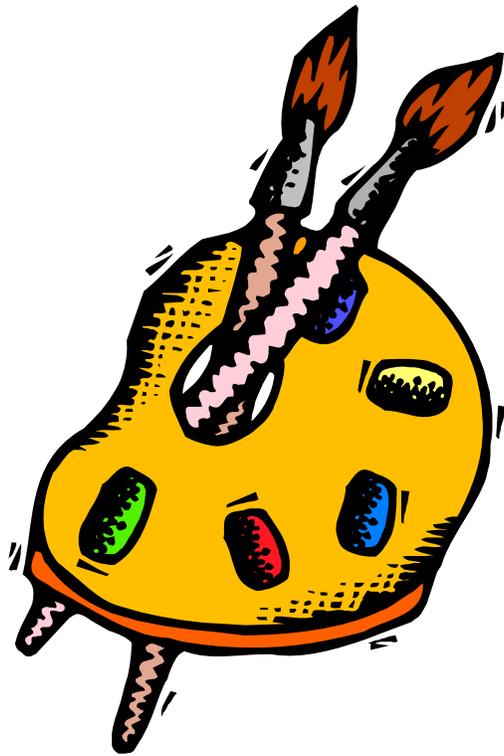


THE TRAINING INSTITUTE
FOR THE U.K.

ARTS MANUAL FOR
TUTORS OF BOOK 6



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 6: 'TEACHING THE CAUSE'



UNIT ONE: 'The Spiritual Nature of Teaching'

The purpose of this unit is to understand that teaching is an act of particular significance. And to appreciate that effective teaching involves both 'being' and 'doing' – attention to one's inner condition as well as constant activity.

Idea 1

Before even opening the first page, ask the participants to interview a partner, asking 3 questions.

- 1) What are their expectations from the course?
- 2) If they could develop a skill they do not currently possess what would it be and why?
- 3) What has been their most successful teaching experience to date?

Then each person introduces their partner, rather than themselves to the group. This creates a lovely atmosphere as people learn things about one another they did not know, and sets the tone for discussing teaching.



Idea 2

Before doing the exercise in Section One, ask participants to draw what teaching means for them or what they understand by it. This can be done in an image or diagram, using colours. Then, each participant takes a turn to describe what they have drawn. It can be interesting to ask the other participants what they think it means first. This is a great opener and gets people sharing and having fun at the beginning.

Idea 3



In Section Three, we are asked to reflect on the concept of enkindlement as a necessary state for the teacher to be in. Ask the participants to paint 'fire' – this can be interpreted in many ways and can often give rise to interesting variations, which can then be placed in one collage for decorating a wall.

Idea 4

To explore the quote in more depth in Section Four, you might ask the participants to create a collage using different materials, to depict a candle, moth, cloud, meadow, young tree. They would have to find things that could represent these objects, such as cotton wool, a leaf, wax, etc and the state they should be in.

Idea 5

Section Four asks us then to reflect on the spiritual condition of joy. It might be a good idea here to play a game which is conducive to great joy and laughter. One of the participants will surely know of such a game. If not, there's always the old chestnut 'Swap Seats'. Ask the participants to sit in a circle on chairs. One person stands in the middle. They ask people to swap seats who have something in common, which they describe, for example, "Anyone wearing jeans, swap seats!" or "Anyone who has a brother, swap seats!" The person in the middle must then try to get a seat. No-one can move to the seat next to them or sit down in the same seat they had.

Idea 6

In Section 7 participants are asked to memorise the quotation from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is rather long, and some may find this difficult. It will be necessary to return to it often throughout the training of people to really grasp it. Try breaking the quote up into small phrase and writing one phrase on a small piece of paper. In pairs, after reading the quote several times, they can try to piece the quote back together and then take one piece away at a time while trying to repeat it. This has been quite effective proven method of memorization.



Idea 7

Another way to help participants memorise the quote in Section Seven more easily is for them to draw symbols or small pictures to remind them of the words on a flipchart paper. This can be done individually or in the whole group and is often lots of fun.

Idea 8

In Section Eight, participants (working in small groups or pairs) could attempt to demonstrate through movement, mime or dramatic dialogue the answers to the questions

Idea 9



Some quotations are asked to be committed to memory in Section Eleven. It is very beneficial for different memorization techniques to be tried out in the group. Perhaps asking people to try to set one of the quotes, or part of one to a tune or rhythm can work well.

Idea 10

Before reading the quotation in Section Twelve, using coloured pipe-cleaners, ask the participants to work in pairs and create a 'word', a 'forest', a 'lion', a 'mountain', and a 'servant'. This serves to heighten anticipation to find out the meaning of these objects and how they fit into the quote. When the words are met, they then have more impact on the reader. The meaning of the whole quotation is then more readily accessible.



Idea 11

Another quote needs to be memorized in Section Thirteen. Try this method for some laughter and a sense of group achievement which has shown to work very well. It is called 'Body Memory'. Combining movement and words is very powerful to help memory. Standing in a circle, each participant suggests a movement which is linked to the meaning of a particular phrase. The whole group copies it while repeating the words. This continues until all the phrases in the quote have been covered, starting from the top every time a new phrase is added. The combination of group support, repetition and movement with words can really help those who have had trouble memorizing in the past.

Idea 12



The concept of sacredness is explored in Section Fourteen. To enable the participants to feel that sacredness and to open up a fruitful discussion, it can be very powerful to actually try to create a 'sacred space' using sheets on the floor, flowers, candles and soft cushions. Before entering this

space, participants are told what to expect and asked how they might prepare to enter. Then, shoes are taken off, and a silence encouraged, although it is pointed out that if anyone wishes to speak while in the space, they are permitted to do so. Perhaps anointing them with rose-water as they enter could also be beautiful. After they have experienced the sacredness of the space, a discussion is encouraged as to how they felt on entering, how they moved, what they thought before and while they spoke and listened etc.

Idea 13

In Section Fourteen, we focus on the 'key' needed to unlock the hearts of men, the Word of God. Ask the participants to paint a key demonstrating this concept. Keys can be decorated beautifully, using glitter, gold or silver paint, patterns and colours. Alternatively, keys could be cut from card using a template and then decorated to be hung up in the room, or at a Feast or Cluster Meeting. They could also be decorated using the Word of God.



Idea 14



The concept of the Revelation being like a sacred scroll is introduced in Section Fifteen. This really lends itself to making a scroll and writing beautiful, sacred words on it. Scrolls can be then decorated and made to look old by burning the edges slightly, then rolled up and fastened using seals. These can be made from red wax and embossed using shapes or inscriptions.

Idea 15

Another memorization technique which has been proven to work well is through group repetition. Try it for the quote in Section Twenty-Three. Sitting in a circle and with books closed, one person being by saying the first phrase from the quote, which is then repeated in turn by each person in the group. Then, the next phrase is added to the first, and again it goes round the circle. The group continues in this way until the whole quote has been covered.

Idea 16

Exploring the idea of 'weaving' the Word of God naturally into our conversations in Section Twenty-Six can be achieved through actually creating very simple weavings, using a small wooden frame made from short sticks wrapped with thick thread. Coloured wool can then be woven using thick needles through the threads, creating wonderfully bright patterns. Participants may feel they wish to continue working on these while moving on to discuss concepts in the next sections. (Some tutors may find this distracting, though!)



Idea 17

The quote to be memorized in Section Twenty-Eight is another long one. It can work very effectively to ask participants in work in pairs and put one sentence of it to music. Once they have mastered their tune, they then come back to the large group and teach the tune to them. After each tune/sentence has been learnt, the whole quote can be sung without looking at books!

Idea 18

There are a lot of quite long quotes to be read in Section Twenty-Nine. To give participants a break from taking in information by reading, many have enjoyed simply lying back, perhaps on the floor with a cushion, and listening to the quotes being read to them with some relaxing music playing quietly in the background. It is found that while in a relaxed state and with soft music playing, it is actually much easier for the mind to visualise and *feel* the meaning of the words more deeply.

Idea 19

In Section Twenty-Nine, assign one quote to each pair and ask them to devise a way of teaching the quote to the rest of the group, e.g. through singing, actions, drawings, repetition etc.

UNIT TWO: ‘The Qualities and Attitudes of the Teacher’

The purpose of this unit is to reflect on the qualities and attitudes of a teacher of the Cause. To understand that effectiveness in teaching can be developed if we approach it in a posture of learning.

Idea 1

The first few sections in this unit help us to explore some of the essential spiritual qualities of a teacher such as purity of heart, faith, humility, wisdom, courage etc. After each section, ask each participant to draw a small picture, image or diagram to illustrate that particular quality on a small square of paper. After Section Eleven (where we finish looking at these qualities), each piece of paper can be stuck together to make a very interesting and colourful wall-hanging for the room.

Idea 2

After the participants have completed Section Four on faith, ask them in pairs to pick one of the things we should have faith in when teaching and to demonstrate it through movement only.

Idea 3



The exercise in Section Six really lends itself to being acted out using the technique of Forum Theatre. Give each group of 2 or 3 (depending on the question) 15 or so minutes to come up with a role-play that demonstrates the scenario, thinking also of a possible ending. When each group comes to act out the scene to the whole group, when they come to the point of ‘crisis’ ask them to ‘freeze’ and discuss in the group how the Bahá’í teacher should respond. The actors can then act out the audience’s suggestions, and discuss the consequences.

They can also act out their own suggested ending they rehearsed.

Idea 4

Adopting a posture of learning is discussed in Section Twelve. After the participants have completed the exercises, standing in a circle as a group, ask them to close their eyes and breathe deeply. Ask them to be as relaxed as possible, perhaps moving their arms in a Tai-Chi-like fashion in tune with their breathing. Once everyone is in a relaxed state, ask them to picture what a ‘posture of learning’ looks like. After a minute, then ask them to assume that ‘posture’ with their bodies. This may be as a movement or a tableau (frozen picture). Then, participants open their eyes and one-by-one demonstrate their ‘posture of learning’ for the group. This really helps people reflect deeply without using words on this important attitude.

Idea 5

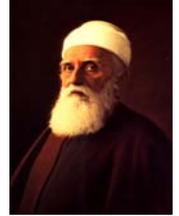
The concept of ‘being’ and ‘doing’ can be further emphasized by asking the participants to think of one practical way to demonstrate the spiritual states described on P72 of Section Eighteen and act it out for the rest of the group to guess.

Idea 6

In Section Nineteen, there are more quotations to read and reflect on. Once again, it can be a welcome break from reading to invite the participants to lie down on the floor or make themselves comfortable in their chairs, close their eyes and reflect on the words while soft, relaxing music is played in the background.

Idea 7

The crowning glory of this unit comes in Section Twenty, where participants are asked to reflect upon how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá taught the Faith. We read an account of some early believers in the West who witnessed Him do this. Instead of simply reading it, it is very powerful to assign one paragraph to each participant (some may look at the same one, but that doesn’t matter as they will tell the story in a slightly different way anyway, and repetition is never a bad thing) and ask them to prepare to tell it as if it had been themselves seeing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then, when everyone is prepared, put some candles and cushions on the floor and invite the participants to join you. Each one then recounts meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and what they witnessed about His teaching. This can be very moving and has the effect of feeling that the Beloved Master is still with us in the world, as everyone there has ‘met’ Him.



UNIT THREE: ‘The Act of Teaching’

The purpose of this unit is to become familiar with some of the approaches and methods of personal teaching endeavours and collective campaigns.

Idea 1

Try answering the exercise in Section Two on receptivity as a whole group in the form of a brainstorm diagram.

Idea 2

In Section Two, we are asked to memorise a passage from the Guardian about the urgent need for teaching and some of the opportunities open to us in the present state of the world. As a way of enabling the participants to become more familiar with the words in the quote, and to relax and have fun at the same time, try playing either a game of charades! After the group has read through the quote a few times, write some of the key words onto pieces of paper. Then split the group into two or three teams. Each team comes up with a name. Then, each member of each team comes up one at a time and has 1 minute to mime the word. It can be even better to see who can get the word in the fastest time.

Alternatively, you can try the same game, but using words instead of mime. The players are not allowed to use any mime, any rhyming words, or any derivatives of the word itself.

After the game, participants may find it easier to memorise.

Idea 3



One of the main aims of Book 6 is to familiarize participants with the contents of Anna’s Presentation and enable them to study it carefully to assist them in their direct presentation of the Faith. During the study of those sections covering this in the course (Sections 6-20), after each one, ask the participants

to draw a series of images that summarise and show clearly the progression of ideas Anna presents. They could do this by cutting out pictures from magazines and newspapers and sticking it on flipchart paper, or by using their own pictures. At the end of this, they will have an 'image-map' which they can then use to go over the ideas again and practice delivering with a partner. Alternatively, they could practice it section by section as they go through each bit.

Idea 3



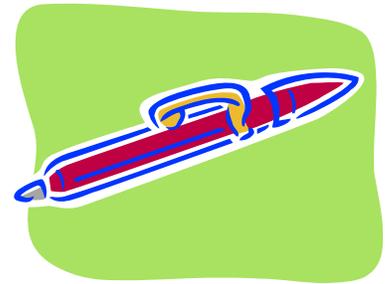
There's always room for a little sock puppeting what ever course you're doing! These are fun, creative, simple and very effective. Participants might like to try using them to practice having a teaching encounter and delivering Anna's presentation.

Idea 4

After participants have made their personal teaching plans in Section Twenty-Four, they could write them onto cards, which could be decorated beautifully in order to be stuck on their wall.

Idea 5

In Section Twenty-Five, participants are asked to write a few paragraphs about the importance of participating in intensive teaching campaigns. Instead of paragraphs it is much more interesting, and I think effective, to ask them to write a poem instead. Providing a thesaurus, dictionary and rhyming dictionary can help a lot. Usually, this will take no more than 20 minutes, and then participants can share their poems with the group. If people are shy to share, they can write it up on the wall anonymously and everyone can read them. It is important to share them as the concepts in them will help to re-enforce the understanding of intensive teaching campaigns.



Idea 6

In Section Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine, to explore the concept of intensity, it might be fun to try a common relaxation technique using tensing of the body muscles and then letting go. Ask participants to lie on the floor comfortably. Then, beginning with the toes, ask them to clench the muscles holding for 5 seconds, then let go. Work your way up through the body clenching different muscle groups, until you reach the neck. At the end of this, people report feeling very relaxed. Perhaps it is the same when we dedicate out time to intensive teaching!

Idea 7

There is a fun game which can help to explore the concept of intensity and pulsation, as mentioned in Section Twenty-Nine. Participants stand in a circle holding hands and the object of the game is to pass a pulse smoothly round the circle. This is done by clenching someone's hand lightly, indicating to them that they must pass on the 'pulse'. Once it is felt by everyone, there is a sense of team unity generated.

Idea 8

Again, in Section Thirty-One there are quite a few quotes to be read through. It might be good to wait til the end of the course (having completed Sections Thirty-Two–Thirty-Five) before going back to read the prayers in this section. You could ask your participants to close their eyes and play relaxing music while the prayers are read, taking time to reflect on everything they have learnt in the course.

