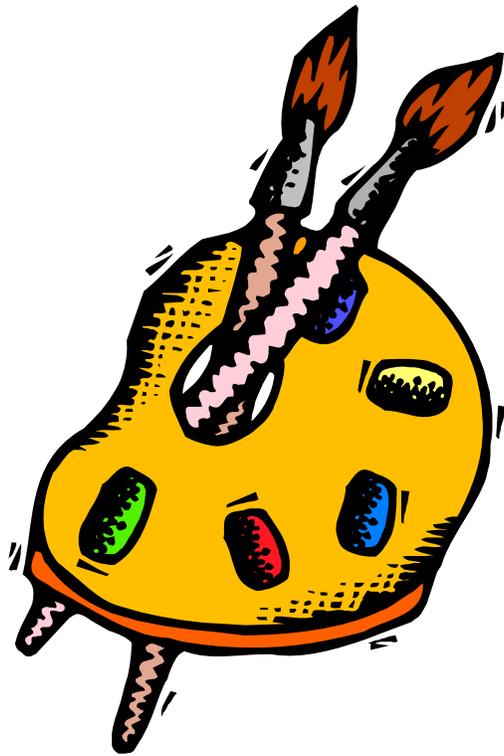


THE TRAINING INSTITUTE  
FOR ENGLAND

ARTS MANUAL FOR  
TUTORS OF BOOK 4



## 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.

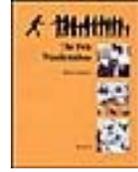
## **General Arts Resources on the Web:**

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 BOOK 4: 'THE TWIN MANIFESTATIONS'



## UNIT ONE: 'The Greatness of This Day'

The purpose of 'The Greatness of this Day' is to gain spiritual insights into the significance of this Day and the promises it holds for humanity.

### Idea 1

Although not technically artistic exploration but fun and useful none the less, it can be interesting before studying Unit One to gather quotations from different religions' scripture about the prophecy of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh (see website <http://www.bci.org/prophecy-fulfilled/> for lists of these), and jumble them up anonymously. The participants can then work in small groups or pairs to try to work out which religion the prophecies come from. When they finish, you can let them know if they are correct!

### Idea 2

In section 8 of unit 1 we are asked to memorise the quotation from the Guardian. As an aid to memorisation, ask the participants to stand in a circle and with each phrase or few words of the quote, create a short movement with their hands and/or body. Then everyone in the circle repeats the movement while saying the words. Each time someone adds a new movement, the group say the quote from the beginning. Each person contributes a movement until the whole quote has been done. Then each participant has a go at reciting it. If they get into trouble, the members of the group can prompt them by doing the movement associated with the phrase.

### Idea 3



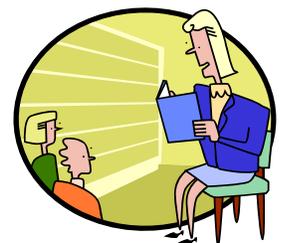
The quote in section 4 is very visual and lends itself nicely to graphic presentation. Take a large piece of paper and fold it into 4. Each section of the paper relates to a section of the quote, depicting the ocean, the sun (or day-star), the clouds, and the wind (or breeze). As a whole group, create a wall frieze that can be presented to the local Feast, or displayed at a story-telling evening, or even taken with the participants on their home visit!

## UNIT TWO: 'The Life of the Báb'

The purpose of 'The Life of the Báb' is to learn to narrate the story of the Báb's life and gain an appreciation of the potency of His ministry.

### Idea 1

Before beginning to read the stories, you might invite the participants to brainstorm the elements of good story-telling and discuss why each element is necessary. Then, when they practise telling the stories in this unit, they can refer to the list of points to remember, know what they need to work on and give each other clear feedback.



## Idea 2

After reading a little about the life of Quddús in section 4 (and more in the ‘Dawnbreakers’ if the group want to read more), you might want to read a few poems by/about other well-known believers and then invite participants to spend some time composing a poem about Quddús, his relationship with the Báb and his sacrifice.

For poetic inspiration, you might like to browse the following links to find poetry by Bahá’ís and inspired by the Baha’í teachings.

<http://www.upliftingwords.org/Bahai-poetry.htm>

<http://www.kenfinn.demon.co.uk/poems/>

<http://bahai-library.org/?collection=poetry>

## Idea 3



Instead of just sticking to the monologue suggestion as of a way to depict the story of the mounted escort in section 4, you might like to invite the participants to actually create a short play, adding other characters into the story, eg. the wife of the escort and the nasty governor. It can be useful to put them into pairs and invite each pair to come up with a scene, which is then put together into a play. Bringing turbans and cloaks can help the drama to come alive as the participants can more easily ‘get into character’. If the participants feel confident and inspired enough to share their work, they could perform it in the social part of the local Feast, a Holy Day celebration or at a final open celebration of the end of their course to which they could invite friends and family.

## Idea 4

After reading about the martyrdom of the Báb (in section 8), you could ask the participants to write a short story from the point of view of an eye-witness who was present on that day in Tabriz, describing in detail the sights, sounds, smells etc that might have been heard at the time. You could begin the activity by playing some Eastern music quietly and encouraging the students to close their eyes and allow their imagination to take them away to that time and place. Then they can simply write what they ‘saw’ in their minds’-eye. Some like to share what they have written, others don’t. It is important to be sensitive to this.

## Idea 5

There are many different tunes that the two prayers, ‘Remover of Difficulties’ and ‘God is Sufficient’ (in section 11) have been put to. Choose one, or find one on a CD, and teach it to the group as a way of helping the participants memorise them.

## Idea 6



Also in section 11, the group is asked to memorise at least part of the Báb’s Address to the Letters of the Living. This can be daunting for them! However, you can lessen their anxiety by presenting the passage not as a huge chunk as in the book, but by photocopying it and cutting it up into smaller sections. Each section can then be read with some meditative music in the background.

Another way to assist them to memorise the Báb’s Address is by printing off small sections onto A4 paper and then inviting them to illumine it, sticking the resulting beautiful picture and Writings on their wall. Everyday they can then read it which, in time, will help them to commit the words to memory. For ideas and examples of beautiful Celtic illumination, see the website [www.aon-celtic.com](http://www.aon-celtic.com). You might also like to research and share a little about the tradition of illumination in English and Celtic cultures.

## Idea 7

In section 15, the concept of crisis and victory is introduced. Thinking about how Abdu'l-Bahá so often used physical items to relay spiritual truths in his talks and presentations, it can be very enlightening and refreshing to try to the following activity when discussing this concept (and others elsewhere in the course).

Divide the participants into groups of 3. Briefly explain how Abdu'l-Bahá used physical objects to illustrate his presentation of a spiritual theme. (a burning candle = life of service; a glass of water = spiritual nourishment; flowers, chocolates, oil lamp, etc). Each group then goes to their work area where they find some items to use in their presentation of the concept of crisis and victory in the history of the Faith.

Give each group 10-12 items each. These might include: flowers, a candle, a beautiful picture frame, some crystals, a white rounded stone from a beach, a brass candle snuffer, some fir-tree cones, a clock, a Bible, a copy of the Holy Koran, a porcelain bell, seashells, etc. The list is endless, and the only rule in choosing objects was that they should be items of beauty.

The group then could take 30mins or so to prepare a presentation to the rest of the group using as many of the items as they can.

The great thing about this exercise is the way in which it helps the participants to think in a very different way about concepts/a story. Some of the participants may find it a great help to have the items to hold while talking – it gives them courage. The use of metaphor while actually seeing the object is a very powerful element in getting a concept across. And this activity works well as a 'mental breather' if the group is feeling tired.

## UNIT THREE: 'The Life of Bahá'u'lláh'

The purpose of this unit is to learn to narrate the story of Bahá'u'lláh's life and gain an appreciation of the magnitude of the spiritual forces released by Him.

### Idea 1



In section 1, after reading the story of the puppet show, there is obviously quite a lot of scope to explore puppets and the art of puppetry. You could practise telling the story of the puppet show using the puppets you make, or choose another story from the course that can be told using them. They could become very effective props to help the participants tell stories when they do their home visits. See the websites <http://familycrafts.about.com/od/puppets/>,

[http://ri.essortment.com/howtomakepupp\\_rxzy.htm](http://ri.essortment.com/howtomakepupp_rxzy.htm) or [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_9760\\_make-puppets.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_9760_make-puppets.html) for clear instructions on making different kinds of puppets.

### Idea 2

In section 7, when reading about Tahirih and her unveiling, to stimulate discussion and understanding about the 'veil' in Islamic culture, you could bring in long black cloaks and sheets and invite your participants to put them on in a chador type covering (men too!). Having a mirror there for them to see themselves covered up can be a very powerful experience. Some people may find this activity uncomfortable, especially those who have lived in a society that forced women to cover up, so it is necessary to be sensitive to this.



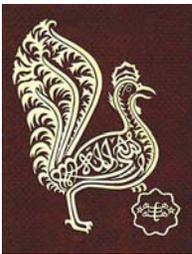
### Idea 3

In section 12, the participants read about the experience of the Bábis and Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyáh-Chal. It can be a very effective to attempt to try to re-create the conditions of the prison for them. An outdoor shed which can be closed to create darkness is ideal, with a clean carpet or mat on the floor for people to sit on. Encouraging the participants to sing 'God is Sufficient Unto Me' as they sit in the cold darkness can be very moving. It is important to discuss with the participants afterwards how they felt and link it with the experience of the Bábis. Again, some people may not be comfortable with this, and it is important to be sensitive to this.

### Idea 4

In section 14, the Maid of Heaven is mentioned Who visited Báha'u'lláh in the Siyah-Chal and told Him of His Revelation. You could ask the participants to draw/paint/create an image of the Maid of Heaven. Of course, there will be many differing interpretations of this which can be very interesting, and will help them to remember what the entity was that delivered Bahá'u'lláh's revelation to Him.

### Idea 5



In section 20, the Hidden Words are mentioned. There are many CDs and tunes that have been created to illuminate the beautiful words of these texts, and you might like to teach one or two to the participants. If you don't feel confident teaching a song, you might like to ask another of the participants who feels confident to do it for the group, or (failing this) another member of the community to come and visit your group. You could also ask the participants to find their favourite Hidden Word and create their own tune for it.

### Idea 6

Also in section 20, the story of the clergymen trying to create a test for Bahá'u'lláh is introduced. It can be quite fun to attempt to re-create the 'silly' conversation they might have had and encourage the participants to come up with ludicrous ideas for tests of Bahá'u'lláh's miraculous power.



### Idea 7



Re-create the Garden of Ridvan for the reading of sections from the Ridvan Tablet in section 23! Simply put a white sheet on the floor and some beautiful cushions in a circle round lots of roses, candles and plants. There are some CDs available with sounds of water and birdsong, which when played in the background can give the impression of being in a peaceful and delightful garden. You could invite family and friends to this uplifting experience.

### Idea 8

To help the participants get clear in their minds the series of places that Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to, it can be useful and fun to create the map shown in section 29 as a large 'life-size' map. This can be done simply by writing the names of the cities and the dates that Bahá'u'lláh arrived and left them onto bits of card and having the participants lay them on the ground in relation to each other, perhaps on a lawn outside. They can then walk from city to city, recounting briefly the story of Bahá'u'lláh's life as they go!

