

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: A STRIKING LOOK AT THE COBRA

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

Subject Areas: The following information about the cobra will be discussed:

- How they eat
- How they move
- Predators of cobras

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 happens to the hard skeleton of an animal once a cobra eats it?
2. Do most humans die after being bitten by a cobra?

Activity Ideas

- How do cobras and other snakes move? How can they swallow animals that seem too large for their mouths? Use this website to create a puzzle, such as a crossword or word search, to help you and your classmates learn about snakes.
<http://www.kidzone.ws/lw/snakes/facts04.htm>
- Cobras are predators of small animals and other snakes, but do cobras have any enemies? Do any animals hunt cobras? Research and write about what preys on cobras and how they do it.

Use the News

- Write a news-style article about snake charmers. You could pretend a snake charmer is performing in your town. Or it could be a travel article about India. Research and write about these daring individuals.

Answers to the Quiz

- 1.) a, 2.) d, 3.) b, 4.) c, 5.) b, 6.) b, 7.) toxin, 8.) hood 9.) 5 m, 10.) 6 ft.

Quick Quiz — The Cobra

1. Spitting cobras aim for their attacker's eyes.
a. True b. False
2. Wild cobras are found in southern Asia and _____.
a. Brazil b. Canada c. Russia d. Africa
3. Most cobras squeeze their prey to death.
a. True b. False
4. When threatened, a cobra lifts as much as _____ of its body off the ground.
a. all b. 1/2 c. 1/3 d. 1/9
5. All snakes build a nest for their eggs.
a. True b. False
6. The king cobra is the _____ venomous snake in the world.
a. most b. longest c. fastest d. most colorful

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. The venom of a cobra is a neuro _____.
8. A threatened cobra will form its head into a flattened “ _____ ” by spreading the rib bones in its neck.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. Some cobras can spit 2.5 meters. How far is twice that?
10. Some cobras can be 18 ft. in length. How long is $\frac{1}{3}$ that length?