

# 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: UNMASKING RACCOONS**

For release the week of: November 26, 2012

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

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

- Food-washing behavior
- Raccoon intelligence
- Raccoons in stories

**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 raccoons wash their food?
2. Are raccoon dangerous to people?

## **Activity Ideas**

- How smart are raccoons? What behaviors do they show that seem intelligent? Search for videos on the Internet that show clever actions of raccoons and share what you find with each other. Write a brief description of the one you think proves it the best.
- There are many stories and books about raccoons. You could find one in the library or online. Choose one, read it, and write a summary of the story. A famous one is “Rascal” by Sterling North. It is a novel, a Disney movie, and a Japanese anime television series.

### **Use the News**

- Think about the funny and smart things raccoons do. Now, create a single or multi-frame comic strip with at least one raccoon character. It could be your own comic or you could “use” an existing one, such as Garfield or Peanuts.

## **Answers to the Quiz**

1.) a, 2.) a, 3.) a, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) b , 7.) Captive, 8.) range, 9.) 11 kg., 10.) 15 years

## **Quick Quiz — Raccoons**

1. Raccoons do not hibernate during the winter.  
a. True b. False

2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ main species of raccoons.  
a. two b. four c. eight d. ten
3. Raccoons are very intelligent animals.  
a. True b. False
4. Raccoons hunt during the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. day b. morning c. afternoon d. night
5. Raccoons walk with their feet flat on the ground.  
a. True b. False
6. The crab-eating raccoon comes from \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. North America b. South America c. Europe d. China

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. \_\_\_\_\_ raccoons can live for more than 20 years.
8. Most raccoons live in an area called a “home \_\_\_\_\_.”

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

9. What's the difference in weight between a 9-kg. raccoon and a 20-kg. raccoon?
10. How much longer did a 19-year-old raccoon live than a 4-year-old raccoon?