

UKULELE TALES

Meets National Core Arts Anchor Standards 5, 7, and 9



OBJECTIVES

- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation (*Pr5*)
- Perceive and analyze artistic work (*Re7*)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work (*Re9*)

MATERIALS

- *Music Alive!* magazines (October 2017)
- Computer or mobile device with Internet access
- Classroom ukuleles

START

1. Have the students read “UkuleleTales” on pages 10-12 before reviewing the words below. [This reinforces comprehension and vocabulary.]

KITSCHY—considered in poor taste; tacky

DUCLET—sweet and soothing

ARSENAL—collection of resources

FORMIDABLE—impressive

INCLUSIVE—not excluding anyone

REPUTABLE—held in high esteem

DEVELOP

► **1. Play** “Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World” as performed by Israel Kamakawiwo’ole (Hear the Music **track 5** on **musicalive.com**).

ASK

- **What’s the time signature of this song?** (4/4.)
- **Is the song in a major or minor key?** (Major—C major.)
- **What instruments do you hear?** (Just ukulele.)
- **Are the chords mostly common triads or more complex?** (Mostly triads.)
- **Which beats are emphasized?** (Beats 2 and 4, which tend to have eighth-note strums.)
- **Can anyone say which style of music the strumming seems influenced by?** (Subjective; reggae.)
- **How would you describe the mood of the song?** (Bright, happy, etc.)
- **Based on your reading, can you identify the performer?** (Israel Kamakawiwo’ole.)

► **2. Play** “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” as performed by Jake Shimabukuro (Hear the Music **track 6** on **musicalive.com**).

ASK

- **What’s the time signature?** (4/4.)

- **What’s the key signature?** (It switches back and forth between minor [C minor] and major [C major].)
- **What instruments do you hear?** (Ukulele for the first part, and then at 2:08, electric guitar, bass, and drums.)
- **How many ukuleles are there?** (Just one.)
- **What do you think of this arrangement?** (Subjective.)
- **Does this sound easy or difficult to play?** (Difficult.)
- **Based on your reading, can you identify the performer and the piece?** (Jake Shimabukuro; the Beatles’ “While My Guitar Gently Weeps.”)

► **3. Play** “Postcards from Italy” by Beirut (Hear the Music **track 7** on **musicalive.com**).

ASK

- **What’s the time signature?** (4/4.)
- **Is it in a major or minor key?** (Major—F major.)
- **What are some of the instruments you hear?** (Ukulele, drums, bass, trumpet, piano, and others.)
- **How would you describe the ukulele’s role in this context?** (It serves as an alternative to the guitar in the otherwise traditional rock ensemble.)
- **Do you think it sounds like traditional Hawaiian music?** (No.)
- **What are the main note values of the ukulele strums?** (Eighth notes and 16ths.)
- **What’s noteworthy about the way the song begins and ends?** (The focus is on the ukulele; the other instruments sit out.)
- **Based on your reading, can you identify the group playing this song?** (Beirut.)
- **In which of these three selections do you find the ukulele part to be the most interesting—and why?** (Subjective.)

CLOSE (OPTIONAL)

In advance, tune a set of classroom ukuleles (g–C–E–A). Hand out these instruments after going through this lesson. Invite the students to explore the ukuleles on their own for a few minutes. Then, teach them a couple of simple chords such as C, G, F, and G7. After that, lead them in singing and strumming any simple and well-known song with a I–IV or I–V progression, such as Bob Marley’s “One Love” or Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind.”

ASSESS

- **Did the students read the article?**
- **Did they listen to the three selections?**
- **Did they play the ukuleles?**