

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: VIEWING VULTURES

For release the week of: December 17, 2012

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

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

- Vulture digestive systems
- Species of vultures
- Drawing vultures

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 don't vultures get sick when they eat rotten meat?
2. Do vultures migrate?

Activity Ideas

- What are the different species of vultures? What is the difference between Old World and New World vultures? Research and report on one species of vulture.
- Use this website, or others, to make wildlife sketches of condors. Don't try to use great detail in your drawings, rather, make a simple sketch of the whole bird or just focus on a part, such as the head or wingtip. You may need to freeze the video at times, or use still photos to make your drawings from. <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/california-condor-gymnogyps-californianus/two-views-adult-wing-tagged-282-not-visible-perched->

Use the News

- Vultures are not popular with most people, because we see them as ugly and repugnant. What other descriptive words can you think of to describe vultures? Now, read through the newspaper looking for other descriptive words, both positive and negative. Make a class list. Be sure to include definitions when necessary.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) b, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) b, 7.) carrion, 8.) tools, 9.) 26 in., 10.) 14,000 ft.

Quick Quiz — Vultures

1. Most vultures live alone.
a. True b. False
2. There are _____ main groups of vultures.
a. one b. two c. five d. ten
3. Vultures don't have feathers on their heads, so they are more aerodynamic in flight.
a. True b. False
4. The California condor is one of the _____ birds in the world.
a. oldest b. fiercest c. smallest d. rarest
5. Many vultures can fly very high in the atmosphere.
a. True b. False
6. New World vultures are found in _____.
a. Africa b. the Americas c. Asia d. Australia

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. Vultures feed mainly on _____, which is the decaying flesh of dead animals.
8. Egyptian condors are one of the few birds that use _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If the wingspan of a condor is 52 inches, what would half that be?
10. If a vulture flies up 12,000 feet, then descends 3,000 feet, then rises 5,000 feet, how high will it be?