

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 RISE OF AGRICULTURE

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

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

- Growing your own sprouts
- How did agriculture lead to civilization
- Farming for non-food products

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 is most of the corn grown in America used for?
2. Growing “sprouts” such as alfalfa is easy and fun. Research it and try it in your classroom.

Activity Ideas

- In your own opinion, explain why farming gave humans more free time. Isn't farming a hard, time-consuming activity? What did people do to survive before agriculture? After giving your ideas, research it and compare your new information with what you originally thought. What is similar? What is different?
- Which plants do farmers grow for our needs besides food? What kinds of plants are needed for things like medicine, fuel, clothing, and building materials? Research and make a class list of what you discover.

Use the News

- Can you find examples of things that come from a farm in the newspaper? Read the news and share what you find with the class.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) d, 3.) a, 4.) a, 5.) a, 6.) d, 7.) Farming, 8.) East 9.) 20, 10.) 4

Quick Quiz — Agriculture

1. Farming is one of the world's newest occupations.
a. True b. False
2. Water irrigation systems were first used in _____ and Mesopotamia.
a. China b. Brazil c. Russia d. Egypt
3. Farmers grow some plants for other things besides food.
a. True b. False
4. Scientists who study ancient civilizations are called _____.
a. anthropologists b. biologists c. climatologists d. seismologists
5. Nearly all of the world's food comes from farms.
a. True b. False
6. Two examples of cereal grains are oats and _____.
a. wheat b. barley c. rice d. all of the above

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. _____ is one of the world's oldest and most important occupations.
8. Ten thousand years ago, farming may have first begun in the Middle _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. How many acres of land would a field 5 acres long, and 4 acres wide be?
10. If a farmer only had 120 days of warm weather to grow her crops, about how many months is that?