

# 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: TRAVELING WITH MARCO POLO**

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

**Subject Areas:** The following information about Marco Polo will be discussed:

- Methods of travel
- Who were the Khans?
- What happened to him on his travels?

**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 did Marco Polo get put in jail?
2. What methods did Marco Polo use to travel the world?

## **Activity Ideas**

- Here is a very condensed summary of Marco Polo's life. A reading comprehension quiz follows the article to reinforce the information.  
[http://www.abcteach.com/free/r/rc\\_biography\\_marcopolo\\_upperelem.pdf](http://www.abcteach.com/free/r/rc_biography_marcopolo_upperelem.pdf)
- Marco spent many years with the Mongols. Who were they? Who were Genghis and Kublai Khan? Research and report on the Mongols and their leaders.

### **Use the News**

- "The Travels of Marco Polo" was like an ancient travel news story. Where have you traveled? Have your parents or grandparents traveled anywhere? Write your own travel article about a place you've visited. Or interview someone who has traveled somewhere interesting and write your version of his or her story.

## **Answers to the Quiz**

1.) b, 2.) a, 3.) a, 4.) c, 5.) a, 6.) b , 7.) Cathay, 8.) silk, 9.) 40, 10.) 72

## **Quick Quiz — Marco Polo**

1. The Polos' amazing journey only took 4 or 5 years.  
a. True b. False

2. When the Polos went to China, they met the Mongol leader Kublai \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Khan b. Zhangjiakou c. Cathay d. Buble
3. Marco's story was written while he was in jail.  
a. True b. False
4. Marco Polo could speak \_\_\_\_\_ languages.  
a. two b. three c. four d. six
5. Most people did not believe Marco's story was true when he returned.  
a. True b. False
6. The Polos set out for China in \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. 521 b. 1271 c. 1776 d. 1812

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. During Marco Polo's time, China was called “\_\_\_\_\_.”
8. Marco returned with a cloth made from worms called \_\_\_\_\_.

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

9. If Marco was 17 years old when he left, and traveled for 23 years, how old was he when he returned?
10. If Marco had 6 jade statues worth 12 pieces of gold each, how many pieces of gold would they all be worth?