

# 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: LOOKING BACK AT ANCIENT CHINA**

For release the week of: February 20, 2012

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

**Subject Areas:** The following information about ancient China will be discussed:

- Chinese alphabet
- The Chinese invention of gunpowder
- Ancient Chinese entertainment

**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 kind of alphabet do the Chinese have?
2. What tool did the ancient Chinese use to help them count?

## **Activity Ideas**

- Gunpowder was invented by the Chinese more than 900 years ago. What did they use it for? Research and write a brief report about the ancient use of gunpowder.
- What kinds of entertainment did the ancient Chinese people enjoy? What music, dance, art, and theater did they have? Create a short presentation about one type. (Poster, report, PowerPoint, oral report, etc.)

### **Use the News**

- Confucius wrote many important things about society. Some of his “sayings” are famous even today. Research and make a short list of the quotes you think would be appropriate to print in a modern newspaper. Which ones could help us today?

## **Answers to the Quiz**

1.) a, 2.) b, 3.) b, 4.) a, 5.) a, 6.) c , 7.) compasses, 8.) Confucius 9.) 500, 10.) 900

## **Quick Quiz — Ancient China**

1. Gunpowder was invented in China.  
a. True b. False
2. Historians of China divide time into a series of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. eras b. dynasties c. epochs d. reigns
3. The ancient Chinese began making polyester more than 4,500 years ago.  
a. True b. False
4. The art of making \_\_\_\_\_ as invented by Cai Lun of China about 1,900 years ago.  
a. paper b. ink c. silk d. coffee
5. The tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi contained more than 6,000 life-sized terra-cotta soldiers.  
a. True b. False
6. In 1045, Pi Sheng of China used \_\_\_\_\_ to create each individual character for his printing press.  
a. iron b. wood c. clay d. bone

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. The Chinese began using \_\_\_\_\_ for navigation more than 1,000 years ago.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ was a philosopher who was born in China around 551 B.C.

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

9. If 6,000 soldiers were put in 12 rows, how many soldiers would be in each row?
10. How many years are in 9 centuries?