

# 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: A PEEK AT PUFFINS

For release the week of: August 13, 2012

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

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

- Coloration and behavior
- Swimming and flying
- Climate change problems

**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. Why do puffins' feet and beaks get colorful during breeding season?
2. How do puffins take off and land, with such short wings?

## Activity Ideas

- How did puffins get their name? What enemies do puffins have? Learn the answers to these and 24 other questions about puffins at this website. Study the page and then quiz each other to see how much you remember. <http://www.projectpuffin.org/PuffinQuestions.html>
- Climate change may be affecting puffin populations in Iceland. Take a look at this National Geographic clip about puffins:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoHD2GxcBMw&feature=related> Here's a quick clip to see the amazing way they swim: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qwo9qUGhtU>

### Use the News

- Puffins nest in large colonies. A single colony may contain as many as 40,000 birds. What kinds of groups do humans form? How many people may be found in these groups? Read the newspaper for articles about groups of people. Make a list of as many groups as you can find. If numbers are given, record them in the list. Do you think most people like to be in groups or alone? Why? Write or discuss your ideas.

## Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) a, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) b, 7.) parrots, 8.) toes 9.) 9,000, 10.) 14,000

## Quick Quiz — Puffins

1. Puffins are good swimmers, but bad fliers.  
a. True b. False
2. Puffins build their nests \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. underground b. on cliffs c. in trees d. on the rocks
3. Puffins live mainly near the Antarctic.  
a. True b. False
4. Puffins feed mainly on \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. seeds b. worms c. insects d. fish
5. Puffins spend most of their lives at sea.  
a. True b. False
6. Puffins have an extra set of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. toes b. eyelids c. wings d. nostrils

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. Puffins are sometimes called sea \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Unlike most birds, puffins have only three \_\_\_\_\_.

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

9. If a colony of 36,000 puffins were divided into 4 equal groups, how many would be in each group?
10. If only 22,000 out of 36,000 puffins returned to an island to breed, how many did not return?