

# Teaching Guide to *Shortcuts* by Jeff Harris

## Introduction

*Shortcuts* by Jeff Harris is a beautifully illustrated, fact-packed page that makes learning fun. Each week, *Shortcuts'* multicultural cast (Juanita, K., Roland, Junior and James) offers facts, riddles, jokes and puzzles to help kids learn about science, geography, animals, food, history and holidays.

Each teaching guide provides ideas for expanding the lesson and creating discussion and learning activities for your students. The grade level for the guides is usually 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, but they can be adapted for use at other levels. The guides are broken down into four areas:

### **1. Questions for Discussion and Further Study**

Designed to help students think and research, not just give one-word answers

### **2. Activity Ideas**

Designed to allow students to be creative and teach themselves

### **3. Use the News**

Designed to have students use the news in studying each topic

### **4. Quick Quiz**

Designed to be adaptable to several grade levels, evaluate students' comprehension and build vocabulary and math skills

You might use the teaching guides in the following ways:

**Questions for Discussion and Further Study:** Engage the entire class by asking each question aloud and listing the students' answers on the board. Or have them use reference resources to give their own answers to the questions. Allow them to discuss other students' answers after they've researched the topics. Key words or phrases that can help students search for more information are italicized.

**Activity Ideas:** Give the students a time limit to research their projects, using library or study time. By having the students cite their resources you can check their work; or, alternatively, tell them which resource(s) you prefer them to use.

**Use the News:** These can be worked on individually but we suggest they work in groups to learn teamwork skills.

- **Quick Quiz:** We suggest you review the quizzes ahead of time and change the phrasing or difficulty level based on the students' abilities.

# **Shortcuts: PONDERING PYTHONS**

For release the week of: July 16, 2012

**Objective:** After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding of pythons.

**Subject Areas:** The following information about pythons will be discussed:

- How pythons swallow large prey
- Kinds of pythons
- Pythons as pets

**Evaluation:** Students may be evaluated using the following point scale:

*Four points:* Information is accurate, organized, shows creative thought/use of materials

*Three points:* Information is accurate and organized

*Two points:* Information is mostly accurate; organization needs some work

*One point:* Significant inaccuracies; lacks organization

## **Topics for Discussion and Further Study**

1. How does a python get its mouth around an animal that is bigger than its mouth?
2. What other kinds of pythons are there?

## **Activity Ideas**

- Do pythons make good pets? Why or why not? What kinds of precautions would a python owner need to keep in mind? What kinds of snakes make good pets? Why? Research snakes as pets and write a report about owning snakes, especially constrictors.
- Brightly colored tree pythons have beautiful skin. Many kinds of artwork can be created with snakes as a subject. Brainstorm some ideas of “snake art” and decide on one for yourself. Chalk drawing, painting, clay modeling, body painting, etc. Collect your art supplies from school and or home and make your own work of art.

### **Use the News**

- Are any pythons “endangered”? Some people catch pythons for profit. What do they use them for? Research this activity and report any news you find about it.

## **Answers to the Quiz**

1.) a, 2.) b, 3.) b, 4.) a, 5.) b, 6.) b , 7.) squeeze, 8.) sensors 9.) 2 m , 10.) 886 grams

## **Quick Quiz — Pythons**

1. Some pythons may go as long as a year without eating.  
a. True b. False

2. The reticulated python is one of the \_\_\_\_\_ snakes in the world.  
a. fastest b. longest c. shortest d. most poisonous
3. Most pythons hate the water.  
a. True b. False
4. Unlike most snakes, female pythons \_\_\_\_\_ their eggs.  
a. incubate b. eat c. abandon d. roll
5. Many wild pythons are found in North America.  
a. True b. False
6. It may take several \_\_\_\_\_ to digest a large meal.  
a. days b. weeks c. months d. years

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. Pythons are constrictors, they \_\_\_\_\_ their prey to death.
8. Most species of pythons have special heat \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)**

9. How many meters long would a 60 cm, a 40 cm, and a 100 cm python equal?
10. If a 697-gram python ate 189 grams of meat, how heavy would it be?