



Junior Journal 58

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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.



Learning to play the ukulele



This is how the students at East Tamaki School learn to play the ukulele.

First, the students learn to strum. Strumming is just like waving to a friend. You should be relaxed and use the whole hand. There are lots of ways of strumming, but the first one the students learn is to simply strum downwards with the thumb.



Strumming

The next step is to play a melody (a tune). The students use one finger at a time to pick the strings. Each string makes a different sound (or note).



Picking out a melody

It's a big day when the students learn their first chord. A chord is three or more notes played at the same time. Each chord is known by a letter. The students learn the C chord first. To play this chord, they press down on the bottom string with one finger and use the other hand to strum all the strings.



Playing a chord

When the students know a few chords, they can put them together to play songs.

They have a few tips about learning a new song.

When I learn a new piece, I start slowly, then get faster.

It helps to break the song into small sections and repeat each section a lot.

I start by counting the strum out loud to get the beat. Then, as I get it, I just count in my head.





Some chords are hard to play because you have to use lots of fingers. But if you keep working at it, they get easier.

I like tapping my feet when I play. It helps me to keep in time with the music.

The students also practise at home. They try out the chords they have learnt and practise changing quickly from one chord to another. And they enjoy playing and singing the songs they already know. Some students teach their families how to play.

The sweetest sound

Maria Winder is a teacher at East Tamaki School. She is also the Chairperson of the New Zealand Ukulele Trust. She says that learning the ukulele is not only heaps of fun but also helps the brain to develop and grow.

Maria says you can't help but love the ukulele, and that when all the Kiwileles from around New Zealand play at the concert, "it's just the sweetest, most joyful sound".



Maria Winder



And what do the East Tamaki students say about playing the ukulele?

When I play the ukulele, I feel happiness.

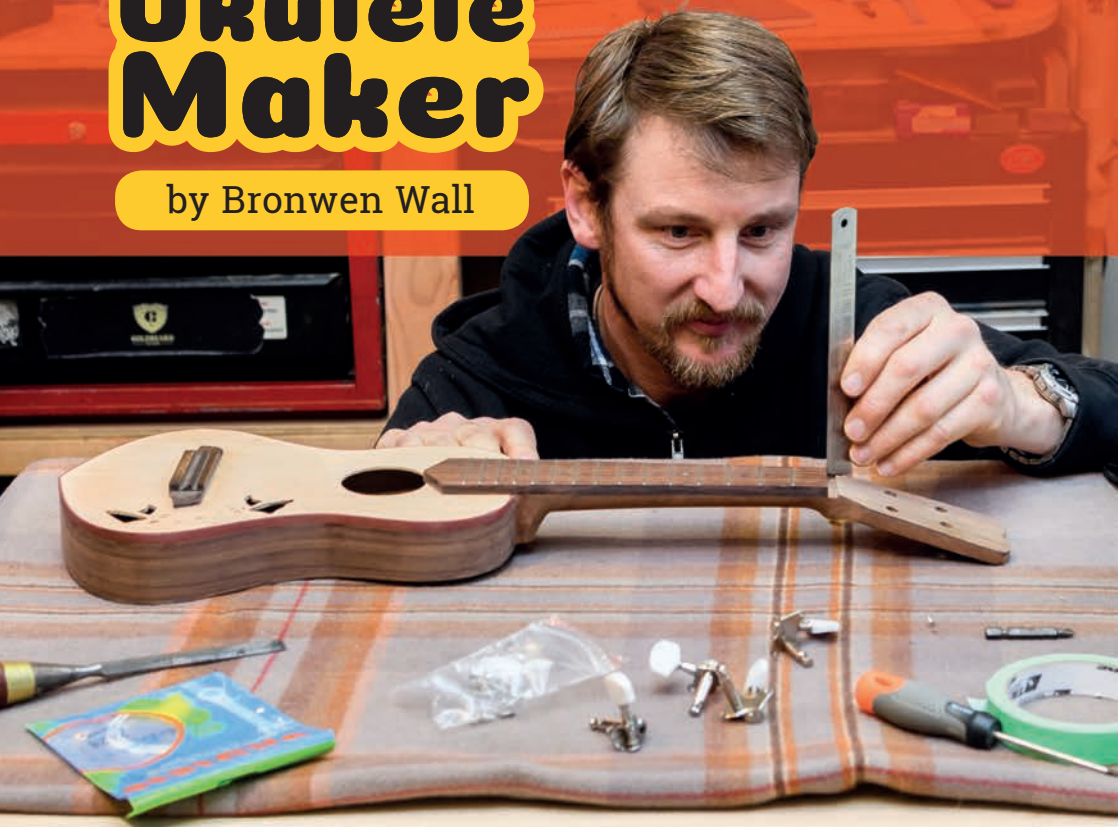
I like the confidence of being able to play an instrument.

It's just a really nice feeling being able to play with a group.

I can't wait to be in the Kiwilele concert like my brother and sister.

The Ukulele Maker

by Bronwen Wall



Dave Gilberd loves making things. When he was a boy, he spent a lot of time building toy planes and boats out of wood. He's been making things ever since. Now Dave works full-time building beautiful ukuleles and guitars.

When Dave was at high school, he learnt to play the ukulele. He enjoyed playing it so much that he decided he would like to make a ukulele himself. Dave went to see a luthier (a person who makes stringed instruments, such as violins, guitars, and ukuleles). The luthier taught Dave how to make a ukulele.

Dave's first ukulele didn't look very good, but it sounded OK. What's more, Dave really enjoyed making it, so he made another ... and another. Now, Dave is a luthier himself.



A ukulele and some of the guitars Dave has made

Making a ukulele

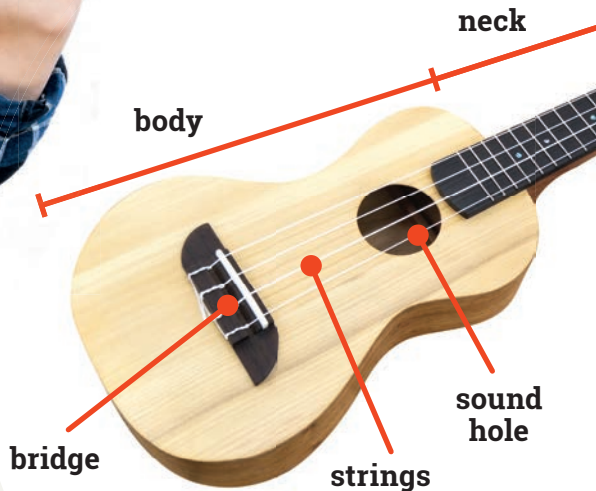
The first thing Dave does when he makes a ukulele is to draw a plan. The plan shows the size and shape of all the pieces he will need to make and how all the pieces will fit together.



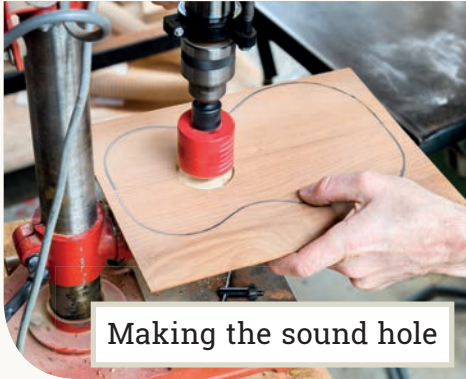
Then Dave chooses the wood for the ukulele. The wood needs to look and sound beautiful and be strong but flexible (easy to bend). Dave taps the wood to hear if it makes a nice sound.



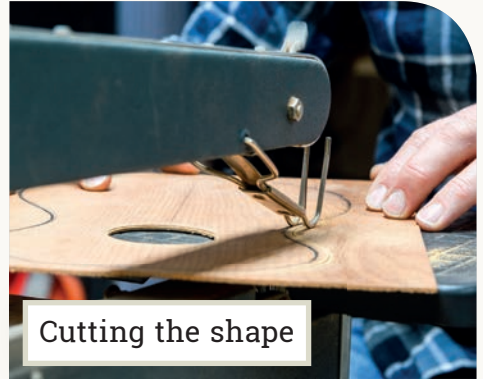
The parts of a ukulele



Dave draws the shape of the ukulele body on one of the pieces of wood, then he cuts a hole in it. This is the "sound hole". It makes the sound of a ukulele louder. Then Dave cuts out the shape.



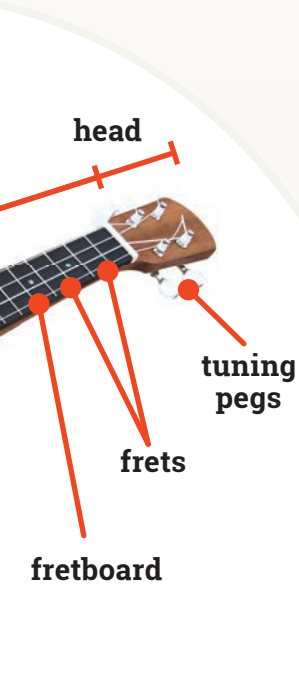
Making the sound hole



Cutting the shape

Next, Dave cuts out the other pieces of wood and sands each piece to make it smooth.

Then he takes the strips of wood for the sides of the ukulele and wets them. He uses a hot iron to bend the wet wood into the right shape.



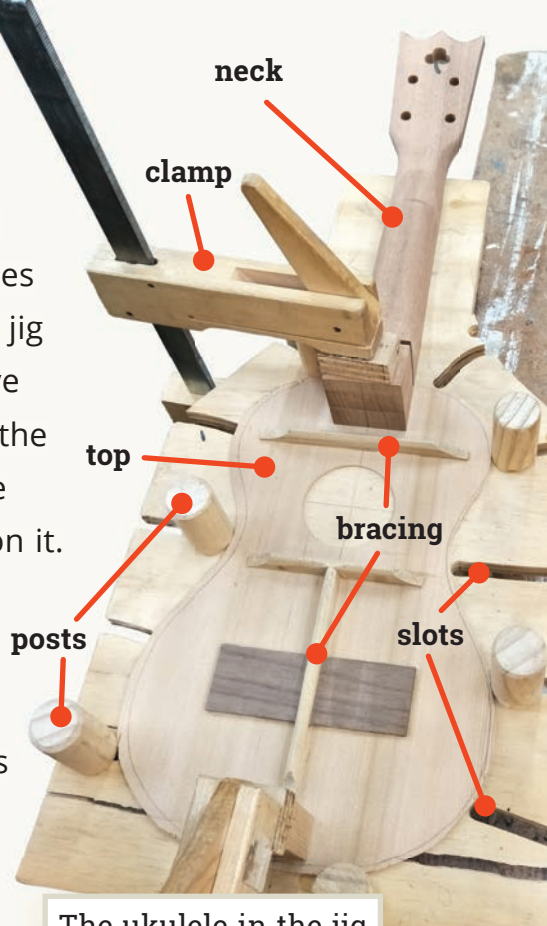
Bending the wet wood

Now it's time to start putting the ukulele together. Carefully, Dave puts the pieces into a frame called a jig. The jig has little posts that help Dave make sure the pieces are in the right place and that keep the ukulele still while he works on it. The jig also has slots for ties to go through.

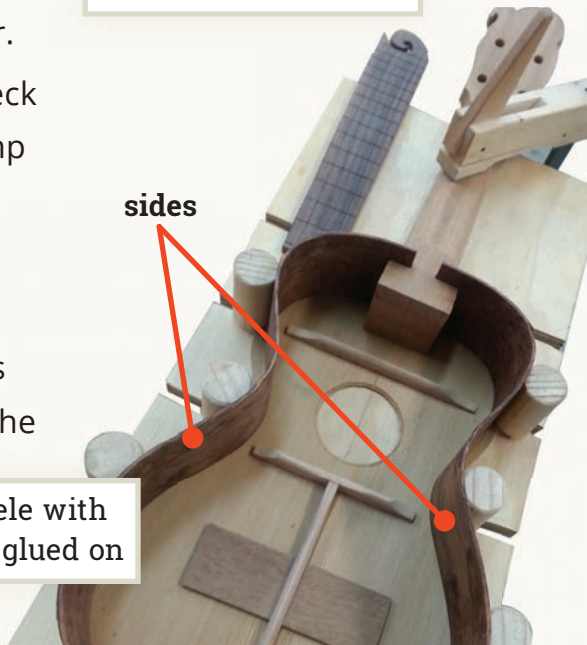
Dave adds each piece in a particular order. He puts the top down first. Then he glues bracing to the inside of the top. The bracing will make the ukulele stronger.

Next, Dave glues the neck to the top. He uses a clamp to hold the pieces in the right place. Then he waits for the glue to dry.

Next, he glues the sides in place, and ... waits for the glue to dry.



The ukulele in the jig



The ukulele with the sides glued on



Using the ties to hold the back in place

Then, he glues on the back, puts ties through the slots to hold it in place, and ... waits for the glue to dry.

He uses a hammer to put the frets (small pieces of metal) into their slots along the fretboard. (The frets show where to press the strings to play each note.)



Hammering in a fret



Gluing on the fretboard

Finally, Dave glues on the fretboard and the bridge, and ... waits for the glue to dry.

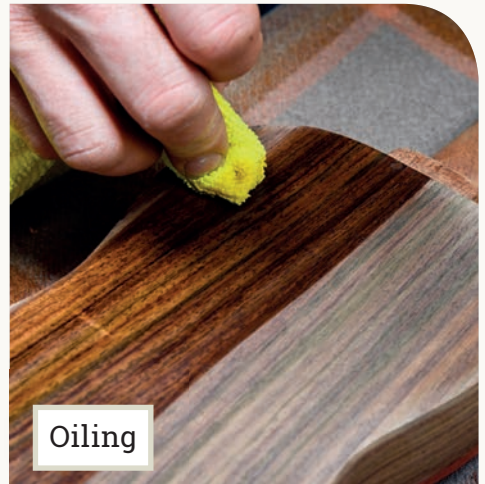


Gluing on the bridge

It takes about a week to make a ukulele. A lot of that time is spent waiting for glue to dry!

Once everything *is* dry, Dave sands the ukulele to smooth away any rough edges. Then he paints it with a clear oil to help keep it strong.

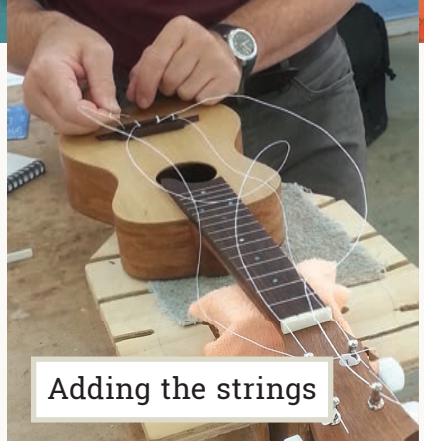
Then he screws the tuning pegs into place.



There's still something missing, though. Can you guess what it is?



It's the strings! Dave uses nylon strings on his ukulele. He threads each string through a hole in the bridge and ties a knot in one end to stop the string slipping right through. Then he ties each string to a tuning peg at the head of the ukulele. Now all Dave has to do is tune the ukulele so each string makes the right note. He twists each peg to pull the strings tight to change their sound.



Adding the strings



Tuning

Now the new ukulele is ready to play.





The Jumping Flea

“Ukulele” is a Hawaiian word. (Hawai‘i is a small group of islands in the Pacific Ocean.) People in Hawai‘i say the word as oo-koo-lay-lay. It means “jumping flea”.

No one knows for sure why the ukulele got this name. Some people say that it was because ukulele players often played so fast their fingers looked like fleas skipping over the strings!



The Something

I found a something yesterday.
I found it on the ground,
But no matter how I blew it,
It didn't make a sound.

It didn't match my T-shirt
When I wore it as a hat,
And it wasn't really strong enough
To be a cricket bat.

When I tried to put my foot in it,
The hole was far too small,
So as a shoe or slipper
It was not much good at all.

But then a girl rushed up to me
Smiling from ear to ear
"You've found my ukulele. Thanks!
I thought I'd left it here."

John Carr





Rāhui

by Steph Matuku

Huia went into the garden and checked the strawberries. There were thirty little berries, slowly growing ripe and red. The berries had started off small and hard – white with green dots. Under the hot summer sun, they were slowly turning pink and growing plump. Huia checked them every day. She couldn't wait until they were bright red and ready for eating.

“It will be worth the wait,” said Mum. “When they’re fully ripe, we can have them with ice cream for my birthday hākari.”

But one morning, Huia carefully pulled back the leaves and counted the strawberries – twenty-nine. She counted again. Nope. Still twenty-nine.

“Did you eat one of the strawberries?” she asked her brother, Tama. “They’re supposed to be for Mum’s birthday!”

“No!” said Tama, but Huia thought she saw a hint of sticky red juice on his chin.

The next day, Huia counted the strawberries again. Twenty-eight!

“What?” she cried and counted again. But she’d counted wrong – there were actually only twenty-seven!

A sparrow was sitting on the fence. “Did you eat the strawberries, manu?” asked Huia.

But the sparrow just chirped and flew off into the bushes.



The next day, Huia was almost too scared to count the strawberries, and when she finally did ... oh no – twenty-six!

“Was it you?” she growled at the kiore, who lived behind the compost bin. The kiore just stared at her and then ran into its hole.



“Was it you?” she asked Dad. Her dad shook his head. “Of course not. Those strawberries are for your mother’s birthday.”

Huia frowned. “Well, someone’s taking them,” she said.

“Never mind,” said Mum. “Twenty-six strawberries is still pretty good. There’ll be enough for everyone.”

“Not if someone keeps eating them!” said Huia. “I think we need a rāhui on the strawberries.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” said Mum. “Do you think everyone will listen?”



“I’ll explain it to them,” Huia said, and she called a hui. Dad was there and Mum and Tama. The sparrow perched on the fence as if it were listening, too. And Huia could see the kiore hiding in the compost bin.



“The strawberries are being eaten,” Huia announced. “If we eat them all, there won’t be any left for Mum’s birthday next week. So we need to agree not to eat any more.”

“But that’s what strawberries are for,” said Tama. “They’re to eat. They’re not just to look at.”

Huia looked at him sternly. “We’ll eat them soon,” she said, “but not right now. If we leave them alone now, they’ll be even more delicious by Mum’s birthday. They’ll be ripe and red and perfect to eat. So, do you agree?”

Huia stared at Dad, and Dad turned to Mum, and Mum looked at Tama, who looked a bit cross. Then everyone nodded in agreement. Even the sparrow on the fence seemed to nod its head.

The next day, Huia went down to the garden to count the strawberries. One was missing.

“What?” cried Huia. “What about the rāhui? Everyone agreed!” Then she caught sight of a little bit of red under a leaf. “Oh,” she said. “There it is. Number twenty-six. Found you.”



The next day, there were still twenty-six strawberries. And the next day, and the next. And then, finally, it was Mum’s birthday hākari.

“Time to lift the rāhui!” said Huia.

“Time for strawberries and ice cream!” said Mum.

“And about time, too,” said Tama.



Dad shared out the strawberries. “That’s six each,” he said, “and two left over.”

“Who’s going to have those?” asked Tama.

“I know who can have them,” said Huia.

She took the last two strawberries and went outside. The sparrow was perched on the roof, and she could see the kiore’s whiskers poking out of his hole.

“You kept the rāhui,” she said, “so you should have strawberries, too.”

She put one strawberry on the fence and the other on the compost bin.

“Enjoy!” she said.



Space Rubbish

by Kylie Parry



SCENE ONE: *Inside a spaceship. The **CAPTAIN**, **FIRST OFFICER**, and **SECOND OFFICER** are standing round a pile of rubbish.*

CAPTAIN. The rubbish pile is getting big again. It's time to use the rubbish blaster.

FIRST OFFICER. I love rubbish-blasting day.

SECOND OFFICER. Yeah, me too! It's great to get rid of all that revolting rubbish!

*The **ENGINEER** comes in wheeling a machine with a big switch on the side.*



CAPTAIN. OK, load in the rubbish.

FIRST OFFICER. Soon it will all be blasted to nothing!

They load the rubbish into the machine.

CAPTAIN. Now, blast away!

SECOND OFFICER (*pulling the switch down*). Take that, stinky rubbish!

Nothing happens.

SECOND OFFICER. Uh-oh.

FIRST OFFICER. What's happening?

CAPTAIN. Nothing. That's what's happening.

ENGINEER. Here, let me try.

He pulls the switch again. Nothing happens.

CAPTAIN (*looking closely at the machine*). It says there is no power. The batteries must have run down. Engineer, go and get some more from the storeroom.

The **ENGINEER** hurries off.

FIRST OFFICER. Soon we'll get rid of all this stinky rubbish!

The **ENGINEER** returns, looking worried.



CAPTAIN. What's the problem, Engineer? You look worried.

ENGINEER. Er ... there are no batteries, Captain. We've used them all.

CAPTAIN (*looking sternly at the **FIRST OFFICER***). How could that happen? Didn't you buy spare batteries when we were on Earth?

FIRST OFFICER (*looking embarrassed*). Um, er ... I forgot. I was too busy buying tomato seeds.

CAPTAIN. This is serious. We can't get any more batteries until we return to Earth – in two months' time! If our blaster doesn't work, the whole ship will fill up with rubbish.

FIRST OFFICER. We need a plan. Any ideas?

ENGINEER. We could throw the rubbish out into space.

CAPTAIN. We can't do that! We'd get into big trouble with the S.L.P.

ENGINEER. Oh yeah, the Space Litter Police. I'd forgotten about them.

SECOND OFFICER. We could store the rubbish in an empty room.

CAPTAIN. Excellent plan. Do we have an empty room?

SECOND OFFICER. Well, no, but we could use someone's bedroom.

CAPTAIN. So, whose bedroom shall we use? Would someone like to volunteer?

Silence. She looks around but no one meets her eyes.

ENGINEER. Well, we could try to find some rubbish-eating aliens?

CAPTAIN. Don't be silly. There's no such thing as rubbish-eating aliens.



SCENE TWO. *Everyone reappears carrying things they have made from the rubbish. The **FIRST OFFICER** is carrying some tomato plants and a bag labelled “Compost”.*

CAPTAIN. I love recycling. I wove this rug out of old plastic bags.

ENGINEER. I love recycling, too! I melted down some old plastic bottles and made this bucket.

FIRST OFFICER. My tomatoes have never looked better now that they have compost!

SECOND OFFICER. What about my new space hat? I think it looks amazing.

FIRST OFFICER. Now all our rubbish fits in this little bin.

CAPTAIN. Well, Engineer. It's just as well there's no such thing as rubbish-eating aliens. They'd go hungry!

COMPUTER. Attention, an alien spaceship is approaching.

CAPTAIN. Let's invite them on board. We've got lots of room now that we've got rid of all that rubbish.

COMPUTER. The alien spaceship is alongside.

CAPTAIN (*speaking into the intercom*). Welcome, aliens. Do come and join us for dinner.

ALIEN 1 (*from offstage*). Thank you. That is very kind.

COMPUTER. Opening airlock now.

The door opens, and two aliens walk in.

ALIEN 1. Greetings, Earth people. Thanks again for inviting us to dinner.

ALIEN 2. Yes, we're starving. I'd really love one of your tin cans and a few old plastic bags. Where's all your rubbish?

ALL CHARACTERS EXCEPT ALIENS. Oh no!



illustrations
by Jez Tuya

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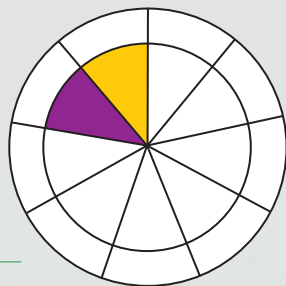
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TITLE	GUIDED READING LEVEL
The Kiwileles	Purple 2
The Ukulele Maker	Purple 2
Rāhui	Purple 2
Space Rubbish	Gold 1



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The Kiwileles	✓	✓
The Ukulele Maker	✓	✓
Rāhui	✓	✓
Space Rubbish	✓	✓



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