

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: SEARCHING FOR SANTA

For release the week of: December 14, 2009

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

Subject Areas: The following information regarding Santa will be discussed:

- Why does Santa have reindeer?
- Images of Santa from around the world
- Santa facts in the movie “Miracle on 34th Street”

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. Where did the reindeer come from? Why aren't horses pulling the sleigh?.
2. What other poems did Clement C. Moore write?

Activity Ideas

- Make a gallery of the “many faces of Santa Claus.” Research, copy, and display images

of Santa from around the world. Include a caption describing where/when the particular image is used.

- “Miracle on 34th Street” is a fun movie about Santa that tries to capture the spirit of Christmas and the traditional ideals of the jolly old elf in today’s society. There have been a few remakes of the 1947 movie, but I like the original the best. Watch this movie and try to identify some of the references to Santa “facts.” I.e. How old is he? Names of the reindeer. Etc.

Use the News

Write your own class/school news article reporting on an upcoming or past Christmas holiday activity from your school. It could be as simple as something seasonal: your studying, a bulletin board, a play, a concert, etc. What was it? Who’s involved? When is it? Where is it?

Answers to the Quiz

1.) a, 2.) a, 3.) a, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) b, 7.) ‘Twas, 8.) holly, 9.) 122, 10.) 3

Quick Quiz – Santa

1. The real Saint Nicholas lived in Turkey.
a. True b. False
2. Pere Noel comes from _____.
a. France b. Sweden c. England d. Germany
3. There is a real American town called Santa Claus.
a. True b. False
4. In 1863, Harper’s Weekly magazine printed illustrations of Santa living in _____.
a. England b. Turkey c. the South Pole d. the North Pole
5. Hundreds of years ago Saint Nicholas was depicted as a thin man riding on a horse.
a. True b. False
6. The Dutch name for Santa is _____.
a. Santa b. Sinterklass c. Jultomten d. Kris Kringle

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. The famous poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” starts out with, “_____ the night before Christmas...”
8. England’s “Father Christmas” wears a fur-lined red robe and crown of _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If Santa visits 7,320 people in one hour, how many is that per minute?
10. If Santa has 24 gifts for 8 people, how many presents does each person receive?