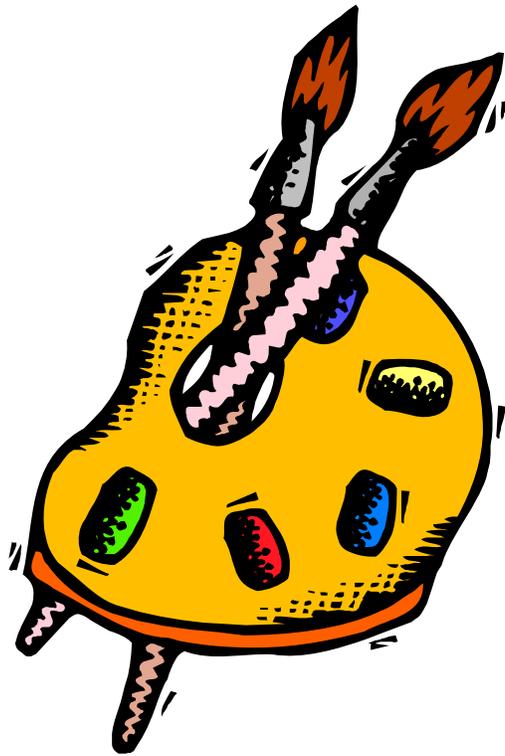


THE TRAINING INSTITUTE  
FOR ENGLAND

ARTS MANUAL FOR  
TUTORS OF BOOK 7



## 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.

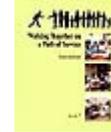
## **General Arts Resources on the Web:**

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 7:



## WALKING TOGETHER ON A PATH OF SERVICE

### Unit 1: The Spiritual Path

The purpose of this unit is to gain increased awareness of the spiritual dynamics of advancing along a path of service to the Cause and acquire an understanding of the forces at work.

A dynamic is an interactive system or process involving the interplay of forces, elements or objects. In this unit many dynamics are identified, in particular the dynamics of faith, hope and longing desire.

#### Idea 1

Our world is characterised by dynamics of every kind:



- The dynamo on a bike produces enough current to power the light: through the cyclist's pedalling action, a coil is made to rotate, voltage is thus induced which produces the necessary current.
- sound is created through the dynamic of the violin, the bow, and

the movement of the violinist's arm;

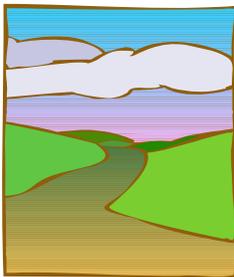


- a piece of pottery is made through the dynamic relationship between the spinning of the potter's wheel, the clay and the movement of the potter's hands;
- the force of the wind interacting with the tide produces large waves (or swell) in the ocean;
- and so on.

You might be able to arrange for the participants to experience an artistic dynamic in action. The most effective would be one where motion is visible, therefore pottery is a good example. It would be excellent for them to have a go on the potter's wheel if possible.

Or, more simply, you could help the participants make percussion instruments and experiment together with producing rhythmic sound (a dynamic created between the different rhythms, showing itself in interesting sounds). Simple percussion instruments can be made by putting pebbles in a tin to make a rudimentary rattle; creating an arrangement of glasses which can be tapped with a chop stick to produce tinkling sound; use two soup spoons back-to-back for a castanet affect; use saucepans as drums; and so on.

#### Idea 2



At the end of Unit 1 the participants will have an increased awareness of the spiritual dynamics of advancing along a path of service to the Cause, and will have acquired an understanding of the forces at work.

Supply them with three or four sheets of flipchart (or similar) paper taped together, along with paints, markers, crayons, glue, crepe paper, and any other art and craft materials you may have, and invite them to create a 'path of service' based on their new awareness and understanding.

This will afford them the opportunity to recap on what they have learned in a fun but creative way, and it will afford you as tutor the opportunity to check that they have understood Unit 1 well.

When they have completed their 'path of service' keep it in a safe place, since you may wish to return to it again later on in the book.

### Idea 3



The final section of Unit 1 focuses on the concept of joy and on 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the essence of joy. In studying this section consider having a singsong with your group (often a powerful bringer of joy). If you are not a confident singer, you could ask a participant in the group to lead. Failing this, you could ask someone from the local community to come and help. You could sing some songs about 'Abdu'l-Bahá – Look at Me (from Book 3); Behold the Candle; Dastam Begir; and so on. Or other Bahá'í tunes (BK3 songs are great fun!). You might also sing some of the group's favourite songs not necessarily Bahá'í tunes.

Another idea of this section might be to tell some of the uplifting and joyful stories from the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (see [http://www.bahai-publishing-trust.co.uk/acatalog/BPT BOOKS ABOUT ABDU L BAH 57.html](http://www.bahai-publishing-trust.co.uk/acatalog/BPT_BOOKS_ABOUT_ABDU_L_BAH_57.html) for a full list of books about the Master packed with stories).

## Unit 2: Becoming a Tutor of Books 1-6

The purpose of this unit is to explore some of the concepts, and acquire some of the attitudes and skills that contribute to the capability of helping a group of friends go through books 1-6.

### Idea 1



Section 4 of this unit invites the participants to meditate on a lengthy extract from a Tablet written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The first paragraph describes how the Ancient Sovereignty has portioned out its own perfection to each created thing so that each *'may become a symbol denoting the sublimity of the true Educator of humankind'*; and so that each, *'even as a crystalline mirror, may tell of the grace and splendour of the Sun of Truth.'*

To help the participants develop a deeper understanding of this paragraph, you could bring to your study circle a selection of created things – e.g. a stone, a gem, a flower, a container-full of water, a live animal (perhaps a family dog, cat, fish or bird), an insect, a handful of earth, a handful of sand, a blade of grass, a feather, a vegetable etc. You may also wish to supply some photographs of God's creation e.g. a sunset, a picture of the planet Earth from space, etc. The distinguishing feature of the materials you supply should be that they are not manmade; or that they are not natural materials shaped by man – for example a piece of sculpted marble. Rather you are looking for natural materials in their natural state.

Divide the participants into pairs, and let each pair choose an object from the selection. Working together they examine it and then do the following:

1. try to identify 'its own perfection, its particular virtue and special excellence'.
2. describe how it is 'a symbol denoting the sublimity of the true Educator of humankind';
3. How, 'even as a crystalline mirror', does it 'tell of the grace and splendour of the Sun of Truth'?

When the participants have completed their examination and answered the questions, let them explain to the group what they found. Then invite each one write a short poem in praise of their chosen object inspired by the quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When the poems are finished, the participants could share them if they wish.

### Idea 2

The extract in section 4 from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continues: *“And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift... That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance... The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed of the Holy Words.”*

Exploring the mysteries of the Holy Words is described in the text that follows as ‘a primary source of motivation’.

Since your participants – having previously finished Book 6 – are now actively teaching the Cause, suggest that they choose some of the Holy Words which they particularly love, gift wrap them as befits a ‘most wondrous gift’, and present it to a person they are currently teaching when the right opportunity presents itself.

To help them do this you might supply them with books from which they can choose the Holy Words, paper on which they can write them (if appropriate) and materials which could make beautiful and unusual gift wrapping: scraps of beautiful fabric, ribbon, paper of different descriptions, arts materials, glitter glue, etc. If you need any creative ideas, try the websites below:

[http://www.diynetwork.com/diy/pa\\_invitations\\_wrapping/0,2024,DIY\\_14157,00.html](http://www.diynetwork.com/diy/pa_invitations_wrapping/0,2024,DIY_14157,00.html)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_8022\\_make-unique-wrapping.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_8022_make-unique-wrapping.html)

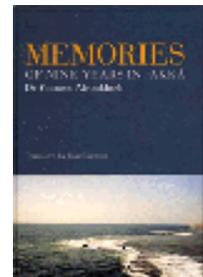
Perhaps somebody in your group or with whom you are acquainted has experience in the art of framing and might like to teach your participants how to frame their precious gift of the Holy Words.



### Idea 3

The quote in section 4 mentions the eminent Sadru’s-Sudúr. The story is his conversion is told in the book “Memories of Nine Years in ‘Akká” by Dr. Youness Afroukteh. It is spread between two sections of the book – pp79-83 (story of Áqá Mírzá Hasan) and pp 96-102 (The effect of the story of Áqá Mírzá Hasan.) You could memorise this story and tell it to your participants. The book is available from:

[http://www.bahai-publishing-trust.co.uk/acatalog/BPT\\_BOOKS\\_ABOUT\\_ABDU\\_L\\_BAH\\_57.html](http://www.bahai-publishing-trust.co.uk/acatalog/BPT_BOOKS_ABOUT_ABDU_L_BAH_57.html)



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### Idea 4

Section 6 focuses on attraction to beauty. In advance of studying this section invite the participants to share some thoughts about beauty and to bring to the group something which they consider to be beautiful: it can be anything from the photograph of a grandchild to a beautiful painting, a piece of clothing, a piece of music or song, something from the Writings...anything at all which they consider to be beautiful. Invite them to display whatever they bring in and to describe why they think it’s beautiful and how it makes them feel etc.

### **Idea 5**

Section 18 comes at the end of a series of sections in which the participants review the first six books of the main sequence of courses. The text says, “It is hoped that this overview will have provided you with insight into what the Institute means by the phrase ‘walking a path of service’”.

Now might be a good time to produce the art materials once again and invite the participants to create a new ‘path of service’, much as they did at the end of Unit 1. When they have finished, compare this new ‘path of service’ with the earlier one, and give the participants an opportunity to explore what they have learned and to see if their understanding has developed during their study so far of Unit 2.

### **Idea 6**

Section 28 deals with the concept of spiritual empowerment. It lists some of the attributes to be acquired by those set on a path of moral and spiritual empowerment and invites the participants to add to the list.

Having studied and discussed the list, and as a means of fixing some of the attributes in the minds of your participants, you could play ‘Empowerment Charades’. Each person simply chooses an attribute from a bag of bits of paper with attributes of God written on them, attempts to demonstrate it without speaking or mouthing any words within 1 minute, and the others in their team must guess what it is. If they guess correctly, they get a point.

### **Idea 7**

Another way of achieving the same goal as that in Idea 6, might be to invite the participants to each create small pictures illustrating the different attributes of empowerment. These can be drawn on pieces of paper or card that have all been cut to the same size. Once everyone has completed their bit, they can all be put together in a collage, possibly framed, and displayed at Feast, a Cluster Reflection Meeting, or other community gathering.

## **Unit 3: Promoting the Arts at the Grassroots**

The purpose of this unit is to help the participants appreciate the role of artistic endeavours in the activity of a study circle. The unit already includes much in the way of using the arts:

**Section 1** has people singing, reciting poetry/storytelling, and affords ample opportunity for displaying works of art or for dancing.

**Section 2** again offers the opportunity for singing Bahá’í songs, those already known to the participants and perhaps some new ones.

**Section 3** calls on the participants to dramatise some scenarios.

**Section 4** describes 5 considerations in the narration of a story, and affords the opportunity to have an evening or interlude of storytelling; or to invite a person known for their story-telling skills to come and entertain the group.

### Extra Idea 1

Section 6 is about incorporating music into the educational practice of your study circle. Towards the end of the section you explore the various kinds of music that would be appropriate for different community events. Having identified which songs are suitable for the celebration of the Nineteen Day Feast, put together a programme of song for the next Feast, and request permission to perform your selection for the community.



### Extra Idea 2

When each of your participants has learned the stories of the seven martyrs of Tehr an and practised narrating it, discuss what aspect of the story would lend themselves to drama. Once the group, either together or in small groups, have worked on a piece and they feel comfortable, they might present it at the next Feast or Reflection Meeting.

Alternatively, read the poem inspired by this story on the following website to your participants: <http://www.kenfinn.demon.co.uk/poems/7martyrs.htm>, or you might like to ask them to read a verse each, or even simply take verses from the poem (it is quite long). Then invite them to try to write their own poems about this stirring story.

### Extra Idea 3

Section 8 of this unit focuses on drama and puppetry. Invite the group to think of a few stories they have learned through their study of the Ruhi sequence that might lend themselves either to dramatisation or being performed by puppets. They can then work in small groups to create these. Try looking on the following websites for ideas on making simple puppets:

<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)

The simple puppet show they create could then be performed at a children's class, the next Reflection meeting or the local Feast, or used as part of the celebrations for the Birth of Bah a' u' ll ah Holy Day.

