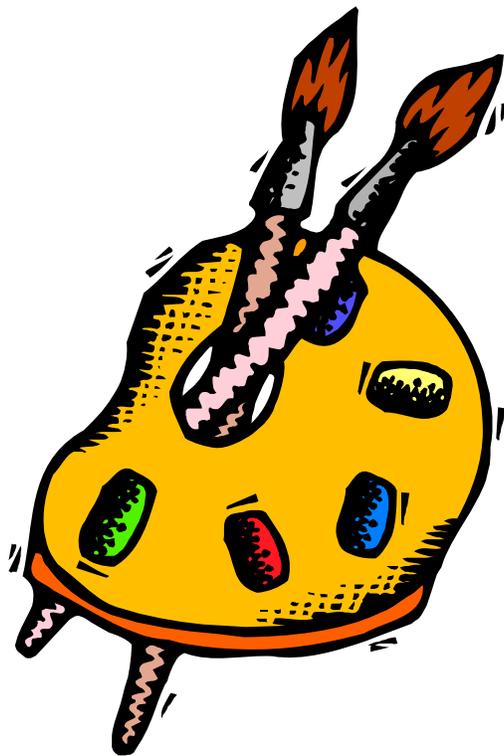


THE TRAINING INSTITUTE  
FOR THE U.K.

ARTS MANUAL FOR  
TUTORS OF THE  
ANIMATOR TRAINING



## Promoting the Arts at the Grassroots: Creative Exploration in Study Circles

Unit 3 of Book 7 is called 'Promoting the Arts at the Grassroots'. Section 1 of this unit clarifies the role of artistic endeavour in study circles: You should not think of it as entertainment or as an extracurricular activity; rather it is *'an essential element enhancing the spiritual development of the participants'*.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Dec letter also mentions our attitude towards arts in the new 5 Year Plan:

*"a graceful integration of the arts into diverse activities enhances the surge of energy that mobilizes the believers."*

The term 'artistic endeavour' implies the use of all arts such as drama, painting, poetry, music and storytelling. But it also includes crafts of every description, from pottery to puppet-making, carving to crochet.

Bahá'u'lláh said:

*"One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship. Therefore any of His servants who manifesteth this attribute is acceptable in the sight of this Wronged One. Craftsmanship is a book among the books of divine sciences, and a treasure among the treasures of His heavenly wisdom. This is a knowledge with meaning, for some of the sciences are brought forth by words and come to an end with words." (Cited in Extracts from the Writings concerning Arts and Crafts, published in The Compilation of Compilations [Ingleside: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), vol. 1, p. 1)*

In your study circle you may use the arts in a variety of ways: as a tool of learning – for example to assist with a difficult piece of memorisation or to illustrate a particular concept or piece of information; as an expression of the joy and harmony developing in your group, or to bring joy to the hearts and spirits of the participants; to develop a deeper appreciation of art and crafts among your participants; to help the participants discover in themselves some of the gifts and talents bestowed on them by God.

Bahá'u'lláh said:

*"The one true God, exalted be He, loveth to witness handiworks of high craftsmanship produced by His loved ones. Blessed art thou, for what thy skill hath produced hath reached the presence of thy Lord, the Exiled, the Wronged. Please God every one of His friends may be enabled to acquire one of the crafts, and be confirmed in adhering to what hath been ordained in the Book of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise." (Cited in Extracts from the Writings concerning Arts and Crafts, published in The Compilation of Compilations [Ingleside: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), vol. 1, p. 1)*

However ultimately your study circle has a single purpose – to empower the believers *'morally and spiritually in their resolve to tread a path of service in the Cause and to humanity'*, so your use of the arts must always have this end in view.

It is hoped that the ideas in this small arts manual will stimulate artistic endeavour in your study circles. You can use the suggestions as described in the book, or you can allow them to spark your own creative initiative. The manual doesn't include the many games which can be used in study circles since these can be found in other sources.

## **General Arts Resources on the Web:**

There are tons of arts ideas for Ruhi on the excellent website [www.ruhiresources.org](http://www.ruhiresources.org)

<http://www.prayerwindows.com/index.html> – and go to ‘Creative Activities’ for some great ideas on simple, artistic activities suitable for use in study circles

<http://www.painterskeys.com/quotations.asp> - for some interesting quotations about art from thinkers and famous writers

# ARTS IDEAS FOR THE ANIMATOR TRAINING: 'RELEASING THE POWERS OF JUNIOR YOUTH'



**Please note: This course is still in development, and references to section numbers may change before publication. This manual is for use with 'Version VI, 31<sup>st</sup> July 06'.**

It is recommended that, while training, the animators are introduced to a wide selection of games and arts activities that will give them ideas of what to do with the Junior Youth in their own groups, when they come to initiate them. For a separate games manual, please contact [england.training@bahai.org.uk](mailto:england.training@bahai.org.uk). The same contact can be used to get hold of any of the materials mentioned in this manual, such as stories.

## UNIT ONE:

The purpose of this unit is to for the trainee animators to reflect on what Bahá'í youth have the capacity to achieve both intellectually and spiritually, for themselves and for their society, and how that fits into the current framework.

### Idea 1

Have a look in current newspapers for articles that involve youth, especially those that show statistics for the numbers of youth facing issues of drugs, violent crime, lack of good education etc. Reading these before the course begins creates a powerful focus and emphasizes the urgency to act.



### Idea 2

Before the participants open their course books, have them share in pairs one of their most positive experiences with Junior Youth. Then, in the whole group, people must share what their partners told them.

### Idea 3



Again, at the beginning of the course, have the participants paint a picture entitled 'The Potential of Youth', and, if appropriate, share their understandings with the whole group.

### Idea 4

In Section Two the participants look at a quote from 'Abdu'l-Bahá describing the period of youth. Cut up A4 paper in 4 or 6 smaller squares. Give one or two to each participant and ask them to pictorially depict one or two of the qualities that 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes that youth can potentially have. Then, as a whole group, they must reassemble the quote using the pictures, as a test of how much they remember it.

### Idea 5

Also on this quote, you could play a game in order that the participants become more familiar with the vision that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá conveys. Write one of the qualities He mentions onto a small piece of paper. The group split into teams, and each player takes turns to describe the meaning of one quality without using any words it uses or derivatives of it, in 30 seconds. Afterwards, the group could try re-assembling the quote using the phrases on the bits of paper.

### Idea 6

In Section Three, we reflect on how youth are like ‘fragile seedlings’. Bring in some young plants to the group as a prompt to discussion on the meaning of this concept. They can examine the plants in more detail to encourage greater reflection.



### Idea 7

In order to memorise the quote in Section Four, try using the technique of ‘Body Memory’. The whole group stands in a circle. One person takes a small phrase of the quote and does an action which illustrates its meaning, while reciting the words of the phrase. The whole group repeats it together, before moving onto the next phrase. When the whole quote is covered, the group can recite it together, or individuals can have a go at reciting it, prompted if need be by the rest of the group.

### Idea 8



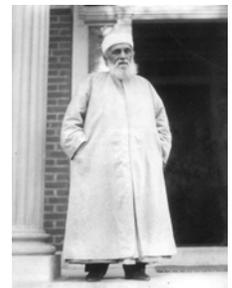
In Section Seven, we are introduced to the idea of a need for balance between studies and service in a young person’s life. In order to explore the concept of balance further, ask the participants to create ‘balancing acts’. In pairs, they must find 3 points of balance between them – perhaps using their heads, their shoulders, or their backs. Balance is achieved when you are totally relying on the other person to hold you up – if they move, you would fall. It is a lovely trust-building exercise too. You can then discuss the need for balance and if that is lost in a young person’s life, what is the nature of their ‘fall’?

### Idea 9

In Section Twelve, we reflect on the depth of transformation that Bahá’u’lláh has brought through His Teachings. Ask the participants to create a short mime or drama that explores the nature of this transformation.

### Idea 10

Also in Section Twelve, we are asked to look more closely at the example set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and to ‘think of episodes from His life that reflect the qualities mentioned’ in the quotes. For stories of His life, see books such as ‘Memories of Nine Years in Akká’, ‘Vignettes of the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’, or ‘Stories of the Master’.



### Idea 11



It can be very relaxing and effective for the participants to lie back and reflect on the quotes in Section Fourteen, having them read to them over soft, peaceful music. This allows the space needed to allow the vision portrayed in the words to be painted powerfully in their imagination.

## Idea 12

Either before or after going through Sections Eighteen and Nineteen, why not ask the participants to create short plays depicting the stories of some of the youth martyrs. This can be very moving and enable them to reflect deeply on the nature of their sacrifices. They could use small pieces of costume, music, mime, narration and dialogue. Stories about people such as Badí, Mona, Anís, and Zaynáb make fantastic dramas. These stories are available from [england.training@bahai.org.uk](mailto:england.training@bahai.org.uk).

## Idea 13

Again, in order to help the participants reflect on the quotes in Section Thirteen, ask them to make themselves comfortable, close their eyes and enjoy the vision that they present, by reading to them the quotes over soft music.

# UNIT TWO:

The purpose of this unit is to begin to think about working with Junior Youth and the special requirements of spiritual education they have at this age.

## Idea 1

In Section Three, we reflect on the fact that after the age of maturity it is very difficult to change a character molded during the time of Junior Youth. In order to help the participants understand this very deeply, it might be good to discuss substances in nature that experience the same process – i.e. once they go past a certain point, there is very little you can do to change it. E.g., once the bark has set on a young tree, it is difficult to bend it. Pottery is another example – once the clay is dry, it becomes hard to change it, and once it is fired, impossible. You could even bring in some clay and experiment with molding into useful pots and then firing them. PICTURE OF POT

## Idea 2

The next set of sections, beginning with Section Four, is on the topic of the self. Before beginning to study, ask the participants to draw a picture using colour and image of their ‘self’, whatever they perceive that to be. Then, as a whole group, or in pairs, they can share their picture and talk about it. Discuss together how the ‘self’ is usually defined in our society, and whether this is the definition that Bahá’u’lláh uses. PICTURE OF MIRROR

## Idea 3



To understand the image of the Junior Youth becoming ‘swift-flying birds’ introduced in Section Eight, free from the fetters of self and desire, you could ask the participants to create a mobile of beautiful, colourful birds. This can be done with card, scissors, glue, coloured felt, feathers, coloured tissue paper, googly eyes is necessary, strong wire or wire coat hangers that can be bent into a different shape. They can hang their creation in their homes to remind them of the spiritual freedom they are trying to engender in the Junior Youth.

## Idea 4

In Section Nine, we are asked to memorise two prayers related to youth. Try giving one part of them to each pair, who must go away and put it to a simple tune, which they then come back and teach to the rest of the group. Alternatively, you could break the group up into two smaller groups and ask each one to work on one of the prayers, using a technique that works for them. They then come back and teach it to the other group.



### Idea 5



In Section Twelve, we look at the potential effect of our crumbling society on Junior Youth. Instead of simply talking about the exercise, why not try to act out each one and show its effect through drama. You could give a different condition of society to each small group or pair, which they prepare to show the larger group, who can then discuss it.

### Idea 6

Before reading through Section Thirteen, ask the participants, working in pairs, to find examples of the following in popular magazines (which you will need to bring in for them – mags like Bella, Company, Loaded etc):

- the promise of fulfillment through material means,
- worship of brand icons,
- sexualisation of something not connected directly with sex,
- back-biting/gossip,
- excessive focus on outer appearance

Once the pairs have shown their examples, discuss the effect of these things on the soul and psyche of a young person.

### Idea 7

In Section Eighteen, we are introduced to the Junior Youth Rúhu'lláh, who was martyred at the age of 12. Instead of simply reading through the story in the course book, why not get hold of more short stories of his life and ask one of the participants to tell it to practice their story-telling skills. A longer version of the story than in the course book is available from [england.training@bahai.org.uk](mailto:england.training@bahai.org.uk).

### Idea 8



In Section Eighteen, the participants are invited to write a few paragraphs on the innate qualities of Junior Youth and what needs to be done to ensure their intellectual and spiritual development. Ask them to write a poem instead! In only 20 or so minutes, people can usually come up with something very interesting and it is great to be able to share everyone's poetic thoughts – it creates a very special atmosphere in the group. Bring along a thesaurus and rhyming dictionary for extra inspiration if needed!

### Idea 9

Section Twenty explores the effect of unhelpful attitudes like paternalism, and authoritarian control. Try asking individual participants to show these attitudes through their bodies, faces, or words in a theatrical way – it will prompt further discussion and they can also share how assuming those attitudes made them, and the person on the receiving end of them, feel.

### Idea 10

Continuing on in Section Twenty, you might then try to practice effective methods of encouragement, through words and actions. Talk about the difference in how it makes you feel to be the encouraged and the encourager.

### Idea 11

Also in Section Twenty, we are asked to think about what activities are conducive to creating great joy in the Junior Youth group. Asking the participants to actually think of games or activities that could do this and then actually playing them with the group would be most effective.

## UNIT THREE:

The purpose of this unit is to reflect on the practicalities of initiating a Junior Youth group, and to be introduced to the three first level courses available.

### Idea 1



After reading through in full and discussing ‘Spirit of Faith’ (which is introduced in Section Two), you might try making lamps. This helps to emphasize the concept of being a ‘lamp of God’, which is introduced in lesson one of this course.

*You need:* some coloured tissue paper, black card, tracing paper, glue, scissors and sello-tape. Don’t forget the candles as well!

*To make:* cut the tracing paper (A4 size) into half. Then make a small black border for each piece with the card and glue it on. Then, on the other side, you can create designs by cutting out and gluing the tissue paper onto the tracing paper. You could encourage the JY to create designs depicting divine qualities. When that’s done, stick all the bits together with sello-tape, turn out the lights and light the candles inside.

### Idea 2

After reading through in full and discussing ‘Breezes of Confirmation’ (which is introduced in Section Three), you might create a cartoon strip or story-board of the story. Alternatively, you could make spoon puppets of the characters and then act it out. Another idea, but one in which you need a lot of time, is to create an animation of the story. This is done by creating background of the different scenes, making characters out of card, wool, paint etc, then taking a sequence of photographs as the characters move. These photos are then put into a PowerPoint and presented.



### Idea 3



In Section 4, we think about the role of the animator in deepening the faculty of spiritual perception in the Junior Youth. After reading through the section, it is very eye-opening to go on a Spirit Walk – that is a silent walk in nature during which we find and note down things that help us gain insight into the spiritual world. E.g. the sun is often used a symbol for God, and we might observe the sun and its effect on everything around us to understand God more deeply. Or we might observe a hard and firm rock, and reflect on the spiritual quality of steadfastness. When the participants return, they can share the insights they gained through the walk.

### Idea 4

In Section Six, we are asked to read and think about how human beings are often veiled in this life from seeing true reality. We read about some of the veils that can hinder us, such as mental and mortal vision, literal interpretation and egotism. A practical and interesting way to introduce the idea of a veil is to ask the participants to lie down on the floor and close their eyes. Tell them you will drape a soft, light cloth over their face, and not to be surprised. (Of course, if they have trouble breathing freely, they can take it off at any time, as some do not like having their face covered). Then ask them to open their eyes and sit up. Ask them what they see – some cloths will be heavier than others and some may be able to see shapes and light, others nothing at all. Then ask them to carefully stand up and move carefully and slowly round the room. What are they able to do/experience? In what way are they restricted? Then ask them to take off their veils. What is the experience of being

liberated? What can they now do/see/experience that they could not before? Discuss how these physical veils help us understand spiritual veils.

### Idea 5



After reading through in full and discussing ‘Glimmerings of Hope’ (which is introduced in Section Seven), you might try creating sock or wooden spoon puppets of the characters in the story and then telling the story using them. Making a puppet is easy-peasey! Simply get hold of some cheapo socks (£1.99 can buy you 6 pairs) or wooden spoons (usually about 50p each), some wool, needles both for wool and thread, beady eyes, buttons, and perhaps some felt, glue and coloured pipe-cleaners. Place all these items on a table and invite the participants to get to work—see what wonders they can create in half an hour!

### Idea 6

In Section Nine, we look further into the power of words to transform. A powerful activity to explore this more deeply is one which actors use to help them delve beneath the surface of a text in preparation for a role. It shows clearly the power of a single word. Each participant is given one word – perhaps ‘heart’, ‘God’, ‘mind’, ‘utterance’ etc (anything connected with the study course). They are invited to use the physical space of the room to delve into the word – repeat aloud it in different ways, say it fast or slow, loud or quietly, roll each letter of the word over in your mouth one by one, bounce the sound of the word off various surfaces – hard and soft. The repetition of the word enables the mind and heart to start finding connections with other emotions and memories in the sub-conscious, and the participants will be surprised at what can come out just from one word.

### Idea 7

The passages related to the power of the Word of God in Section Ten require to be memorised. Try playing a game like charades in order to assist the participants to do so. Write the key words from the quotes on small bits of paper. Then split the group up into 2 or 3 teams. Each person in each team has 30 seconds to describe the meaning of the word, without using the word itself, any derivatives of it, or words that rhyme with it. If they don’t get it in time, the other team/s get a chance to guess. Warning! Loving Bahá’ís can become fiercely competitive!

### Idea 8

There are many short quotes and prayers to be reflected upon in Section Thirteen. Again, why not ask the participants to relax and have them read to them with soft, meditative music. You might have to wake a few up afterwards! Encourage them to use their imaginations to envision empowerment.

### Idea 9

Section Fourteen encourages the use of newspaper and magazine articles that can be discussed in the Junior Youth group to help them develop the capacity to analyse the world around them. Why not bring in one or two articles to the training group and initiate a discussion on its content, so the participants get a chance to experience what that is like.



