

# 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: RINGING IN THE CIRCUS**

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

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

- Famous circus performers
- Ringling Bros. Circus facts
- Performing your own act

**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. Who are some famous performers from history?
2. How does someone become a circus performer?

## **Activity Ideas**

- Learn about one of the most famous circuses in the world by visiting their website: [www.ringling.com](http://www.ringling.com) . Create your own Web quest from this interesting site. Search the Web pages, record questions about the circus and its performers (such as “who are the flying Caceres?”), and keep an answer sheet of your own. Then exchange your question pages and try to answer each other’s quizzes.
- Create a circus act of your own! Have a class performance for each other. What astounding feat can you execute? Balance a stack of books on your head? How many? Stand on you hands? Do a cartwheel? Paint someone’s face like a lion? Tell a funny joke? Juggle? Amazing burps? Spin a ball on your finger? Etc.

### Use the News

Imagine you’re a reporter and just went to the circus. What did you see? Write a fictitious report about your experience. It could be a general report about everything, or a specific, detailed account of a particular act, such as the flying trapeze!

## Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) b, 3.) b, 4.) d, 5.) a, 6.) c, 7.) big top, 8.) Earth, 9.) 50,000, 10.) 12

## Quick Quiz — The Circus

- The Circus Maximus was an event held in ancient China.  
a. True b. False
- The modern ring circus was created in \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Rome b. England c. America d. China
- Most circus acts look scary, but are not really dangerous.  
a. True b. False
- Charles Hughes, of the Royal Circus, was the first to use the word \_\_\_\_\_ since the ancient Romans.  
a. trapeze b. clown c. elephant d. circus
- The ancient Roman circus contained lots of violence and cruelty.  
a. True b. False
- The Cirque du Soleil is from \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. England b. America c. Canada d. Spain

## Vocabulary Comprehension

7. The largest tent in the circus is called the “\_\_\_\_\_.”
8. “Barnum & Bailey’s Greatest Show on \_\_\_\_\_.”

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

9. If the Circus Maximus could seat 150,000 people, how many is  $\frac{1}{3}$  that amount?
10. If the circumference of a circus ring is 120 feet, how many 10-foot-long elephants could stand around it?