

LEARNING LINKS

**Jake  
Shimabukuro**

TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 29 2016  
9:30 AM & 11 AM

2016 > 2017

BROADEN THE HORIZONS  
OF YOUR CLASSROOM.  
EXPERIENCE THE VIBRANT  
WORLD OF THE ARTS  
AT THE McCALLUM!



McCallum Theatre Institute  
**Field Trip Series**



McCALLUM THEATRE INSTITUTE  
PRESENTS

## Jake Shimabukuro

TUESDAY  
NOVEMBER 29 2016  
9:30 AM & 11 AM

“Music was my passion,  
but I had no idea  
that I could make it  
as a musician.”

Jake Shimabukuro

### Connecting to Curriculum and Students' Lives!

**HISTORY** • Hawaii, Japan

**ARTS** • Music, musical instruments

### Expanding the Concept of Literacy

What is a “text”? We invite you to consider the performances on McCallum’s Field Trip Series as non-print texts available for study and investigation by your students. Anyone who has shown a filmed version of a play in their classroom, used a website as companion to a textbook, or asked students to do online research already knows that “texts” don’t begin and end with textbooks, novels, and reading packets. They extend to videos, websites, games, plays, concerts, dances, radio programs, and a number of other non-print texts that students and teachers engage with on a regular basis.

We know that when we expand our definition of texts to the variety of media that we use in our everyday lives, we broaden the materials and concepts we have at our disposal in the classroom, increase student engagement, and enrich learning experiences.

Please consider how utilizing your McCallum performance as a text might align to standards established for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

How do we help students to use these texts as a way of shaping ideas and understanding the world?

Please use this material to help you on this journey.

**NON-PRINT TEXT** • any medium/text that creates meaning through sound or images or both, such as symbols, words, songs, speeches, pictures, and illustrations not in traditional print form including those seen on computers, films, and in the environment.

## The Work of Art

### A Non-print Text for Study

- What's it made of? How can this work serve as a *Common Core State Standards*-mandated "text" for student study in the classroom?



The handsome young man takes center stage. His demeanor is modest yet energized. He is clearly happy to be where he is, doing what he's doing. There is nothing routine or by rote here. He greets the audience warmly and introduces himself. He's clutching a ukulele, that somewhat ridiculed stepchild of the string family. He grows quiet, prepares. What sounds, we wonder, will come from that toy-like instrument, and how will they possibly justify our interest?

His eyes squeeze shut, the face almost grimaces, so intent is he. His fingers strum, slowly at first, simple chords and arpeggiated passages, quiet and almost halting, as if he is feeling his way into the piece. The head sways and jerks in sympathy to the lines of the song as it begins to gain strength. Now the refrain rises, familiar yet remade, his body almost dances the notes that we hear, and Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* has never sounded so fresh or so moving. The final cadences hang in the air, each note a sufficient universe in itself. Silence ensues. We burst into appreciative applause while trying to come to grips with the idea that we are in the presence of a master whose musicianship is boundless and arresting, and who can elicit a level of expression we may never before have heard from a ukulele.

Jake next speaks briefly about George Harrison's *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*, then launches into that iconic piece. Bit by bit, section by section, it gains in speed and momentum, Jake's sinewy forearm moving in a blur as the passionate strumming seems to shred the strings, as they say. This is his breakout hit, courtesy of YouTube, and it defines the word "virtuoso."

Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* is up next. Once again, the piece begins relatively quietly. There is an exquisite eloquence in those fingers, those notes. Eloquent, too, is the expressive movement of head and shoulders that conveys in visual terms what our ears are registering. At first he watches us, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, as if he is gauging how we are taking it in, but as the piece continues, once again his focus turns inward to the music. Alone in the light, he seems to grow larger, as if his physical self matches his artistic stature. There is something here that can't be taught; the authentic voice of an artist.

When it's all over and we're bringing our hands together with abandon, the young man resumes the humble mien of someone who can't quite grasp what all the fuss is about.

## The Artist

Who has *produced* this text for study?



Jake Shimabukuro thought he would be a school teacher and incorporate music in the classroom. The idea that a performing career might develop was not really on his radar. Read below an account of his life, adapted from his website.

Jake Shimabukuro still remembers the first time he held a ukulele. He was four. The encounter would shape his destiny. Today he regularly draws comparisons to musical giants like Jimi Hendrix and Miles Davis.

"My mom played, and I kept bugging her to teach me. So one day we sat down on the floor and she put her old Kamaka ukulele in my hands. I remember being so nervous. Then she showed me how to strum the strings and taught me my first chord. I fell in love with the ukulele immediately. From that day on, you had to pry the instrument away from me in order to get me to do anything else. I remember coming home from school; I would rush home from school just so I could play my ukulele. "

Jake was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. He still lives there. Growing up, he played other musical instruments – drums, piano and guitar. "None of those instruments spoke to me the way the ukulele did. There was something about the uke that was different."

He was inspired by the islands' great uke players – Eddie Kamae, Ohta-San and Peter Moon. But he took it further, influenced by all kinds of artists. "As I got older, I realized that I could also learn from guitar players, drummers, violinists, pianists, singers and even dancers. And then I started to observe athletes. Athletes are artists too. I was heavily influenced by people like Bruce Lee and Michael Jordan – applying their philosophy and intense, mental focus to music performance."

"I guess I've always had this vision from the time I was a kid. I would watch rock bands, people like Van Halen, or guitar players like Yngwie Malmsteen. And you'd see these guys, they're playing their instruments, and they're like running all across the stage, and jumping into the audience, stage-diving, and just yelling and screaming. And I always thought to myself, "Why can't an ukulele concert be like that?"

Jake became a local phenomenon, as a member of the group Pure Heart. Word spread to Japan, and he was snatched up by Epic Records (Sony/Japan) in 2001 as a solo artist. He's made lots of solo albums for Epic, full of his dazzling fretwork, ambitious repertoire and wistful lyricism.

It was in 2005 that something really amazing – and unexpected – happened. While visiting New York, he was filmed performing George Harrison's *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* for a local TV station. Months later, he learned from friends that this clip had gone viral on YouTube. "At the time, I didn't even know what YouTube was. By the time I saw it, it already had millions of views. My name wasn't even on it then. All it said was 'Asian guy shreds on ukulele,' or something like that. That's what opened up the doors to touring in North America, Europe, and Asia. It was a big turning point for me."

Since then, there have been collaborations with a wide range of artists including Yo-Yo Ma, Jimmy Buffett, Bette Midler, Cyndi Lauper, and Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. Jake has topped Billboard's World Music Chart on numerous occasions, and has sold out the Hollywood Bowl, Lincoln Center, Sydney Opera House, Wolf Trap, and Bonnaroo. He even played for Queen Elizabeth II.

A father of two, Jake balances his career with family life and community service. He travels to schools around the world spreading positive messages to young people, encouraging them to live drug free and find their passion.

“I’m constantly discovering new sounds, styles and expressive possibilities within the instrument.”

Jake Shimabukuro

## Contexts

- What *information* surrounds this text for study & could help make students' engagement with it more powerful?



Hawai'i – this spelling includes the okina or glottal stop between the two i's. The typical spelling of Hawaii does not.

August 21, 1959 is when Hawai'i became the 50th state. The only one of our states made up entirely of islands, it's the northern tip of Polynesia. Although it's made up of hundreds of islands spread out over 1,500 miles, the eight main ones are Ni'ihau, Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, Kaho'olawe, Maui and the Island of Hawai'i. This last one is called the "big island," because it's the largest. Throughout the state, you find beautiful natural scenery, tropical climate, lots of public beaches, and active volcanoes. Tourists like it a lot, and so do surfers, biologists, and people who study volcanoes. Over a million people live there year-round. The only one of our states with an Asian plurality, it's the 8th-smallest but the 13th-most densely populated of all fifty. If you tried walking the entire circumference of Hawaii, you'd cover 750 miles.

## JAPAN

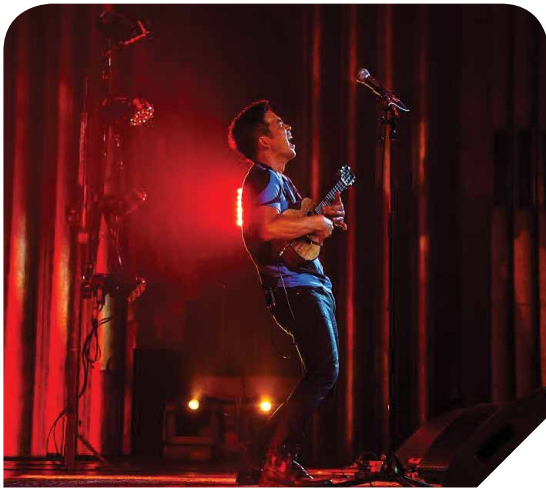
Jake has made quite a splash in Japan, a culture to which his family has ancestral ties. It's an island country, located on the eastern side of Asia. Volcanic like Hawaii, it boasts 6,852 islands! The characters that spell Japan mean "sun origin." People often call this beautiful place The Land of the Rising Sun. 126 million people live there. It's the tenth most populous country on earth. Over nine million of these live in Tokyo, the capital.

The area was inhabited as early as the Upper Paleolithic period. Beginning in the 12th century and continuing through the 1860s, feudal military shoguns ruled Japan in the name of the Emperor. Around 1853, the U.S. successfully urged Japan, which had isolated itself, to open up to the West. Modern Japan has a high standard of living. A member of the UN, the G7, the G8 and the G20, it's a major player in the world today, with the third-largest economy. It's the fourth-largest exporter/importer. And even though it has officially renounced its right to declare war, it maintains a modern military. The concepts of honor and respect are deeply ingrained in the Japanese culture – and traditions abound.

## THE UKULELE

The ukulele, with its humble four strings and modest two-octave range, is an instrument limited only by the imagination and creativity of the person playing it – as becomes evident in the hands of Jake Shimabukuro. The one he plays is a custom-made, four-string tenor ukulele from Kamaka Ukulele.

The first ukulele, appearing in the 1800s, was an adaptation of a small guitar-like instrument from Portugal called the machete. Portuguese immigrants brought it to the shores of Hawaii. In the early days of the 20th century, its popularity spread throughout the continental U.S. Different sized ukes produce different tones and volume levels. There are four sizes: soprano, concert, tenor and baritone. In Hawaii, ukulele means "jumping flea." However, Queen Lili'uokalani, the last Hawaiian monarch, averred the name meant "the gift that came here", from the Hawaiian words uku (gift) and lele (to come).



"I always joke with people and I tell them, one of the best things about being a touring ukulele player is that audiences all over the world have such low expectations. And I think that I jokingly say that, but it is true. It's so true. When you see someone come out with a ukulele, you don't expect a lot of music to come out of that instrument. Especially when, there's no singing involved, there are no other backing instruments; it's just four strings and two octaves. And I think people's expectations of the kind of music that comes out of the ukulele, most people, especially outside of Hawaii, will think of Tiny Tim's *Tiptoe through the Tulips*, but you don't expect to hear a lot of melody or pop tunes, or rock tunes. I think that element of surprise is so powerful in any art form."

Jake Shimabukuro continues, "I mean, after a ukulele performance, I just want to be drenched, like I just wrestled a bear. So I try to incorporate – it's basically like all these little things. You want to take a little bit of everything and really showcase it on the instrument. Dynamics, I think, is probably one of the most powerful aspects of music. And the ukulele has an extremely wide dynamic range. I always wondered, 'Man, what would *Bohemian Rhapsody* sound like on a ukulele?' And then it's my stubborn nature not to give up until I figure out how to do it."

## To get ready for the performance, students could research these:

- The ukulele
- Hawaii, its history & culture



**Here's a 60 minute lesson\* in collaboration & problem-solving you could teach to help prepare students for this work:**

**Line of Inquiry – LOI is an essential question that generates a lesson:**

How does Jake Shimabukuro explore and exploit the assets and qualities unique to the ukulele?

Show students some images of a ukulele.

Deepen students' noticing by asking questions such as:

- What are the details here?
- What materials do you think it is made of?
- How big do you think it is? (You might like to refrain from showing an image of a person with a ukulele until students have wrestled with this question.)
- Where in the world do you think ukuleles first came from?

Share with students some context regarding the ukulele – and possibly a quotation or two from Jake Shimabukuro himself.

### PROJECT IDEA

Students (alone or in pairs) assemble raw materials to construct their own stringed instruments. These could include boxes of various materials, string, rubber bands, fishing wire, metal wire, fastening materials of various kinds, and so on. The goal is for every student to mindfully assemble a stringed instrument – and explore what range of sounds they can elicit from it. Is there a role that classroom science can play in all of this, too?

Have students – in a companion language arts project – write a page-long report answering some of the following questions:

- How have you combined different materials?
- How have you fastened one thing to another?
- How do you hold this instrument when you play it?
- How would you describe some of the sounds it can make? How many different adjectives can you come up with to describe these sounds?
- What does it sound like to play a song on it?

Students then share aloud some ideas from their writing and demonstrate playing their handmade instrument.

## After coming to the theater, students could research these:

- Japan
- Jake Shimabukuro



## Here's a 45-60 minute lesson you could teach after students have experienced the work:

Lead students in recalling details of the performance. After some describing, you will want to ask open-ended questions that get at the essential ideas. The questions listed below in the "What's your read of this non-print text?" section would provide a good starting point.

A Language Arts project: Have students write a review of the performance. This would not be an opinion piece. Sentences like "The part I liked best..." would be set aside. Instead, the review would address questions like these:

- What was the performance made of?
- Who performed it?
- What kinds of skills did he use?
- What did you notice about his performing and about the pieces he played?

When done, a couple of volunteers read their reviews aloud to the class. To help deepen students' thinking about both the performance and the nature of reviewing, ask questions such as:

- What language choices pop out at you? Why?
- What do you think this writer thinks is most important for readers to know about the performance? What makes you think that?
- What has the writer left out (as you recall your own experience of the work)? Why might that be?
- Would this review, if it appeared in the paper, make readers want to go or not? Why?

Have each student share their review with a table partner.

**"If everyone played the ukulele,  
the world would be a better place."**

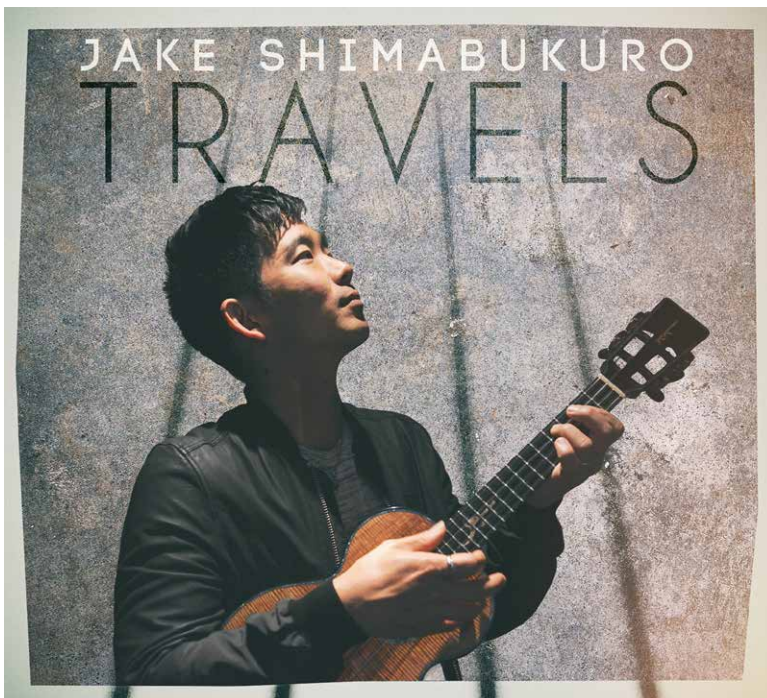
**Jake Shimabukuro**



## What's *your* read of this non-print text?

How would you answer these questions – and how could they be adapted as Guiding Questions to spark student discussion?

- Which pieces most struck you – and why?
- What were some of the genres of music played?
- What stands out about the musical style of this performer?
- How would you describe Jake's playing?
- What was expressed through the body? Through the face?
- How did Jake's movement and the music interrelate?
- How could you tell that Jake had had training in ukulele playing? What were the clues?
- What are the details you noticed about the ukulele itself?
- How did the performance flow? What were transitions between songs like?
- Which moments had the greatest impact on you? What contributed to this?
- If you were describing the "feel" of the performance to someone who hadn't been there, what would you say?
- How did Jake relate to the audience?
- What other experiences in your life does this work connect you to?
- What questions are you left with at the end of the performance?



## Internet

### **Official Website for Jake Shimabukuro**

<http://www.jakeshimabukuro.com/home/>

### **Jake's YouTube page**

[www.youtube.com/user/jakeshimabukuro](http://www.youtube.com/user/jakeshimabukuro)

Contains a lot of cool clips of the artist in performance.

### **Jake's Wikipedia page**

[www.facebook.com/jakeshimabukuromusic/](http://www.facebook.com/jakeshimabukuromusic/)

### **Jake Shimabukuro - Life on Four Strings**

[www.pbs.org/program/jake-shimabukuro/](http://www.pbs.org/program/jake-shimabukuro/)

Documentary about Jake on PBS

### **Jake's Twitter page**

[https://twitter.com/JakeShimabukuro?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/JakeShimabukuro?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)

### **Ukulele**

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukulele>

### **The Ukulele Teacher**

[www.youtube.com/user/TheUkuleleTeacher](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheUkuleleTeacher)

Learn how to play the ukulele!

### **Official Website of the Aloha State**

<https://portal.ehawaii.gov/>

### **TIME for Kids – Around the World**

[www.timeforkids.com/destination/hawaii](http://www.timeforkids.com/destination/hawaii)

Get to know Hawaii! Get the facts about its land, products and culture.

## Books

### ***Peace Love Ukulele***

By: Jake Shimabukuro

Publisher: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2012

ISBN: 978-1458413772

Songbook transcriptions with ukulele tablature.

### ***The Name of the Wind: Portrait of Jake Shimabukuro***

By: Jake Shimabukuro

Publisher: Kodansha, 2008

ISBN: 978-4062148078

Japanese biographical photobook.

## CDS

### ***Gently Weeps***

Label: Hitchhike Records, 2006

ASIN: B000HIP44M

### ***My Life***

Label: Hitchhike Records, 2007

ASIN: B000U1XIJE

### ***Live***

Label: Hitchhike Records, 2009

ASIN: B001TD1XVC

### ***Grand Ukulele***

Label: Mailboat Records, 2012

ASIN: B008RXE5W6

### ***Travels***

Label: Entertainment One Music, 2015

ASIN: B011T60FP8

## DVDs

### ***Play Loud Ukulele***

Studio: Hitchhike Records

Released: 2005

Includes instructions for playing the ukulele as well as concerts and interviews.

### ***Million Miles Away***

Studio: Hitchhike Records

Released: 2005

A 60-minute live concert performance.

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**“It’s a nice relationship  
you develop with  
each audience.”**

**Jake Shimabukuro**