

# 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: Hanging Around with Geckos**

For release the week of: June 28, 2010

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

**Subject Areas:** The following information regarding geckos will be discussed:

- Gecko predators
- Geckos as pets
- Gecko picture gallery

**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 and what do geckos eat?
2. What animals are predators of geckos?

## **Activity Ideas**

- Some geckos are kept as pets. How do you take care of a gecko? Research and write a report about how to care for a pet gecko. If someone in class has a reptile as a pet they could bring it to class for display.
- There are more than 700 species of geckos. Use a computer program to display pictures from the Internet of geckos you find interesting or beautiful. The pictures could be arranged on a single page like a collage, or on several pages as a gallery. Be sure to display gecko feet!

**Use the News**

Write an opinion discussing your views on why classrooms should or shouldn't have animals like geckos in them. Is there an educational value to caring for a pet in a classroom?

## Answers to the Quiz

1.) b, 2.) a 3.) a, 4.) c, 5.) a, 6.) b 7.) lamellae, 8.) tail 9.) 120, 10.) 2 ft

## Quick Quiz — Geckos

1. Geckos have tiny, sharp claws to help them cling to any surface.  
a. True b. False
2. Some geckos have thick tails that are used to store \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. food b. water c. waste d. air
3. Geckos eyelids are always closed.  
a. True b. False
4. A gecko can grow a new \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. eye b. toe c. tail d. tongue
5. Some of the largest geckos grow to be more than 30 cm (12 in.) in length.  
a. True b. False
6. Unlike most lizards, geckos can \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. hiss b. chirp c. growl d. whine

## Vocabulary Comprehension

7. The bottom of a gecko's feet are covered with ridges called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. When attacked by a predator, a gecko will often “drop” its \_\_\_\_\_.

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

9. How many quarters would it take to buy a \$30 gecko?
10. If a gecko crawled 20 ft across a ceiling in 10 minutes, how far did it go in one minute?