

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: LOUNGING WITH LIZARDS

For release the week of: January 11, 2010

Objective: After completing the exercises, students should have a better understanding about lizards.

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

- Flying lizards?
- Color-changing lizards
- What does cold-blooded mean?

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. Do lizards have teeth?
2. Do any lizards fly?

Activity Ideas

- Why and how do chameleons change color? Do they just assume the color of their environment? Research and write an explanation (in your own words) about this phenomenon.

- Lizards are reptiles and cold-blooded. What is a reptile? What does it mean to be cold-blooded? How is a cold-blooded animal's life different than a warm-blooded animal? Research and report on classifying reptiles, and defining "cold-blooded."

Use the News

What kinds of things change color in our society? Neon signs, television screens, etc. Read the newspaper and identify things that can change color like a chameleon.

Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) c, 3.) b, 4.) c, 5.) a, 6.) a, 7.) tongue, 8.) fat, 9.) 9 miles, 10.) $\frac{1}{2}$

Quick Quiz — Lizards

1. Lizards are mostly awake at night.
a. True b. False
2. The Gila monster is _____.
a. huge b. nocturnal c. poisonous d. imaginary
3. A gecko's toes have tiny suction cups on them.
a. True b. False
4. Chameleons can change _____.
a. clothes b. eye color c. skin color d. hair color
5. Some lizards are less than an inch long.
a. True b. False
6. Most lizards have moveable _____.
a. eyelids b. ears c. teeth d. all of the above

Vocabulary Comprehension

7. A chameleon's _____ is as long as its body.
8. Lizards use their tail to store _____.

Math Comprehension (subtraction, division, addition, fractions)

9. If a lizard can run 18 mph, how far can it run in 30 minutes?
10. If a lizard can catch a bug from 6 inches away with its tongue, what fraction of a foot is that?