

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: GETTING STUCK ON STAMPS

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

Subject Areas: The following information about stamps will be discussed:

- Stamp history
- What information is usually printed on stamps
- Making your own stamp

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 is a stamp collector called a "philatelist"? Where does the word come from?
2. How much do regular postage stamps cost now? How much did they cost the year you were born?

Activity Ideas

- What do stamps look like? Have you ever really examined one? What information is usually printed on them? After examining some real stamps or researching them online, try making your own. For this activity you could make a large poster-size version of your stamp, or a regular notebook size, which you could reduce to stamp size in a photocopier. Or for a real challenge, try painting or drawing one with extra-fine-tip brushes, pens or pencils. Some artists even use a single bristle for the paint. A magnifying glass also helps. Be sure to first sketch a larger version of your stamp to work from.
- Do you think our postal system will exist 10 or 20 years from now? If not, how else will we send messages? Is electronic mail (email) enough? Or do we need to be able to send real letters and packages? Explain your ideas in a few paragraphs.

Use the News

- Cut and paste text and pictures from the newspaper to create your own version of a large sized postage stamp. Markers or other art materials can be used to create borders. You could design your own or try to copy an existing stamp with what you find printed in the newspaper.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) b, 3.) a, 4.) c, 5.) , 6.) d, 7.) philatelist, 8.) perforated, 9.) 4 , 10.) \$3.86

Quick Quiz — Stamps

1. The first postage stamp was issued about 1,000 years ago.
a. True b. False
2. The first stamp was issued in _____.
a. America b. Great Britain c. China d. France
3. Long ago, the person who received the letter was expected to pay for it.
a. True b. False
4. The “penny _____” was one the first stamps used.
a. white b. Henny c. black d. pence
5. The first stamps were printed as single stamps, and didn't have to be separated from a sheet of others.
a. True b. False
6. The smallest stamp in the world came from _____.
a. Germany b. England c. Japan d. Colombia

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. A person who collects stamps is called a “_____.”
8. If you buy a sheet of stamps today, the stamp edges may be _____ to help separate them.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. How many $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch stamps laid end to end would equal 3 inches?
10. How much change would I get back from a 5-dollar bill if I bought three stamps worth \$0.38 ?