

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 3rd to 4th, 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: SHEDDING SOME LIGHT ON EDGAR ALLAN POE

For release the week of: October 22, 2012

Objective: After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding of Edgar Allan Poe.

Subject Areas: The following information about Edgar Allan Poe will be discussed:

- The attraction of scary stories
- Read aloud
- Poe stories in modern culture – "The Simpsons"

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. What famous events in history were occurring while Poe was alive?
2. Why do some people like to read or watch scary things?

Activity Ideas

- Poe's stories and poetry are full of imagery and suspense. Choose a short story and/or poem to read aloud to the class. As the story is read, the students could draw pictures of the images that stand out in their minds. Possibly allow students to request paragraphs or pages to be reread to refresh their memories of the passage.
- There are many videos and audio recordings of Edgar Allan Poe's works. Here's a clip from a Simpsons Halloween episode that may be a fun way to hear "The Raven."
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6-1cvsuyRs>

Use the News

- Authors are often interviewed, or their books reviewed in the newspaper. If there are any literary articles in the news, read them and use the information to write your own article about a book you've read. Imagine you are writing for a newspaper too. Here's a link to a step-by-step instruction for writing a book review:
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/bookrev/read.htm>

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) c, 3.) a, 4.) b, 5.) b, 6.) a , 7.) Pendulum, 8.) merchant 9.) 360, 10.) 1849

Quick Quiz — Edgar Allan Poe

- "The Crow" is one of Poe's most famous poems.
a. True b. False
- Poe's parents were both _____.
a. authors b. teachers c. actors d. doctors
- Edgar Allan Poe may have died from rabies.
a. True b. False
- "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is considered one of the first _____ novels.
a. horror b. detective c. successful d. Halloween
- Poe thought highly of most of the other authors of his time.
a. True b. False
- Edgar Allan Poe was born in _____.
a. Boston b. London c. Dublin d. New York

Vocabulary Comprehension

- One of Poe's works is called "The Pit and the _____."
- Poe got his middle name from a wealthy _____ who looked after him.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

- Half of a 720-word poem would be how many words?
- If Poe was born in 1809 and lived till age 40, what year did he die?