

This Little Light of Mine

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Summary

This is the thirteenth and final lesson from the Strumming Through The Americas ukulele course. Students will culminate their journey through the Americas by learning a classic American song from the United States, “This Little Light of Mine.” They will discover the history behind spirituals and work songs in Black American music which inform the background of this piece. On the ukulele, they will learn a new chord, C7, which will be combined with many other chords covered over the last 12 lessons to construct the chord progression of the song. Students will then incorporate lyrics and perform the song as a group.

Objectives

- Distinguish important cultural and historical contexts that led to the use of spirituals and work songs in Black American music.
- Interpret the C7 chord diagram.
- Utilize the new chord, C7, in a new song and performance context.
- Incorporate lyrics with the chordal accompaniment of “This Little Light of Mine” for a performance.

Materials

- Ukulele
- [Google Slides: This Little Light of Mine](#)
- [Mr. Dave Tells an Important Story](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine by the Soweto Gospel Choir](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine by Sister Rosetta Tharpe](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine Chords](#)
- [This Little Light of Mine Lyrics](#)
- Adaptive tools or chord changers for students with disabilities

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Explore

1. Display the [Google Slides: This Little Light of Mine](#). Introduce the lesson by asking the students to reflect on the ukulele course. Ask: *What was your favorite song in the course? What do you remember about some of the amazing countries we visited? What were some of the interesting instruments that were similar to the ukulele?* During this reflection time, note the names of the songs that students liked the most or felt most connected to. You may also choose to make a list of 3-4 specific songs with the students to be used in a culminating performance (discussed in *Perform & Share*).
2. Tell the students that today they will be learning their final song in the course, “This Little Light of Mine.” Ask: *Does anyone know this song?* Explain that before we learn how to play the song on the ukulele, we are going to watch an important video made by the great Mr. Dave, who we met last week. Play [Mr. Dave Tells an Important Story](#) (the video is time stamped to begin from 4:40, stop playing the video at 7:56).
3. Play the students excerpts of two versions of “This Little Light of Mine,” starting with the video of [This Little Light of Mine by the Soweto Gospel Choir](#). Point out to students how all the voices interact with only percussion providing additional accompaniment. Similar to the discussion last lesson about “Killing Floor,” given its popularity and importance, “This Little Light of Mine” has been interpreted many different ways - follow this by playing the second version: [This Little Light of Mine by Sister Rosetta Tharpe](#). Ask: *How is this version of the song different? What instrument is Sister Rosetta Tharpe playing here? Does anyone see any other familiar instruments being played in the video?*

Learn

1. Play the [This Little Light of Mine Chords](#) video for the students. Mr. Juan will guide the students through the chord progression of the song and introduce a new chord C7. While it is important that students follow Mr. Juan to hear the full cycle of chords, given there is a new chord, pause the video at 0:50 so the students can practice the C7 with the diagram displayed. Resume from [0:50](#) to follow Mr. Juan through the rest of the progression. As Mr. Juan states at the end of the video, “This Little Light of Mine” is the longest song in the ukulele course. Repeat the video from [0:33](#) as necessary.
2. Play the [This Little Light of Mine Lyrics](#) video for the students. Mr. Juan will sing the melody and lyrics while playing the chords to the song (with the chord diagrams displayed). For the first viewing, have students put down their ukuleles, so they can focus solely on singing the lyrics in rhythm with Mr. Juan and his accompaniment. It may also be helpful to pause the video after each phrase (0:43, 0:51 and 1:00) to allow students time to process the shapes of the melody and lyrics. Once students are comfortable with the melody, restart the video from [0:29](#) and invite them to practice singing the melody and playing the chords at the same time with Mr. Juan.

Perform & Share

1. Create a class performance video of “This Little Light of Mine.” Encourage the students to both play accompaniment and sing the lyrics. Assist the students by playing the accompaniment along with them to help provide a steady beat. After filming the song, invite any students who feel comfortable to share on the video a sentence or two about what learning ukulele meant to them.

2. Share the performance on [S’Cool Sounds Padlet](#).

3. Consider planning a culminating performance for an audience. Activities such as these provide an invaluable opportunity for students to see the benefits of developing a new skill, and further instill the importance of sharing music to foster community-building through group performance. Here are some steps and recommendations for building a short performance program with the ukulele group:

- Have a class discussion to discover or survey which songs they connected with or liked to play the most.
- Create a program of 3-4 pieces from the course.
- Conduct a lesson-long practice session for the students. Here they can review the materials individually for the chosen songs, then rehearse as a group with guidance.
- Consider a “dress rehearsal” in a chosen performance space. This allows the students to get acquainted with the space in this particular context. Invite a student or several students to introduce each song to the audience.
- In the rehearsal and performance, be sure to play the ukulele and sing *with* the students. This helps with confidence and can be an important guide on the occasion that students need support.