

# 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: THE AMAZING MAYA

For release the week of: August 12, 2013

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

**Subject Areas:** The following information about the Maya will be discussed:

- Religious events
- Mayan ball game
- Comparing Mayans and Aztecs

**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. How did the Maya move the heavy stones used to build their pyramids?
2. What kinds of religious dates were recorded on the Mayan calendar?

## Activity Ideas

- What might the Maya ball game have been like? How could they play without using their feet or their hands? Take a look at this video of a re-creation of that unique game: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tx3h5d90Z8>
- The Aztecs were another indigenous group from Central America who lived during the same period in history as the Mayans. What was the difference between these cultures? Why did they both disappear? Research and report on the similarities and differences between these two groups of people.

## Use the News

- Important events were recorded on the stone “stelae” of the Mayans. As you read the newspaper jot down the most important events. In your opinion, what news would be recorded on stelae of our modern times? Make a list of a few of these influential events.

## Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) a, 3.) b, 4.) b, 5.) a, 6.) d, 7.) stelae, 8.) Spanish, 9.) 64 , 10.) 7

## Quick Quiz — Maya

1. The Maya had huge graveyards for their ancestors.  
a. True b. False
2. The Maya played a game using a \_\_\_\_\_ ball.  
a. rubber b. straw c. wooden d. cloth
3. The Maya used mules to help move the huge stones to build their cities.  
a. True b. False
4. The Maya inhabited \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Asia b. Central America c. North America d. Peru
5. Some of the Mayan pyramids were more than 60 meters tall.  
a. True b. False
6. \_\_\_\_\_ was the main food for the Maya.  
a. Wheat b. Rice c. Beans d. Corn

## **Vocabulary Comprehension**

7. The Maya recorded important events on stone monuments called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The Maya were conquered by the \_\_\_\_\_ in the mid-1500s.

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

9. If a pyramid were 192 feet high, how many yards would that be?
10. If an acre of land could feed 6 people, how many acres would be needed to feed 42 people?