

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: MAKING A SPLASH WITH CROCODILES

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

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

- Crocodile intelligence
- Habitat
- Crocodile–alligator comparison

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 do crocs feed mainly at night?
2. How do we know crocodiles are smart?

Activity Ideas

- If crocodiles kill more than 1,000 people every year, where does this happen? Where do crocodiles live? Which countries? What kind of climate is it? Research this information and then locate these places on a world map. Are any major cities near their habitat? Why can't people avoid these large predators?
- How is a crocodile different from an alligator? Research and report on the comparison of these two reptiles.

Use the News

- Are crocodiles on the endangered species list? If so, should we care? These are dangerous animals that kill people every year. Why should we care if they go extinct? Research and write a newspaper opinion article about “Are crocodiles becoming extinct? Who cares?”

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) d, 3.) a, 4.) b, 5.) a, 6.) b, 7.) spins, 8.) membranes, 9.) 75, 10.) 14

Quick Quiz — Crocodiles

1. Crocodiles are not very smart.
a. True b. False

2. A crocodile cannot _____ its food.
a. see b. kill c. smell d. chew
3. Crocs kill more than 1,000 people every year.
a. True b. False
4. Crocodiles have extra _____ that help them underwater.
a. scales b. eyelids c. lungs d. claws
5. A crocodile can hold its breath for as long as 30 minutes.
a. True b. False
6. A crocodile has about _____ teeth.
a. 20 b. 80 c. 220 d. 1000

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. To eat a large animal, a croc bites its prey and then _____ its entire body.
8. Crocodiles have transparent eyelids called “nictitating _____.”

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If a croc has 80 teeth, loses 12 and then grows 7, how many does it have?
10. If a crocodile grows from 3 feet long to 17 feet long, how many feet did it grow?