

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: DROPPING IN ON the red panda

For release the week of: February 3, 2014

Objective: After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding of the red panda.

Subject Areas: The following information about the red panda will be discussed:

- Location in the world
- Differences from other similar animals
- Digestion and feeding behavior

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. Locate the countries Nepal, Myanmar and China on a map.
2. Find a video or picture of a red panda using the specialized bone on its wrist to manipulate something. Does it look as effective as a thumb?

Activity Ideas

- Red pandas are actually not the same species as the giant panda. The red panda is not even a bear! They are their own species, called “aluridae.” But how are they different from giant pandas, bears, raccoons, cats, or weasels? Choose one other animal to compare the red panda to. How are they different? How are they the same? Take notes as you research them, and then arrange the data into a chart for comparison. A Venn diagram could also be used.
- Bamboo doesn't seem like a healthy source of food for a red panda. How do they survive on mostly bamboo? Research and write a report on their eating habits and how they're able to get enough nutrition from this woody plant.

Use the News

- There always seems to be news about people or businesses moving into a different area and causing problems for the existing animals, plants or people. As you read the newspaper, look for examples of this “relocation” problem. Is there a business that is causing environmental damage? Is there a community that is changing because a different “class” of people is moving in? Is a “big box” store forcing out the small local shops? Read the paper and share or summarize any of these events as you find them.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) d, 3.) a, 4.) c, 5.) a, 6.) a , 7.) vulnerable, 8.) wrist, 9.) 100 , 10.) 75 cm

Quick Quiz — The Red Panda

1. Red pandas eat some bamboo, but mostly consume fruit, roots and insects.
a. True b. False
2. Red pandas are about the size of a large _____.
a. dog b. bear c. bird d. cat
3. Red pandas live most of their lives in trees.
a. True b. False
4. These pandas have mostly red and _____ fur.
a. brown b. yellow c. white d. grey
5. Red pandas have fur on the bottom of their paws.
a. True b. False
6. _____ are the main threat to red pandas.
a. People b. Tigers c. Diseases d. Leopards

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. Red pandas are listed as “_____” on the threatened species list.
8. Red pandas have a specialized bone on their _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. How many groups of 100 animals can you make out of 10,000 red pandas?
10. If a red panda is 120 cm long from nose to tail, and its tail is 45 cm, how long is its body?