

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: THE SKY'S THE LIMIT WITH RAVENS AND CROWS

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Objective: After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding of ravens and crows.

Subject Areas: The following information about ravens and crows will be discussed:

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 "tools" do some crows use?
2. Do crows have enemies or predators?

Activity Ideas

- Ravens and crows are supposed to be very intelligent and adaptable. Do some research to discover this for yourself. How smart are they? What can they do? How does their behavior show their intelligence? How can a crow use a tool? Search books and the Internet for information and videos that will help you learn more about them.
- Crows and ravens are often portrayed in myths, legends and other stories. Find one of these stories, summarize it and present it to the class. Why do you think these birds are often used in myths?

Use the News

What examples of people acting intelligently can you find in the newspaper? How will you identify these behaviors? You might want to have a class brainstorming session listing ways to identify intelligent behaviors.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) a, 2.) b, 3.) a, 4.) c, 5.) a, 6.) a, 7.) carrion, 8.) crow, 9.) 45 in, 10.) 3 miles

Quick Quiz — Ravens and Crows

1. Ravens choose a single mate for their entire lives.
a. True b. False
2. Ravens continue to feed their young for several _____ after the young have left the nest.
a. days b. weeks c. months d. years
3. Wild ravens have been known to live for more than 20 years.
a. True b. False
4. Crows often _____ their food.
a. chew b. share c. bury d. cook
5. Ravens and crows are songbirds.
a. True b. False
6. Crows are found on every continent except Antarctica and _____.
a. S. America b. Asia c. Australia d. Europe

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. Ravens feed mainly on _____.
8. Ravens are the largest members of the _____ family of birds.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

1. If a raven is 1.5 times the size of a crow, and a raven is 60 in., how big would the crow be?
2. If a crow flew 6 miles per hour for 30 minutes, how far did it fly?