13cm trick mouse at the end of Scar's cane.



ACTIVITY

Let's have a turn of creating our very own African animal shadow puppets, using these following templates! There are four different shadow puppet templates of creatures to choose from:

1. Young Simba, our lead but little lion;
2. Zazu, our well-meaning but bumbling bird brain;
3. Mufasa, the original Lion King; and
4. A giraffe, one of the many incredible inhabitants of the Pridelands.

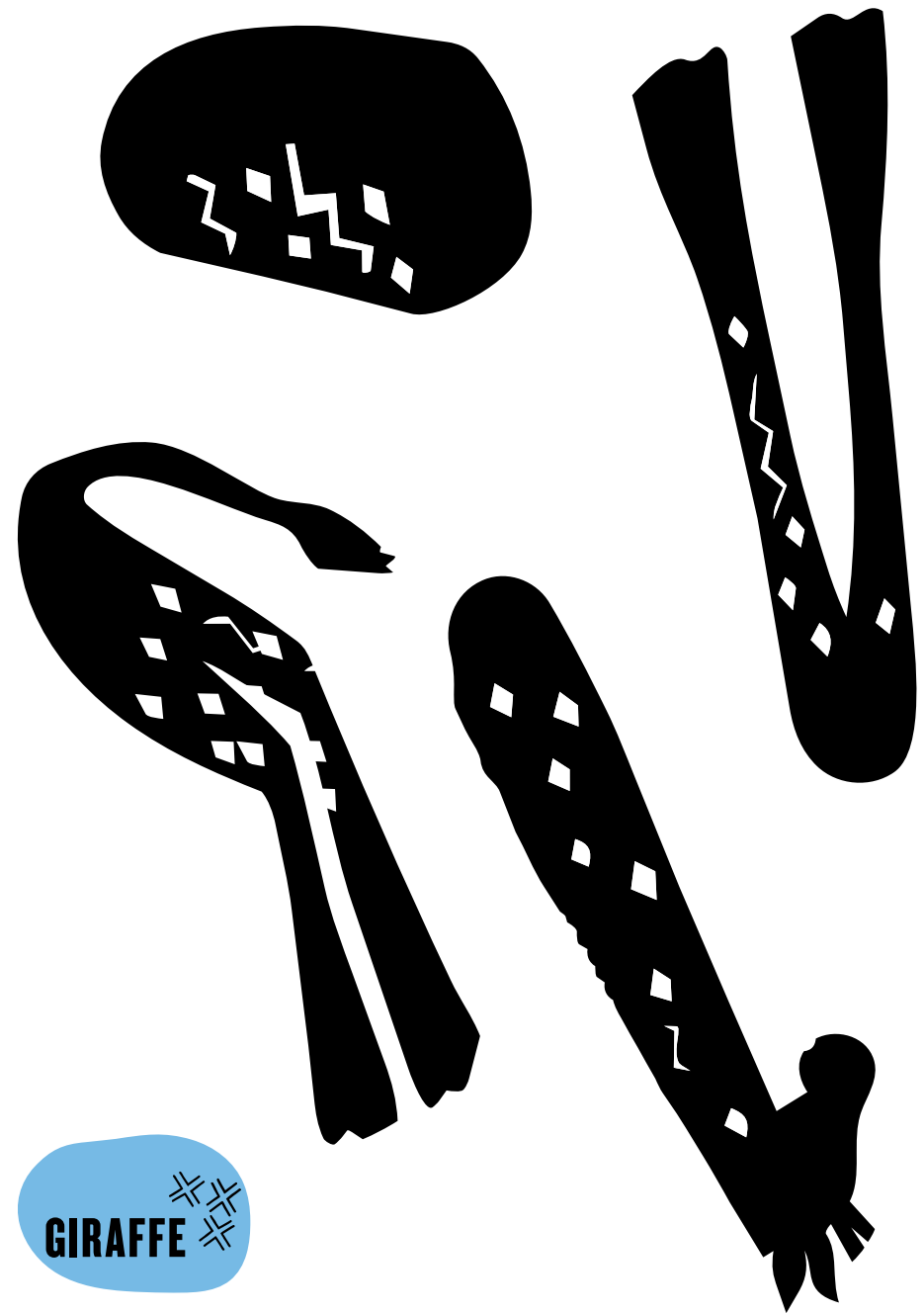
First, it's important to decide whether you would like to make and operate the shadow puppet by yourself, or with a friend. If you really want your puppet to come to life, it will need to move different body parts at the same time, like the head and the tail and the legs; teamwork can be really helpful here. Think about how big you would like your puppet to be; the bigger it is, the harder it might be to operate!



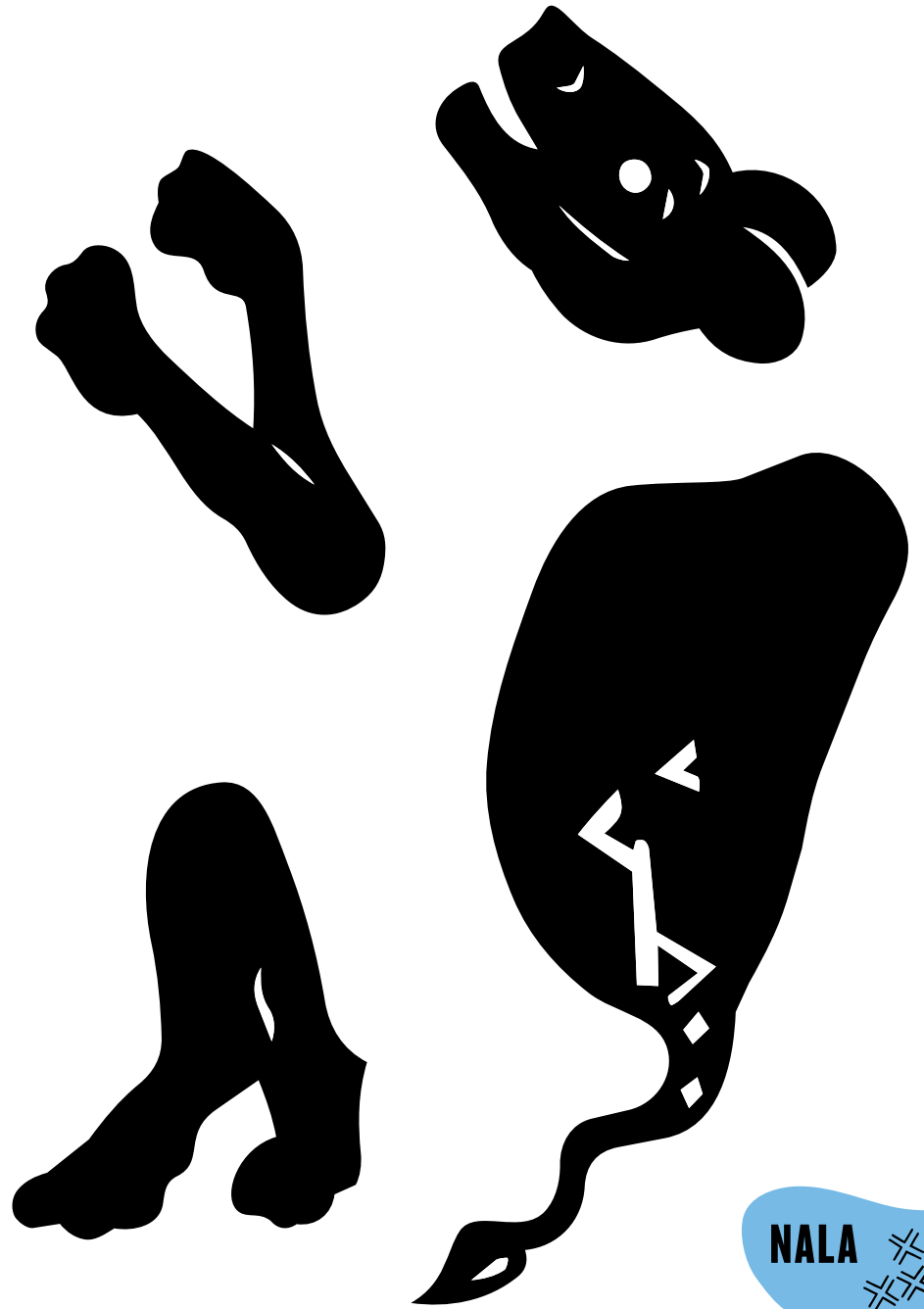
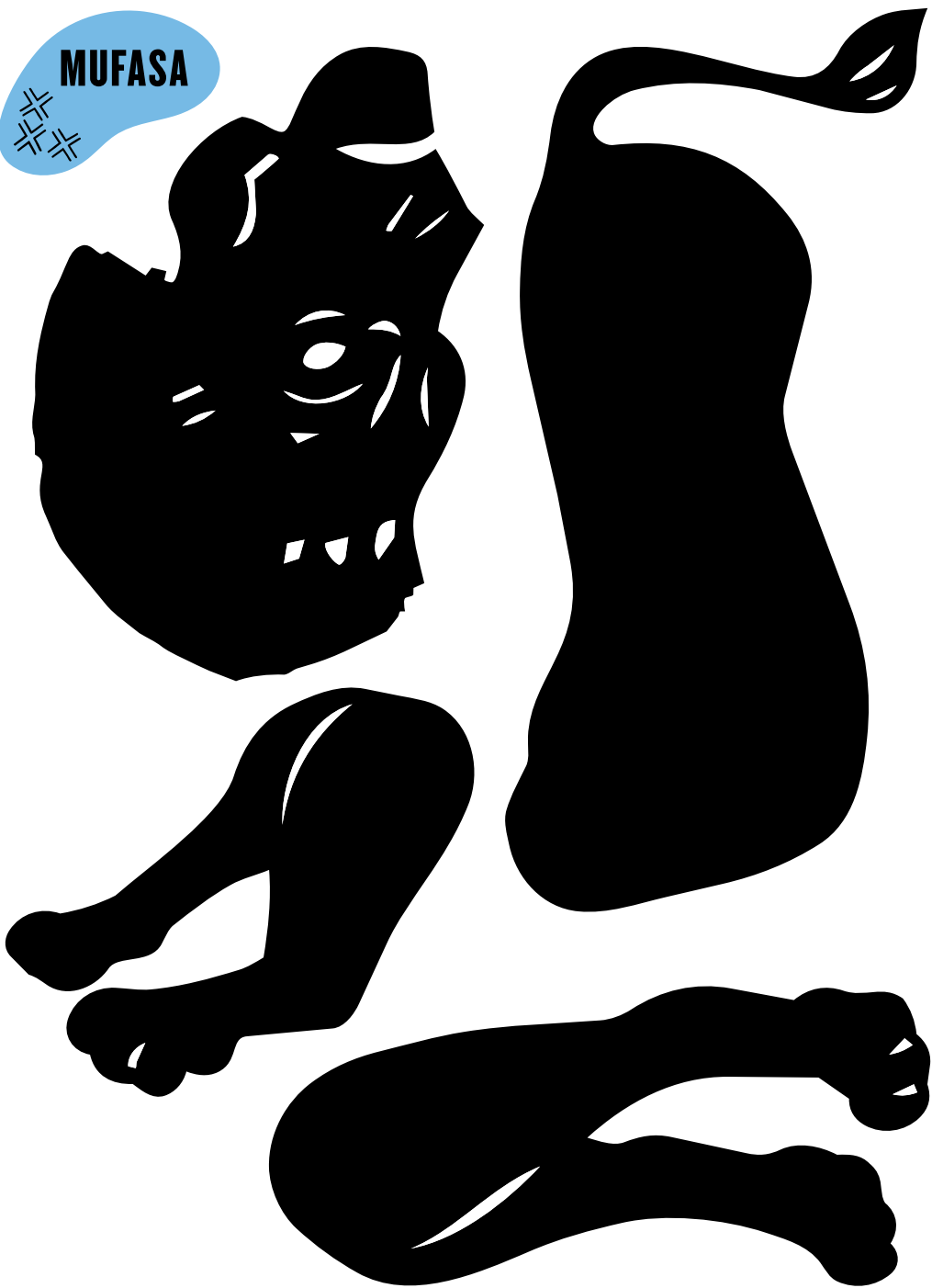
To complete this activity, you will need:

- A copy of one of the templates above on thick paper or cardboard;
- Scissors to cut the template out;
- Split pins to hold the limbs, head and tail to the body of your creature;
- Skewers or chopsticks to use as rods to make your shadow puppet move;
- Some tape to stick the skewers or chopsticks onto the limbs with;
- A source of light, like a lamp or a torch; and
- A large piece of plain white fabric for the puppet's shadow to fall onto. (A clean bed sheet would be perfect!)

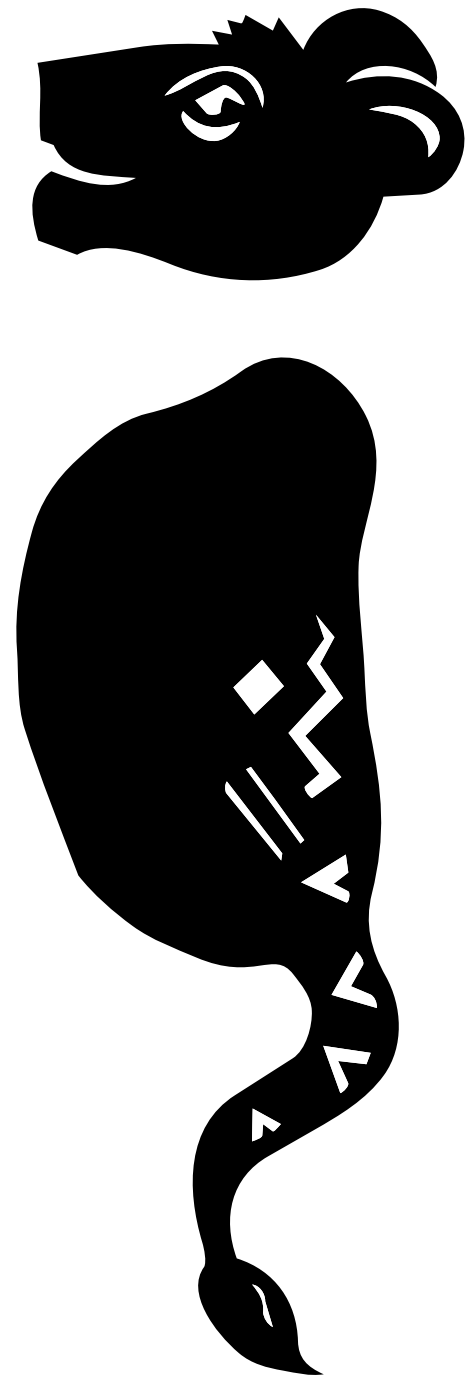
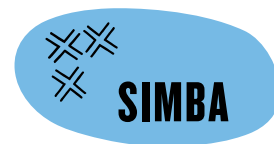
Take some time to cut out the character of your choice from the templates provided here, and then skip ahead to page 52 to confirm the next step in bringing your character to life! Let's get going...



MUFASA



NALA





ACTIVITY

Once you have created your shadow puppets and stuck them to their rods, it's time to set up your screen and to explore how to move your puppet's shadow! Start by setting up your screen by hanging a white sheet or piece of thin white fabric, and then positioning your light source, (lamp or torch), behind it. Here's the really exciting part: the distance between your puppet and the light source actually controls how big or small your shadow appears on the screen. If you move your puppet closer to the light, the shadow grows bigger, which would be perfect for making your character look powerful and imposing*, like Mufasa addressing his kingdom. If you move your puppet further away from the light and closer to the screen, the shadow shrinks and sharpens. This could be great for showing a detailed moment with a character, like a giraffe slowly lolloping across the Pridelands. Try experimenting with different distances before you perform your scene, and see how dramatically the size and shape of your shadow can change with just a few steps forward or backward. Just like the creative team behind THE LION KING, you are using light, shadow, and movement to tell a story and create a little bit of theatre magic in your very own classroom.

ZAZU





ACTIVITY

In THE LION KING, we see two brothers and only one throne! The tension between these feline rivals feels a little like a game of 'Musical Chairs', but with the wellbeing of The Pridelands and their entire menagerie* of residents at stake! Mufasa and Scar are on opposite sides of a very important question: what makes a good king? Through this activity, you are going to explore that question yourselves, through Drama.



COULD YOU BE KING?

Let's start by INVITING six volunteers to the front of the class: three to explore the Good Brother and three to explore the Treacherous* Brother. For each brother, GIVE the performers the following direction, one group at a time:

- Please SHOW us how a fair and kind leader might STAND.
- Please SHOW us how a sneaky and cruel leader might STAND.
- Please SHOW us how a fair and kind leader might WALK and use GESTURE*.
- Please SHOW us how a sneaky and cruel leader might WALK and use GESTURE*.
- Please let us HEAR how a fair and kind leader might SPEAK to others, including servants and ordinary people.
- Please let us HEAR how a sneaky and cruel leader might SPEAK to others, including servants and ordinary people.

Let's give our six performers a round of APPLAUSE!

Next, in pairs, you are going to DEVISE and PERFORM a short, silent improvised scene about two royal brothers who both want to be king. One brother is good, just, and fair, always thinking about others. The other is sneaky, deceptive and always thinking only about himself.

You do not need to plan every moment of your performance in advance; just step into your character and see what happens!

Your scene should go for about 90 seconds and must include these three moments:

1. Both brothers learn that one of them will be chosen as the next king. Show us their responses to the news immediately! The way you move, your facial expressions and your gestures* will show your audience who each brother really is.
2. The treacherous* brother tries to trick or deceive the good brother in some way. It could be a lie, a false promise, or a sneaky scheme. The good brother must decide how to respond.
3. Finally, the brothers hear who the subjects of the kingdom have chosen as their new ruler. SHOW your audience how each brother reacts to the final decision.

After each group has PERFORMED their scene for the rest of the class, be sure to PROVIDE constructive feedback. FOCUS feedback on the following:

- Which performer you thought was playing which brother;
- What was strong about their work; and
- Which aspect of their work could be improved.



The Golden Rule: You must never be unkind to your scene partner in real life, even if your character is being unkind to theirs. Great actors always look after each other!



POETRY ABOUT PLACE

♪ "The sun rolling high through the sapphire sky" ♪



Did you know that the songs in THE LION KING are actually poems set to music?

Look at the lyric above from one of the show's most famous songs, Circle of Life. Can you hear how beautiful that description is? Tim Rice, the famous lyricist* who wrote this line didn't just say 'the sun is high in the blue sky'; instead they chose the word 'sapphire' to describe the colour blue, making us picture something rare and precious and dazzling like a jewel. And 'rolling high' makes the sun sound alive, like it's moving on a great journey across the sky. That's what poets do best...they find unexpected, surprising words that make ordinary things feel magical.



ACTIVITY

Now it's your turn! Using this lyric from Circle of Life as your inspiration, WRITE your own four line poem about something you might see in nature, like the moon, the ocean, a mountain, a storm, or anything that makes you feel something. Try to:

AVOID boring colour words: instead of 'blue' try 'sapphire', instead of 'red' try 'crimson' or 'fire';

BRING your writing to life by using verbs, or 'doing' words: the moon might 'float', 'sail', or 'drift';

THINK about how your reader might feel when you use words carefully: excited, peaceful, tiny, or amazed; and

CHOOSE a title for your poem which helps to express something important to your reader.

You will **NOTICE** there are five lines for you to write on here. Don't forget to include a title!

