

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: WADING THROUGH THE FACTS ABOUT WETLANDS

For release the week of: December 2, 2013

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

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

- Uses for peat
- Types of wetlands
- Wetlands in stories

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 do farmers do with peat?
2. Most plants can't live in saltwater. How do mangroves survive?

Activity Ideas

- Choose one of the types of wetlands to research and write a report about. What makes it a unique type of wetland? What types of animals live there? Where is it usually located? What is the climate like?
- Can you think of any movies or stories that have wetlands in them? Brainstorm with the class to make a list of these wetlands in fiction. Can you describe what they were like in the story/movie? Was the wetland an important part of the story? Why?

Use the News

- Are the world's wetlands endangered? Why should we care? Research this topic and write your opinion about preserving wetlands as a newspaper article. Try to convince your readers about your side of the issue. Here's a website that might help:
<http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/conservation/news-peat-feet>

Answers to the Quiz

1.) a, 2.) b, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) c , 7.) erosion, 8.) peat, 9.) 39 , 10.) 1/6

Quick Quiz — Wetlands

1. Mangrove forests grow in saltwater.
a. True b. False
2. _____ are usually found in colder climates.
a. Swamps b. Fens c. Marshes d. Mangroves
3. Wetlands allow pollution to get into our ground supply of water.
a. True b. False
4. _____ Potholes are found in the grasslands.
a. Highway b. Winter c. Forest d. Prairie
5. Wetlands are fragile.
a. True b. False
6. More than half the _____ harvested commercially depend on wetlands.
a. birds b. cows c. fish d. plants

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. Wetlands protect the shoreline by slowing the effects of _____.
8. Decayed plant material is called _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If, out of a flock of 55 birds, there were 4 fewer birds returning to a marsh each year for 4 years how many birds would be left?
10. If $\frac{1}{3}$ of a bog was left after a dry summer, and then $\frac{1}{2}$ of that dried up, what fraction would be left?