I’m Dr Fernanda Machado. Together with Dr Rachel Sutton-Spence, we bring you this Element in Creative Sign Language to showcase the exciting developments in Latin American deaf literature, we focus on the work in Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) which has recently enjoyed an upsurge in the Brazilian Deaf Community. We invite readers to watch and study the wonderfully creative performances of deaf literature and sign language literature that Brazilian deaf artists have given to the world. In our text, we also included examples from other sign languages for our readers to learn about and to watch, so that you can experience a range of sign languages poems and stories.

In this Element, we will present a range of genres of deaf literature so that you can understand, through examples, what is original deaf literature, such as deaf children’s literature, as well as other stories from books and films, adaptations, retellings and translations. Our examples draw on anthologies of original deaf-authored poems, stories and humour in Libras to show the effects of this visual creative language art form. We expect that the highly visual works that we show will be accessible and enjoyable to all readers, whatever their national sign language and any deaf community, so that everyone can freely enjoy Libras literature. There are various themes covered within the genres we describe here of visual creative work by the deaf community in the 21st century. They show the identity of deaf people, always celebrating the beauty, richness and visual impact of this deaf cultural heritage.

Until now, most of the study of deaf literature has been in Europe and North America. To this we now add research from the rapidly growing scene in South America by showcasing Brazilian deaf literature.