

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: RECITING THE ALPHABET

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

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

- Directions in which languages are read
- Similar languages and their origins
- Reading jumbled words

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 are there vowels and consonants?
2. English is read from left to right. What languages are read in other directions?

Activity Ideas

- Do some words look or sound similar even though they're in different languages? Why do you think this may have happened? Write a word in English, then use books or a computer (Google Translate?) to rewrite that same word in several different languages. Do any seem similar?
- Just when you thought spelling was important (It is!) you read this: <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/cna-yuo-raed-tihs/> Click the link and see what you think. Could you read it? Why or why not? Our brains are pretty amazing.

Use the News

- Use a newspaper to find words that start with each letter of the alphabet. How many letters are there from A to Z? That's at least how many words you should look for. You could collect multiple words from each letter and see which ones are used the most. You could also cut and paste them into a collage.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) a, 2.) a, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) b , 7.) Digraphs, 8.) beta, 9.) 5, 10.) yes - 13

Quick Quiz — the alphabet

1. Early alphabets had only capital letters.
a. True b. False
2. The Proto-Sinaitic alphabet represented different _____.
a. sounds b. objects c. colors d. people
3. The Greek writing system was the first that read from right to left.
a. True b. False
4. The _____ writing system is the oldest continuously used writing system in the world.
a. Egyptian b. English c. Greek d. Chinese
5. Proto-Sinaitic is one of the first known alphabets.
a. True b. False
6. The modern English alphabet was developed from the _____ alphabet.
a. Egyptian b. Roman c. Greek d. Chinese

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. _____ are combinations of letters.
8. The word alphabet is derived from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, “alpha” and “_____.”

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. What is the average length of these words if the numbers of letters in the words are: 7, 4, 6, 7, 5, 2, 3? (rounded to the nearest whole number)
10. Can 26 letters be divided into 2 groups of equal numbers?