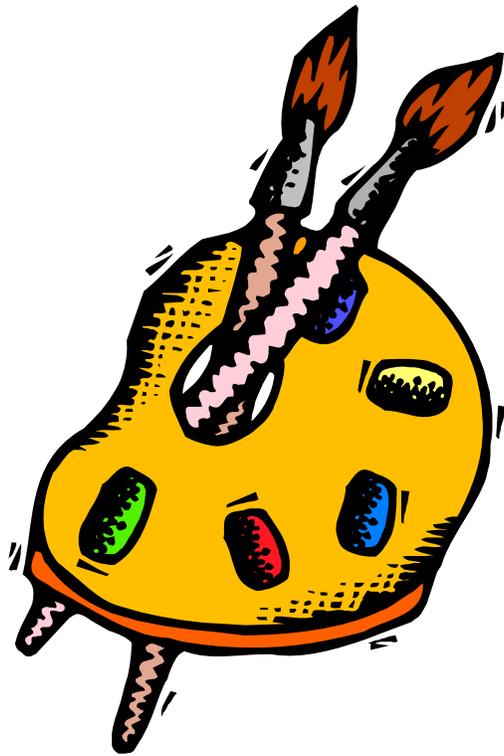


THE TRAINING INSTITUTE
FOR ENGLAND

ARTS MANUAL FOR
TUTORS OF BOOK 3



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 27th 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.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 BOOK 3: 'TEACHING CHILDREN'S CLASSES: GRADE ONE'



UNIT ONE: 'Some Principles of Bahá'í Education'

The purpose of this unit is to understand some of the basic principles of Bahá'í education.

Idea 1

The 15 lessons for children found in Unit 2 can be started during the study of Unit 1. Each lesson has a quotation to memorise, a song to learn, a story to tell, and a game to play. The tutor can teach 3 new songs per session over 5 sessions, and also play 3 games each time. The quotations and the stories can also be divided up so that these are learned throughout the sessions of Unit 1.

Idea 2

The quotation in [Section 3](#) asks us to **“Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value”**. This is a vital concept for understanding the purpose of children's classes. The participants can reflect on its meaning by creating either a painting or a collage on this theme. Collages can be created easily by using lots of magazines on various themes, glue and scissors. This is a useful creative activity for people who find painting/drawing difficult.



Idea 3

In order to further emphasise the concept of being a 'mine rich in gems', ask participants to take a piece of black card (the mine) and decorate it with sparkles (plastic 'gems', glitter, etc). Then, give each one a glitter or gel pen which writes in a bright colour and ask them to write the 'gems' that they see in others' 'mines'. This is a lovely way of helping the participants to come closer and creating a lovely, warm atmosphere at the beginning of the course. They can then be displayed on the wall, or taken home.

Idea 4



In [Section 6](#), we explore the concept of capacity. It makes it interesting if certain objects are brought in, such as a candle, a bucket, a thimble, a pencil etc. A demonstration could be carried out to show that a pencil cannot be lit as a candle and a candle cannot write. Also, you could show that the pencil must be sharpened for it to be able to write. You might give the participants objects such as candles and pencils with instructions of what to do with them, some of which are possible and others not. This should spark an interesting discussion on capacity and suitability, from which the section can be read and understood very clearly.



Idea 5



In [Section 8](#), we are asked to memorise a quote. Putting this to music is a great way of helping the participants to do this successfully. Use shakers, tambourines, a guitar, or any other instruments that could help with rhythm and tune.

Idea 6

The second quote in Section 9 really lends itself to a physical demonstration. If it is possible to bring in an oil lamp, it would be great. Doing a painting of an oil lamp (perhaps from a picture), decorated beautifully, would be very useful in assisting the participants to reflect on the words of the quotation.



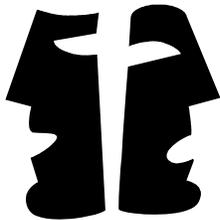
Idea 7

In Section 10, we are asked to memorise a short quote. In order to explore the very important concept of the fear of God, it would be interesting and fun to ask the participants, working in pairs, to create two role-plays, one demonstrating the behaviour of a person who is mindful of the fear of God and the other of someone who is not.

Idea 8

To explore the idea of habits in our lives in Section 12, it could be lively to ask the participants to think up several physical habits they or others have, and a few spiritual habits that we exhorted to try to develop. Then, each participant takes turns to mime their habit to the rest of the group, who must guess what the habit is. Having thought up many examples of habits, this should give rise to an interesting discussion.

Idea 6



Section 13 has several scenarios of how to deal with different situations arising in the class. These scenarios could be acted out in sketches by the participants.

UNIT TWO: 'Lessons for Children's Classes Grade 1'

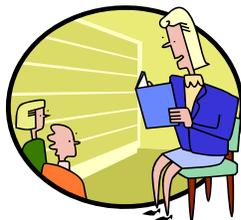
The purpose of this unit is to learn to teach simple children's classes consisting of memorisation of prayers and quotations, songs, stories, games and colouring.

Idea 1

As each part of the lessons is introduced in the first part of this unit (e.g. memorisation in Section 3, singing in Section 4 etc), assign one quote, song, story or game to each participant who prepares it, before coming back and teaching it to the rest of the group. In this way, all 15 lessons can be covered. Any lessons that aren't covered in this way can be then prepared by each pair and delivered to the whole group.



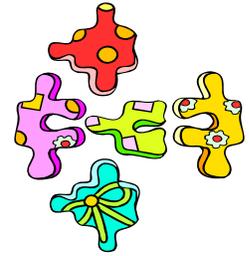
Idea 2



When you reach the part that explores the art of story-telling (Section 6), it can be useful to brainstorm the things to remember to make story-telling effective, such as eye-contact, facial expression, gestures, tone of voice, sequence of ideas etc. Write these up on a flip-chart or poster and stick on the wall. When each participant prepares and delivers their story, they can make reference to them as a check-list.

Idea 3

To assist with memorising the quotations from lessons 1-15, the tutor could print out the quotations and cut them up into words or phrases, making a jigsaw puzzle. The participants could test their memory of them by putting them back together again.



Idea 4

Another fun way of encouraging the participants to memorise the quotes from the lessons is to have a 'Quote-Off'. This is where two people stand facing each other and the first word of the quote is read out. The first person to say the full quote is the winner. (As we are trying to move away from competitive games, some tutors may not feel this particular game is appropriate. However, it is very good fun!)

Idea 3

You could also ask the participants to put the quotes in the lessons to well-known tunes, such as 'Greensleeves' or 'The Bear Necessities'.

Idea 4



Section 4 asks the participants to learn the songs in the lessons. This can be lived up by bringing in shakers, maracas, tambourines etc and as much noise as possible being made while singing. This encourages those not used to singing or shy about it to sing louder!

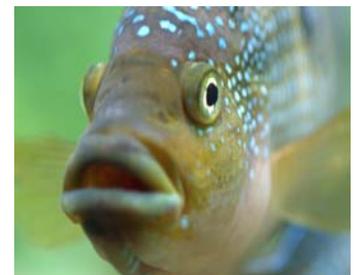


Idea 5

The tutor can also teach some additional Bahá'í songs to the participants, or ask the participants to set a prayer or quotation to music.

Idea 6

For Sections 6 and 7, ensure enough time is given to practicing the skill of storytelling. The tutor could bring in props to assist the participants in telling the stories found in lessons 1-15, such as cloths for head-scarves, or a lump of coal. Alternatively, participants could make props, such as cutting out fish and decorating them on card in order to tell the story of the fishes.



Idea 7



Another way of helping the participants to learn the stories is to attempt to tell them using creative drama, rather than just as a story. For example, working in small groups, you might ask them to recount the story of Mulla Bahram in Lesson 10 as an operatic drama, where the participants have to sing the story in opera style! Another way is for them to mime the story as it is being narrated, such as the story of the 3 fishes in Lesson 14.

Idea 8

You could ask the participants to make shadow plays of one of the stories too. This is done very simply with some tracing paper, coloured tissue paper (to make the scenery), black card and kebab sticks (to make the shadow puppets). You also need scissors, glue and sell-o-tape. When the lights are turned off and a torch used to light up behind the tracing paper, the effect is very dramatic and is a lovely way to convey a story. Children love it!



Idea 9

For Sections 8 and 9, ensure enough time is given for playing all of the games found in lessons 1-15. Be mindful that you will need to provide some tools and props in order to play them successfully, such as cloths to use as blindfolds, a coin or small stone, pens and paper etc. Advance preparation is essential.

UNIT THREE: ‘Conducting Classes for Children’

The purpose of this unit is to develop the skills and abilities needed to conduct classes for children, managing the class with a great deal of love and understanding and, at the same time, with the discipline necessary to create a proper learning environment.

Idea 1



For Section 4 as a craft activity, the participants can make a simple prayer book, as they might do with children. Print out a few short prayers in different fonts and sizes. Supply the participants with glue, scissors, coloured card, coloured string, pens and crayons. Participants can stick the prayers onto card, and then loop several cards together with the string. They can also make a cover for their prayer book, perhaps using felt, beads, coloured paper etc.

Idea 2

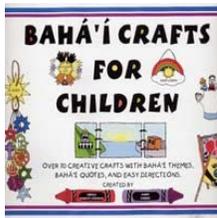
To explore further the concept of discipline and rules, ask each participant to draw a simple picture or diagram of things that need to be kept inside boundaries in order for them to be effective, e.g. roads and traffic lights to keep vehicles in order, train tracks, a fireplace, lines on a page etc. Then each one can share their idea.



Idea 3

When reading through and discussing the quotation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Section 6 about praise and punishment, it would be useful to ask the participants to work in pairs and prepare some scenarios demonstrating appropriate praise and verbal chastisements in response to errant behaviour. This also relates to Sections 8 and 9. When things are demonstrated rather than just talked about, it becomes easier to understand and remember them.

Idea 4



Use the book, *Bahá'í Crafts for Children* as a source of inspiration for teaching simple craft activities to the participants.

Idea 5

To practise introducing the class to parents and organising what you would say, use role-play in pairs. You could also prepare to act out a home visit to the parents in which the children and the class is discussed, as well as spiritual themes introduced.

