



Overview

This report provides information about the Kiwileles, a ukulele orchestra made up of New Zealand school students. It focuses on the experiences of students at East Tamaki School and includes a description of some of the steps involved in learning to play a ukulele.

“The Kiwileles” requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

This journal also has a linked article, “The Ukulele Maker”, which explains how ukuleles are made.

There is a PDF of this text and an audio version as an MP3 file at www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz

Related texts

Texts about music and performance: *Easy Peasy* and *Kapa Haka* (Ready to Read, Turquoise); “Dances of Samoa” (SJ L2 Oct 2012), “Starting with Strings” (SJ L2 Aug 2015), “Taofo O!” (SJ L2 Nov 2018)

Texts about learning a new skill: *Joe’s News* and *Whai – String Games* (Ready to Read, Green); *Kapa Haka* and *White Sunday in Sāmoa* (Ready to Read, Turquoise); *Tom’s Tryathlon* (Ready to Read, Purple); “Dig In!” (JJ 52); “Just One Wheel” (SJ L2 May 2015)

Text characteristics

“The Kiwileles” includes the following features that help develop the reading behaviours expected at Purple.

The structure of the text as a report, with an introduction, a series of main points, and a conclusion

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and visual language features that requires students to make connections to their prior knowledge to make inferences

A variety of sentence structures, requiring students to attend to punctuation and linking words and phrases (such as “So”, “that’s”, “to”, “But”, “and”, “which”, “First”, “next”, “because”, “if”, “not only ... but also”) to clarify the connections between ideas

The Kiwileles
by Georgina Barnes
A ukulele makes a warm, bright sound. It fills a room perfectly. So imagine the sound of three thousand ukuleles all playing at once. That’s what you will hear at a Kiwilele concert.

The Kiwileles is a ukulele orchestra that’s made up of children. They come from over 130 schools around Aotearoa New Zealand. Every year, they get together to play at a big concert.

The first Kiwilele concert was held in 2007. Only thirty-three schools took part. But the orchestra grew quickly. Two years later, the Kiwileles broke the world record for the number of people playing the ukulele in one place at the same time – 1,400!

East Tamaki School in Auckland is a Kiwilele School. Every student in year 3 and year 4 learns to play the ukulele. They have music lessons once a week. By the time they are in years 5 and 6, the students are skilful enough to play in a Kiwilele concert.

Bill Sevesi
Bill Sevesi helped to start the New Zealand Ukulele Trust, which runs the Kiwileles. Bill was a musician who helped make music from Pacific countries popular in New Zealand. He wanted every child in New Zealand to get the chance to play the ukulele.

Language features that enable students to apply and extend their vocabulary knowledge, for example:

- the composite word “Kiwileles”
- the suffixes in “skilful” and “joyful”
- the adverbs “perfectly”, “quickly”, “simply”, “slowly”, “quickly”
- the root word “music” in “musician”
- words with letters or letter-combinations that can have more than one sound (for example, “concert”, “confidence”, “musician”; “orchestra”, “chord”)

Visual language features, including subheadings, photographs, captions, speech bubbles, and a text box

Ideas and information organised in paragraphs

Some vocabulary that may be unfamiliar, including subject-specific vocabulary (for example, “ukulele”, “concert”, “orchestra”, “musician”, “strum”, “melody”, “chord”, “sections”, “tapping my feet”, “keep in time”, “instrument”) and some commonly used words that have multiple meanings (for example, “Trust”, “pick”, “strings”, “note”, “tips”), the meaning of which is supported by the context, the sentence structure, the visual language features, and/or definitions

Cross-curriculum links

English (Reading)

Level 2 – Processes and strategies: Selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

Health and Physical Education

Level 2 – Healthy communities and environments: Explore how people's attitudes, values, and actions contribute to healthy physical and social environments.

The Arts: Music

Level 2 – Understanding music in context: Explore and share ideas about music from a range of sound environments and recognise that music serves a variety of purposes and functions in their lives and in their communities.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Suggested reading purposes

Possible learning goals

What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?

- To find out about the Kiwileles
- To find out about learning to play the ukulele
- To think about what's special about the Kiwileles

What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?

The goals listed below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them according to your students' strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students, over several readings, to:

- **make connections** between information in the article and their prior knowledge to **make inferences**
- **ask questions** and look for or think about possible answers
- **make connections** between information in the body text and visual language features to identify and track main points (**summarise**)
- **identify and discuss main ideas**
- **monitor** their reading, and when something is unclear, take action to solve the problem, for example, by rereading a sentence or looking for clues close by.



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Sounds and Words

Introducing the text

A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>

Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that your introduction to the text is effective in building or activating their prior knowledge and providing appropriate support for a successful first reading.

Select from and adapt the following suggestions.

For English language learners, you could talk through the article before the whole group session to build confidence and provide support with vocabulary and text features that may be unfamiliar. Also, read and discuss the figurative language in the first two sentences to support students with the ideas of the sound of ukuleles being “warm and bright” and “filling” the room. You can find further information about features of texts that may need support at [The English Language Learning Progressions](#).

- Expect the students to recognise from the layout of pages 2–3 that this is a non-fiction text. Support them to read the title and use it with the photograph on page 2 to consider what “The Kiwileles” might be. (If necessary, prompt them to notice the components of the word “Kiwileles” and the “ukulele” shape of the photo.) Then have the students read the first sentence on page 3 to confirm or clarify their predictions. Discuss what an orchestra is.

- Encourage the students to share what they know about ukuleles. If possible, have a real ukulele for them to look at or show an online video clip of a ukulele being played. (Note: On page 5 the text talks about pressing down the bottom string to play the C chord. Students who play the ukulele may know this string as the “top” string. Musicians call it this because it's the highest-pitched string.)
- Together, browse through the article and ask the students to use the headings and other visual language features to predict what they will find out. Look for opportunities to draw out or feed in some of the subject-specific vocabulary as part of the discussion.
- You could have the students think, pair, share a question they have before reading.
- Together, set a reading purpose. Remind the students that looking for answers to their specific questions will also help them meet this reading purpose.
- Give the students sticky notes to mark information that answers any of their questions or to note aspects, including new vocabulary, they want to come back to. Remind them you will discuss these afterwards.

Reading the text

For the first reading, encourage the students to read the text by themselves. Observe their confidence and perseverance, intervening only if it's clear a student needs help. Much of the processing that they do at this level is "inside their heads" and may not be obvious until the discussion after the reading. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word-solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.

Student behaviours

Examples of the sorts of behaviours (developed over several readings) that will help students achieve their learning goal(s)

The students make connections between information in the article and their prior knowledge to make inferences.

- On page 3, they make connections between the references to years at school, the phrases "by the time" and "skilful enough", and any experiences they have of learning a musical instrument to infer that it takes a lot of time and effort to become a Kiwilele.
- They use explicit and implicit content (for example, the body text, speech bubbles, and photographs on pages 8–9) to make inferences about the experiences and feelings of the students.
- They begin to form their own conclusions about what is special about the Kiwileles.

They ask questions and look for or think about possible answers.

- They note information that helps to answer their questions or that generates new questions. For example, they might wonder about:
 - why the Kiwileles grew so fast
 - what it means to be a Kiwilele school
 - what a "Trust" does
 - how learning the ukulele can help the brain.

They make connections between information in the body text and visual language features to identify and track main points.

- They use the subheadings to clarify what each section is about.
- In the third paragraph on page 3, they use key words and punctuation to visualise the spectacular growth of the Kiwileles.
- They use key words, layout, speech bubbles, photos, and captions to track and visualise the sequence of steps in learning to play the ukulele.

They demonstrate self-monitoring and problem-solving.

- They use a range of strategies to clarify the meanings of unfamiliar words, for example, the explanation and labelled photograph on page 4 to understand "strumming" and the definitions in parentheses for "melody" and "sound" on page 5.
- They note aspects that may be unclear or of particular interest, for example, the possible meaning of the word "Trust" on page 3.

Deliberate acts of teaching

How you can support individual students (if needed)

- Prompt the students to note things they are not sure of or that are of particular interest.
- Remind them of strategies they can use for solving unfamiliar words (for example, looking for the biggest known word "chunk", applying their knowledge of letters, sounds, and word structure, and using analogies to familiar words) and for clarifying meaning (for example, rereading or reading on and thinking about the overall meaning of the sentence or paragraph, and checking the photographs and captions). If necessary, provide support with specific words, for example, reminding them that "ch" can also have a hard sound as in "orchestra" and "chord".

Discussing and rereading the text

You can revisit this text several times, focusing on different aspects and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. **Select from and adapt** the following suggestions according to your students' needs and responses to the reading. Some of the suggestions overlap, and several can be explored further as after-reading activities.

 For some suggestions, you may find it helpful to project the PDF of the article so that you can zoom in on relevant sections.

- Remind the students of the reading purpose and discuss their initial responses to the article. They could think, pair, share one interesting point they have found out.
- Encourage them to make connections to their own experiences of learning something new or working towards a goal.
- Support the students to think critically (to identify and discuss main ideas). For example:
 - to consider why the the Kiwileles have grown so quickly
 - to make inferences, based on explicit and implicit information in the report and their own experiences, about what qualities a Kiwilele would need
 - about how learning the ukulele might help "the brain to develop and grow". Ideas might include: improved finger-brain coordination, feelings of happiness, a growth mindset or "can-do" attitude, working hard on something of value, or being part of a team. (See also After reading.)

- Have the students reread the article, stopping to discuss points of interest. Encourage them to share any aspects they have marked with sticky notes. You could explore such aspects as:
 - the steps involved in learning to play the ukulele (described on pages 4–7) and the tips the East Tamaki students have for making things easier
 - how the author shows the way the teacher and students feel about the Kiwileles and learning the ukulele. The students could highlight examples on a printout of the text.
 - the structure of the article as a report – the introduction on page 2, a series of main points on pages 3–8, and the conclusion on page 9 that links back to the positive ideas in the introduction
 - the roles of Bill Sevesi and Maria Winder and what a “Trust” is. You could draw attention to use of the past-tense verbs to refer to Bill (who died in 2016 at the age of 92).
 - the subject-specific vocabulary (for example, “orchestra”, “strum”, “melody”, “chord”, “beat”, “keep in time”) and how their meanings are supported in the article. Discuss words that have more than one meaning, (such as “Trust”, “pick”, “strings”, “note”, “tips”) and create oral sentences together that demonstrate their meanings.
 - how the students worked out (or tried to work out) unfamiliar words or phrases. Provide support as required, noting any aspects you might want to follow up on later, perhaps as a mini-lesson or as an after-reading activity. Discuss interesting features of words, such as:
 - the suffixes within “skilful” and “joyful”. Support the students to identify the root words and generate further examples.
 - the root word “music” in “musician” (and the change in the pronunciation of “c”). Together, generate examples from other familiar root words (for example, magician, comedian, electrician, librarian).
 - the use of adverbs (“perfectly”, “quickly”, “simply”, “slowly”) to describe *how* things happened.

After reading: Practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students’ needs during the lesson and provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other texts, including texts generated by the students, and to the wider literacy programme (for example, oral language, writing, handwriting, and word games and activities) and other curriculum areas. **Select from and adapt** these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

For English language learners, *Supporting English Language Learners in Primary School* (SELLIPS) also has ideas for purposeful and relevant tasks.

- Provide opportunities for the students to reread this report and to read other texts with similar themes or ideas (see Related texts).
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the text as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions are particularly supportive for English language learners because, as well as clarifying pronunciation, they provide good models of the prosodic features of English, such as intonation, stress, and phrasing.
- Ideally, provide opportunities for the students to try out strumming, picking out a melody, or playing a chord on a ukulele.
- Follow up the discussion after the reading by taking photos of the students and having them write their own speech bubbles about ways they “grow and develop their brain[s]” and how it makes them feel. Display their speech bubbles beside their photographs.
- Support the students to find out more about the Kiwileles (including answers to some of their questions) by visiting the Kiwileles website.
- Have the students fill in a Venn diagram about what they would find rewarding and what they would find challenging about being in the Kiwileles. Use their diagrams to draw out the idea that challenges can also be rewarding.
- To support summarising, ask the students, working individually or in pairs, to identify two facts about each of the following:

Topic	Two facts
The Kiwileles	
Bill Sevesi	
East Tamaki School	
Maria Winder	

Make time afterwards to discuss where the students found the information and to provide support (and clarification) as required.

- Have the students highlight some definitions or explanations on a printout of the article (for example, for “Kiwileles”, “Bill Sevesi”, “strumming”, “melody”, “sound”, “chord”, “Maria Winder”) and then work in pairs to create a glossary for other topic-specific words (for example, “concert”, “orchestra”, “Trust”, “musician”, “tips”, “Chairperson”, “happiness”, “confidence”). They could write each word and definition on a separate card and use these for a word-definition matching activity.