

# TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

## THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:  
GENEROSITY, LOVE, COURAGE**

I am the Servant of the Blessed Perfection. In Baghdád I was a child. Then and there He announced to me the Word, and I believed in Him. As soon as He proclaimed to me the Word, I threw myself at His Holy Feet and implored and supplicated Him to accept my blood as a sacrifice in His Pathway.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 52

We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved Master, whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair’s breadth from the revealed Law of Bahá’u’lláh.

Such is the path of servitude; such is the way of holiness He chose to tread to the very end of His life. Nothing short of the strictest adherence to His glorious example can safely steer our course amid the pitfalls of this perilous age, and lead us on to fulfill our high destiny.

Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 132

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



### KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood
- To know about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s experience with the imprisonment and banishment of Bahá’u’lláh during ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share the special relationship between the birth date of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the date of the Declaration of The Báb.
- Use art and craft activities to make a family tree showing the members of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family.
- Research and share stories of life in Tíhrán during ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood.
- Learn the names and dates associated with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s birth and childhood.
- Map the exiles of Bahá’u’lláh, acting out stories of events that happened to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His family during these exiles. Remember not to portray members of the Holy Family. Make a timeline of these events.



### WISDOM OBJECTIVE

- To understand the uniqueness of the Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá even as a child and the importance of His childhood experiences as preparation for His life of service to Bahá’u’lláh

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Learn about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s early recognition of His Father’s Station.
- List some of the ways ‘Abdu’l-Bahá helped His Family, and the responsibilities He had as a child.
- Consult about why Bahá’u’lláh referred to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as “the Master”, and what that means to us today.
- Compare significant events in the Bábí Faith that had a connection with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life (i.e., ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born the night the Báb declared).
- Make dioramas which depict incidents or events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood.
- Meditate and reflect on events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood, such as His visit to Bahá’u’lláh in the Síyáh-Chál, or the time Bahá’u’lláh left Baghdád for Sulaymáníyyih. Then discuss with a partner one’s thoughts and feelings about such events. Share these thoughts in poetry, drawings, or writing.

## TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

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### SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the childhood of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as it relates to one’s own childhood
- To discern how one can use the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood to cope with the tests and difficulties in one’s own life

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Make a family tree of one’s own family.
- Compare the similarities and differences between one’s own life with that of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when He was a child.
- Share experiences that have been personally difficult, how the experiences were handled, and what was learned from these situations.
- Develop a dramatic presentation on positive results from tests and difficulties.
- Consult about how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá might have reacted to some difficulties learners have experienced in their own lives.



### ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE

- To be able to share stories from the childhood of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with others

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Plan a birthday celebration for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Share the map of the exiles of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Family, and present dramatizations of events that occurred during these exiles to the community. Do not portray members of the Holy Family.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

### **Sample Activities**

#### **ACTIVITY: CREATE KEEPSAKE BOXES TO REMEMBER THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Establish a loving environment; Engage the mind and heart; Use of art

**SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY:** 1 HOUR

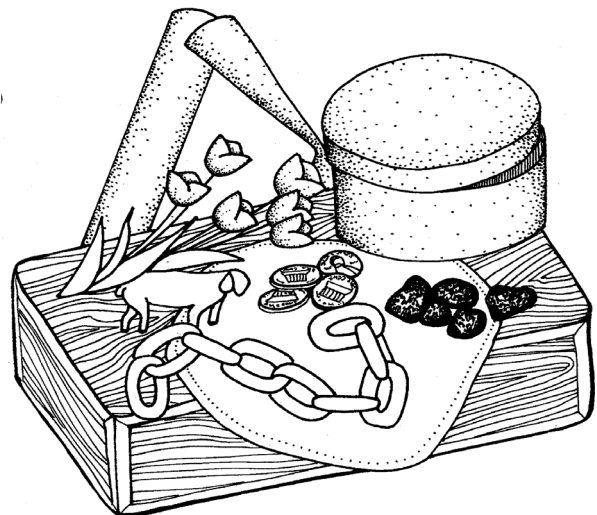
**In Advance:**

- prepare a sample keepsake box, described below

**Materials Needed:**

- shoebox or smaller gift box for each student
- beautiful wrapping paper, ribbons, bows, stickers, etc.
- small photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for each student

1. Joyfully present the previously-prepared keepsake box to the class. Tell children that Someone very special had a birthday – He was born on May 23, 1844 (write the date on the board). As they may begin to guess Whose birthday that is, remove the lid of the keepsake box to reveal ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s name and photograph displayed in the inside lid of the box.
2. Tell children that they will be making their own keepsake box about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This box will become a special place for them to keep small items to remind them of His life. They will make the box today and then they will learn stories about the Master’s childhood. A small memento of each story will help them remember His life and tell these stories to others. These stories are provided in summary form in this Lesson Planning Guide, pp. 12-13. They are also told in the books cited for each activity.
3. Provide each child with a box, the lid to the box, and choices of beautiful wrapping paper, bows, etc. Assist the children to wrap both their box and lid separately. Encourage them to beautify both the inside and outside of the box.
4. Measure and cut nice writing paper or construction paper to fit neatly inside the lid. Provide copies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s name and invite the children to copy His name onto this paper in their nicest handwriting.
5. Instruct the class to leave space for a small photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to be mounted on the paper with glue stick. Invite the students to further decorate this paper, then assist them to mount it inside the lid of their box.



**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**  
**TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

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**ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S BIRTH**

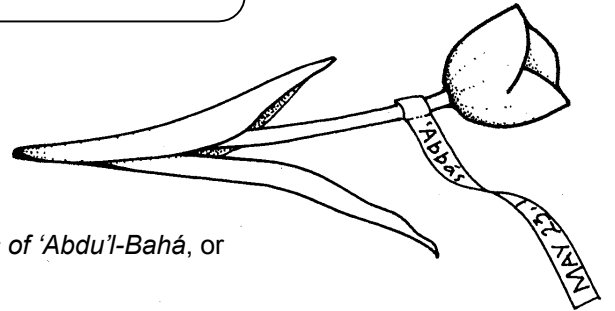
**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- gift box prepared in the preceding activity
- small silk or dried flower for each student
- thin paper strip for each student
- glue sticks or other glue
- Story 1 on p. 12 of this Lesson Planning Guide, p. 1 of *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, or pp. 3-4 of *Servant of the Glory*



1. Read or tell the story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s birth from one of the sources listed above.
2. Give each child a small silk or dried flower, as a remembrance of the gardens at His home on the warm spring day on which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born.
3. Provide each with a thin paper strip, on which the children can write the date of His birth—May 23, 1844—on one side and His name at birth—‘Abbás Effendi—on the other side. With glue stick, attach one end of the paper strip around the stem of their flower. Place this memento in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake box.

**ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF THE SHEEP**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of manipulatives

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- small toy sheep, fluffy bit of wool, or cotton ball for each student
- story 2, p. 12 of this Lesson Planning Guide, p. 3 of *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, or p. 7 of *Servant of the Glory*
- toy horse, sheep, and farmer figures

1. Tell the story about the sheep, using toy figures to illustrate the story. Remember not to directly portray the Master Himself with any of the toy figures. After you demonstrate ‘Abdu’l-Bahá giving sheep to the shepherds, have each shepherd gather up the sheep he is watching.
2. Discuss the story: What do you think Bahá’u’lláh meant when He said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would someday give himself away? How could you show such giving and generosity in your own life, even as a child? (Examples: service projects, giving to the Bahá’í Funds, etc.)
3. Give each child one of the toy sheep, a small piece of sheep’s wool, or a cotton ball to place in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake box as a reminder of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s generosity.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

### **ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF NOTHING BUT FLOUR TO EAT**

**WISDOM OBJECTIVES:** To understand the uniqueness of the Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, even as a child, and the importance of His childhood experiences as preparation for His life of service to Bahá’u’lláh

**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES:** To analyze the childhood of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as it relates to one’s own childhood; To discern how one can use the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood to cope with the tests and difficulties in one’s own life

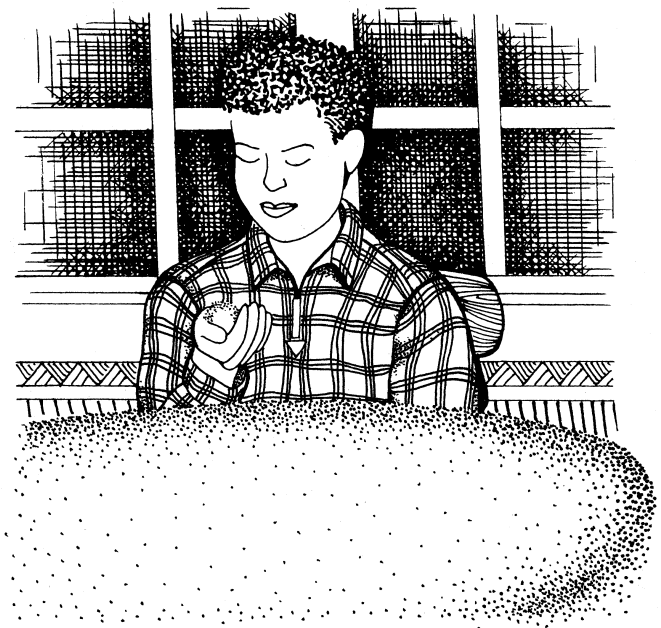
**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of memorization; Use of reflection; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- Story 3, p. 12 of this Lesson Planning Guide, p. 5 of *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, or p. 9 of *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*
- flour, brown paper, scissors, tape, glue sticks, pens

1. Read or tell the story of nothing but flour to eat. Ask the children to hold out their hands as you place in them a pinch of flour. Encourage them to taste it and imagine what it would be like if a handful of flour was all they could eat for the entire day.
2. Ask the children if they have ever been hungry, even for a short time. What does that feel like? Invite them to imagine how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His family must have felt when they had so little to eat. Invite them to consider the many children in the world today who do not have enough food. Ask them to consider how our actions to promote the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh are the most effective method for removing hunger from the world. Invite them to reflect on how the Holy Family went from riches (the story of the sheep) to poverty (the story of only flour to eat), simply because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Father, Bahá’u’lláh, accepted the Báb’s Message.
3. Share Bahá’u’lláh’s words, “Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity...” (*Gleanings*, p. 285) as an example of how the Holy Family acted, and how we should act whether we experience prosperity or adversity. Memorize this short statement.



4. Ask the children to trace the outline of their hand onto a piece of brown paper, and cut it out. Rub a glue stick in the center of the cut-outs and invite the children to sprinkle some flour on them. They may place this in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake box as a reminder of His childhood sufferings in the path of God.

## TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

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### ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF BOYS CHASING ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE:** To discern how one can use the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood to cope with the tests and difficulties in one’s own life.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of memorization; Use of Consultation; Use of manipulatives

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- stories 4 and 5, p. 12 of this Lesson Planning Guide, pp. 6-8 of *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*
- small stones for each student
- coins and cloth square for each student
- fine point permanent marking pen

1. Read or tell with great animation the stories indicated above. Ask children to share stories of a time when they saw someone being bullied or chased: What happened? How was it resolved? How did they feel?
2. Share with students Bahá’u’lláh’s Words: “Armed with the power of Thy Name, nothing can ever hurt me...” (*Prayers and Meditations*, p. 208). As a class, memorize this short passage from the Writings. Then practice saying aloud together the Greatest Name: “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!”
3. Remind the children that the powerful words that they have just memorized are within them at all times. They may recite them in their minds and hearts when they need to feel the power of Bahá’u’lláh. Ask the children to think again about their own experiences: Who can remember a time when there was a problem with bullying or chasing that was successfully resolved? What did they do? What did others do? Then list these successful strategies on the board in one or two short words such as: get help, consult, make new friends, pray, etc.
4. Let all the children have the opportunity to practice saying “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!” or reciting the short passage memorized earlier. Invite them to suggest times that they could say it out loud or silently to themselves. List these occasions on the board.
5. Gather students and give each one these items: several stones (to represent the stones thrown at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá), and several coins (to remind us of the money that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá hoped to use to buy food) wrapped in a cloth, for their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake boxes. Ask students to remember the bullying ‘Abdu’l-Bahá received as He served His family while Bahá’u’lláh was imprisoned.
6. Invite the children to select one of the successful strategies to write on one of their rocks. When they tell other people this story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, they may also describe the powerful actions that they can take to protect themselves and others from harm.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

### **ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ SEEING HIS FATHER IN THE SIYÁH-CHÁL**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood

**WISDOM OBJECTIVE:** To understand the uniqueness of the Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, even as a child, and the importance of His childhood experiences as preparation for His life of service to Bahá’u’lláh

**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES:** To analyze the childhood of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as it relates to one’s own childhood

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of art; Use of manipulatives

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- Story “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Visit to the Siyáh-Chál” on p. 13 of this Lesson Planning Guide, pp. 9-10 of *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, or p.16 of *Servant of Glory*
- metal chain cut into 6” lengths for each student (these may be purchased and cut at hardware stores)
- 10-pound bag of flour, can of coffee, or other object

1. Tell children the stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá seeing His Father in the Siyáh-Chál. You may choose to carefully lead children down a dark staircase to gently impress upon them the awfulness of the Siyáh-Chál as you describe ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s experience that day. The goal is to inspire love, not fear, from this experience. Do not frighten the children by creating a too realistic representation of the prison.
2. Invite the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Pass around a ten-pound object. Explain that the chain around Bahá’u’lláh’s neck weighed more than ten of those objects! Ask them to imagine ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s shock when he saw His Father come out of the dungeon, ill and weighed down with that heavy chain.
3. Give the children short pieces of a metal chain to be placed in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake boxes as a reminder of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to the Siyáh-Chál.





**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**  
**TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

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**ACTIVITY: USING KEEPSAKE BOXES TO TELL ABOUT ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S CHILDHOOD**

**ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE:** To be able to share stories from the childhood of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with others

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of peer teaching; Use of stories; Use of art

**SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY:** 30 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- keepsake box prepared in previous activity

1. Invite the children to work in pairs to practice sharing the stories they have learned about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood. Encourage them to use the mementos in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake box as story-telling aids and as reminders of important details in the stories. Allow time for the children to take turns sharing their boxes and talking about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with their partners.
2. Remind them that they can tell these stories to EVERYONE so that the whole world will know about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. After practice, encourage them to share these stories with a younger children’s class, at the Nineteen Day Feast, at a fireside, at a Holy Day associated with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, or simply with their friends and family members.
3. Identify when and where they will be able to share these stories with others: when friends visit their home, at school for show and tell, when they visit relatives, etc. You may need to arrange for an occasion for this to happen.



Resource Pages



Some Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Bahá’u’lláh and His lovely wife Navváb were very happy. Together they loved and served the many people who depended on them. They lived in a large house and cared for the poor, the sick, and many others. Their large house in Tíhrán was surrounded by beautiful gardens. On May 23, 1844 a baby boy was born into that happy family. His name was ‘Abbás Effendi. Today we know Him as the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.<sup>1</sup>
2. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was about seven years old, He went riding through the countryside on His Father’s land. When He met the shepherds who were caring for His Father’s sheep, they wanted to show their love for Him, so they gave Him a feast. Then the head shepherd suggested that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also might want to give the shepherds a gift. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had nothing to give them, so he said, “I will give them all the sheep.” When He got home His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, laughed and laughed. He said, “Someday the Master will give Himself away.”<sup>2</sup>
3. One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived in a big house with His mother and Father. And the next day His Father was gone, taken away to a prison. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had friends and servants who loved and cared for Him. Now He was hiding with His mother, sister, and baby brother. There had always been wonderful foods to eat, and more than enough for everyone. Now they had nothing to eat. One day His sweet mother gave ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a handful of flour because there was no bread.<sup>3</sup>
4. All of their friends were gone. The neighbors had thrown so many rocks at the house that the courtyard was filled with stones. The family had to move to a little house in a back alley and stay indoors so no one would see them. One day there was no more money or food. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was sent to His aunt’s house to ask for a few silver coins. She gave Him what she could and wrapped the coins up in a handkerchief.<sup>4</sup>
5. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had to walk a long way home. Some children began to chase Him. “Here is a Bábí,” they said. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ran and hid in a doorway. He stayed there until night came, but the mean children found Him again. They chased Him and yelled at Him. They even threw rocks at Him. He ran all the way home. His mother was very worried because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was only nine years old. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did find the way home. He was very tired and afraid, but now the family had money to buy some food.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baluzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Honnold, *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 58

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted from *Brilliant Star*, September/October 1991, adapted from *‘Abdu’l-Bahá* by H.M. Balyuzi

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*



## ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Visit to the Siyáh-Chál

from *Servant of the Glory: The Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*  
by Mary Perkins, p. 16

Bahá’u’lláh was kept in the prison for four months. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, grieving at this cruel separation, asked to be taken to the dungeon. He later recalled:

They sent me with a black servant to His blessed presence in the Prison. The warders indicated the call, and the servant carried me in on his shoulders. I saw a dark, steep place. We entered a small, narrow doorway, and went down two steps, but beyond those one could see nothing. In the middle of the stairway, all of a sudden we heard His blessed voice: ‘Do not bring Him in here’, and so they took me back. We sat outside, waiting for the prisoners to be led out. Suddenly they brought the Blessed Perfection out of the dungeon. He was chained to several others. What a chain! It was very heavy. The prisoners could only move it along with great difficulty. Sad and heart-rending it was.

Bahá’u’lláh was so ill that He could hardly walk. His hair was unkempt, His neck galled and swollen by a cruel steel collar. His body was bowed down by the weight of an appallingly heavy chain. This sight of His beloved Father so ‘haggard, disheveled, freighted with chains,’ pierced the tender heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Overcome with shock and grief, He fainted and was carried away unconscious.

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

## TOPIC: THE CHILDHOOD OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

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### LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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#### Stories and Articles:

*Brilliant Star:*

“When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Was Young” November-December 92

“The Story of Abbás Effendi” September-October 91

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 1-6

Mehrabi, Jacqueline, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 8-19

Perkins, Mary, *Servant of the Glory*, pp. 3-17

#### Music:

Sears, Hand of the Cause William, narrated by, with various artists, *Lote Tree*, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

#### Reference:

Balyuzi, H.M., *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 9-17

Phelps, Myron H., *The Master In Akká*, pp. 14-32

Ruhe, David, *Robe of Light*, pp. 57-58, 142-143

#### List other favorite resources:

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Teacher Training Center, or submit your findings to the Educational Materials web site.

# TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

## ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:  
CERTITUDE, LOVE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is himself a servant at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty and a manifestation of pure and utter servitude at the Threshold of the Almighty. He hath no other station or title, no other rank or power. This is my ultimate Purpose, my eternal Paradise, my holiest Temple and my Sadratu’l-Muntahá.

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 295*

We should teach as the Master taught. He was the perfect Exemplar of the Teachings. He proclaimed the universal truths, and, through love and wise demonstration of the universal verities of the Faith, attracted the hearts and the minds.

*Shoghi Effendi, The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 1, p. 105*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



### KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know the unique qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a leader
- To know the qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a Servant, particularly in His service to Bahá’u’lláh, to the Bahá’í community and to its expansion and development
- To know the circumstances of the final years of the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and of His passing
- To know the facts of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service to Bahá’u’lláh after the imprisonment in ‘Akká

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share quotations from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in which He describes Himself as a servant.
- Find stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá later in life that illustrate His service to others and to the Cause.
- Make a timeline and plot some of the events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life that demonstrate ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s leadership of the Bahá’í community, and as the Servant of Bahá.
- Give students an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a servant of God in today’s world.
- Create a sorting game to distinguish the events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s childhood, youth and later years.



### WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To comprehend the untiring nature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service
- To understand the way in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá balanced His life of service to meet the needs of all people
- To understand the spiritual nature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service and leadership

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite the students to imagine that they are children in the household of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and witnesses to the daily events in the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Encourage the children to collect an anthology of the stories told by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to illustrate the principles and teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

## TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

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### SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To see the events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life as the perfect example of how to live a Bahá’í life
- To realize that the qualities of leadership exhibited by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are those we should emulate
- To see the method used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to lovingly change enemies into friends as applicable to one’s own life

#### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Develop long-term class projects that identify and study the unique characteristics of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s leadership. Rotate leadership of the group so that each member can practice these qualities while the rest of the group supports and assists.
- Explore with children what it means to have balance in one’s own life and how balance affects one’s ability to take action.



### ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To begin a life of service by following the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- To emulate the leadership qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- To emulate ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s loving, understanding and wise methods of teaching the Faith
- To follow the loving example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in one’s efforts to change enemies into friends
- To recount major events from the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

#### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage students to select and emulate one quality demonstrated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (e.g., generosity, kindness to animals, courtesy, etc.). Provide opportunities for students to share incidents from the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with other members of the community.
- Encourage children to select a person they do not know well and make friends with her/him. Keep a log or diary to write about emergent thoughts and feelings during this process. Consult in small groups about the challenges and opportunities presented.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH**

Sample Activities

### **ACTIVITY: GAINING INSPIRATION FROM STORIES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S SERVICE TO OTHERS**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a Servant, particularly in His service to Bahá’u’lláh, to the Bahá’í Community and to its expansion and development

**WISDOM OBJECTIVE:** To comprehend the untiring nature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service; To understand the way in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá balanced His life of service to meet the needs of all people

**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE:** To see the events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life as the perfect example of how to live a Bahá’í life

**ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE:** To begin a life of service by following the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; To recount major events in the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Education directed towards recognition of God; Use of stories; Use of drama; Use of consultation; Use of reasoning

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 1 HR.

**Materials Needed:**

- framed photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when he was old man or the photograph before p. 1.
- copies of “A Day in the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” p. 23 for each student
- simple refreshments for each student
- dress-up clothes, simple props such as scarves, and art supplies (optional)
- story on p. 21 of this Lesson Planning Guide or copies of selected stories from *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

1. Lovingly greet the children, serve them simple refreshments, invite them to be seated – demonstrate a spirit of service.
2. Display the photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Invite the children to identify this wonderful Person; ask them if they know the meaning of the name, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá.” (Answer: Servant of Bahá’u’lláh.) Share these words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the class:  
  
“My name is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My qualification is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My reality is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My praise is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection [Bahá’u’lláh] is my glorious and refulgent diadem, and servitude to all the human race my perpetual religion...No name, no title, no mention, no commendation have I, nor will ever have, except ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This is my longing. This is my greatest yearning. This is my eternal life. This is my everlasting glory.”
3. Share the stories, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Generosity and Justice” and “Generosity,” p. 21 of this Lesson Planning Guide OR if you have the book, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, tell children that they will to read some stories demonstrating how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served others. Divide into groups of three or four, with at least one reader in each group. Give each group a copy of one of the following stories from *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* to read: “The ‘Abá” (p. 28); “The Car” (p. 33); “The Poor” (p. 35); “The Party” (p. 36); “Serving God” (p. 42).
4. If reading in small groups, ask them to return to the full group and share their stories. Then, whether discussing one story or several, explore the ways that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served others, His joy in service, and how He balanced the needs of all the people involved in the experience.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 139



## TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

5. Distribute copies of the coloring page, p. 23 of this Lesson Planning Guide, “A Day in the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká.” Read the heading and questions, and then encourage the children to work with a partner to color the people in the picture who are in need. If the illustration is too small for younger children to color, please invite them to draw their own picture of some of the people that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá loved and served.
6. Ask the class to imagine how we can serve others by following ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example. Return them to the story groups, to plan a reenactment of their story. Emphasize that they should act as if they were following ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example, instead of portraying the Master. Discuss what it would look like if you were to be the selfless servant.
7. Perform the skits for each other, possibly utilizing hats or pieces of cloth as costumes, and making simple props as needed.

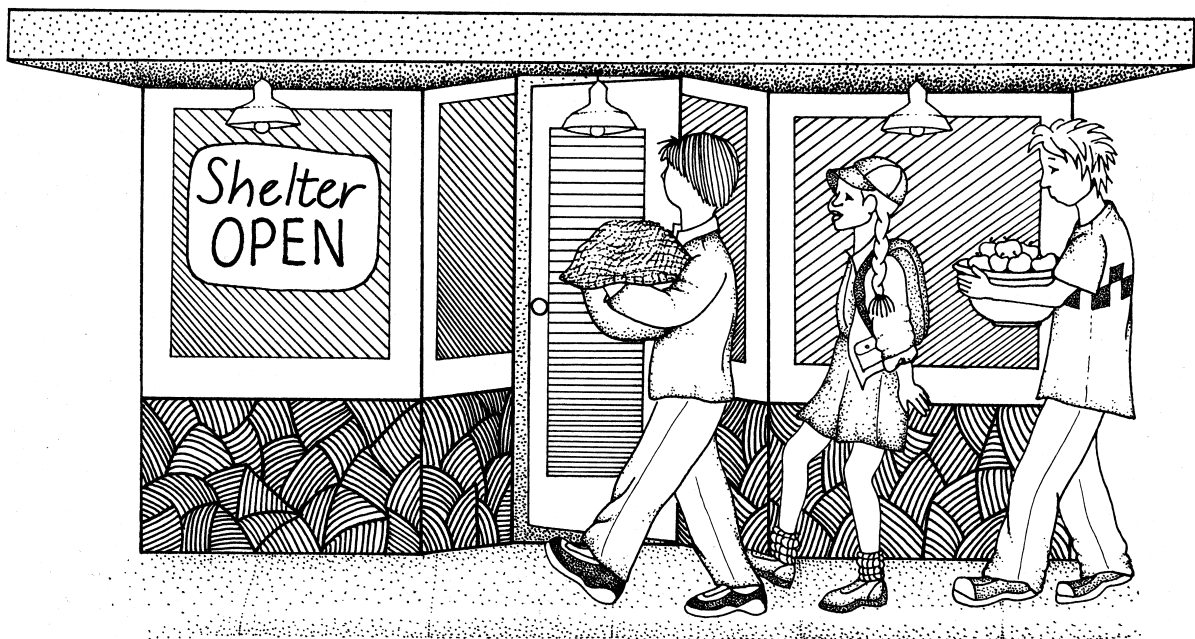
### ACTIVITY: PROVIDE SERVICE INSPIRED BY ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S EXAMPLE

**ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE:** To begin a life of service by following the example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Involve service to humanity; Use of consultation; Use of reasoning

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN. + SERVICE PROJECT

1. Consult together as a group: What are some practical ways that we can become servants to our community? Select one service project, such as providing lunch at a homeless shelter or regularly visiting a nursing home. Make a plan and carry it out in a spirit of selfless service.
2. Track your progress over time. What are you learning? What are the results of your service?
3. Describe the experience at the next Nineteen Day Feast.



**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH**

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### **ACTIVITY: GAINING INSPIRATION FROM STORIES ABOUT ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S STYLE OF LEADERSHIP**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know the unique qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a leader

**WISDOM OBJECTIVE:** To understand the spiritual nature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service and leadership

**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES:** To perceive the events in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life as the perfect example of how to live a Bahá’í life; To realize that the qualities of leadership exhibited by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are those we should emulate; To recognize the method used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to lovingly change enemies into friends as applicable to one’s own life

**ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES:** To emulate the leadership qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; To follow the loving example of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in one’s efforts to change enemies into friends

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of reflection; Use of drama; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 50 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- the story, “Justice,” on p. 21 of this Lesson Planning Guide or *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, by Jacqueline Mehrabi
- copies of the “Customs of the Kingdom” situation cards, p. 22 of this Lesson Planning Guide

1. Ask children if they know the Title that Bahá’u’lláh used for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (Answer: the Master.) Reflect for a moment upon this seeming contradiction: Bahá’u’lláh called His Son “The Master,” while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called Himself “The Servant.” How can ‘Abdu’l-Bahá be a master and a servant at the same time?
2. Either share the story “Justice,” from p. 21, OR tell the children that they will be reading some stories from the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which show how He was a leader of the Bahá’í community through love, kindness, patience, courage and complete reliance on God. Ask them, as they read the stories, to think about how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was both the Master and the Servant of Bahá’u’lláh at the same time. Take turns reading aloud in strong voices these stories from *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*: “Chains” (p. 19), “Charcoal” (p. 24), “The Boat” (p. 30).
3. In the whole group, discuss the wisdom and spiritual perception objectives listed above.
4. Tell the children that you are going to give them a chance to practice using ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s style of leadership, to role-play how to lovingly change enemies into friends. Use the situation cards from “Customs of the Kingdom,” p. 22 of this Lesson Planning Guide, or make up your own role-playing situations.
5. Divide the class into small groups to consult about each situation and create a skit to show how the situation could be resolved.
6. Encourage the children to watch for opportunities before the next class to practice emulating ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s qualities of leadership and service. Ask that they make a journal entry about the opportunity and how it was resolved to share at the next class.
7. Remember to invite the children to tell about their service at the beginning of the next class.

## TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

## Resource Pages



### ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Generosity and Justice

There are many stories of the beloved Master giving clothing to those who needed it. Sometimes He even gave away the only coat He had! In most cases the people were very grateful but sometimes a person wasn’t satisfied with the gift and wanted more. Even then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed kindness but would not let the people cheat Him.

#### Generosity

A certain lady witnessed a touching scene in Dublin, U.S.A. She was in the same inn where the Master was staying. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was out with His secretary. A poor, old man passed the inn and the Master asked the secretary to call him back. The man was not only ragged but filthy, but the Master took his hand and smiled at him. They talked together a moment, the Master taking in the whole figure – the man’s trousers hardly served their purpose. The Master laughed gently and stepped into a shadow. The street was quite deserted. He fumbled with the clothes at His waist. When He stopped, His trousers slid down, but He drew His robe around His body and handed His trousers to the poor man with a ‘May God go with you.’<sup>1</sup>

#### Justice

Economic justice, even in small matters, was important to the Master. Once in Egypt ‘Abdu’l-Bahá obtained a carriage in order that He might offer a ride to an important Páshá, who was to be His luncheon guest. When they reached their destination, the driver asked an exorbitant fee. The Master was fully aware of this and refused to pay the full amount. The driver, big and rough, grabbed His sash and ‘jerked Him back and forth,’ demanding his unfair price. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remained firm and the man eventually let go. The Master paid what He actually owed him and informed him that had he been honest, he would have received a handsome tip instead of only the fare. He then walked away.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Honnold, *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 72

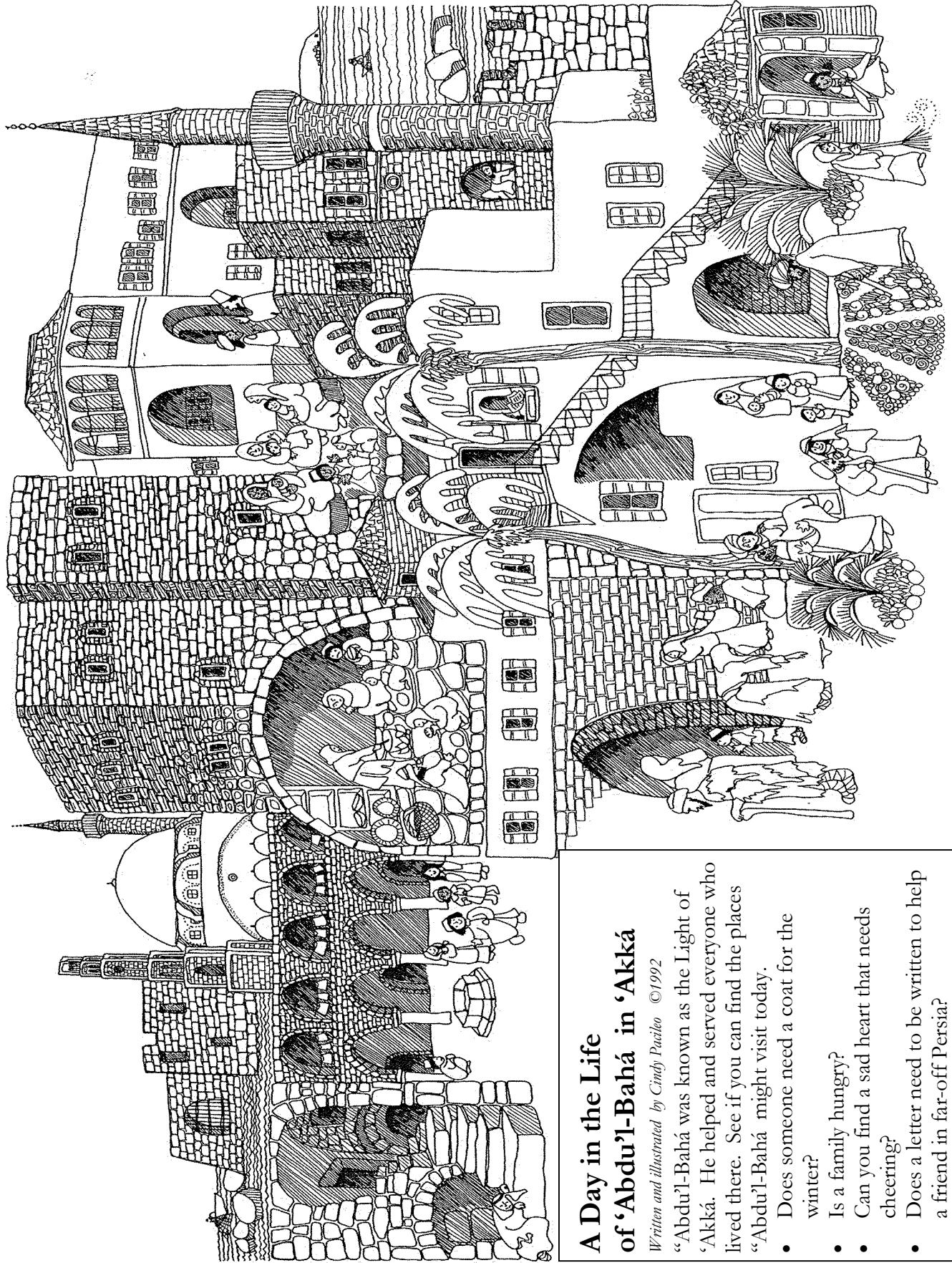
<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 94

CUSTOMS OF THE KINGDOM SITUATION CARDS

(reprinted from *Brilliant Star* magazine, Nov.-Dec. 1993)

<p>Beth and Quiana were talking in the school hallway. Rachel joined them and began to tell stories about something bad that their friend Sarah did last night. Beth starts to join in an talks about Rachel, too. What does Quiana do?</p>	<p>Sally and Geraldo want to get married, but Sally’s father doesn’t approve. Sally suggests that they elope so that her father can’t stop their marriage. What do Sally and Geraldo do?</p>
<p>Todd, the class clown, tells people a joke that puts down people in Jim’s ethnic group. Several kids start laughing. Victor sees the hurt in Jim’s eyes. What does Victor do?</p>	<p>Jessie is the only girl on the block. She wants to play soccer with the boys. Derek, the star player, says he’ll quit if they let a girl on the team. Nima has seen Jessie play soccer, and he thinks that she is pretty good. What does Nima do?</p>
<p>At the city pool Sarah and her rich friends from private school stick together. They won’t let Mary join in their game because she goes to public school. After Sarah’s friends go home, she tries to join Mary and her friends who are having a snack. Mary’s friends don’t want Sarah around. What does Mary do?</p>	<p>Miguel was the last one off the school bus. On his way out, he found a one-dollar bill in one of the seats. He knows the boys who were sitting there, but Mrs. Brown, the bus driver, told him to take the money. She said those boys would only argue about it and don’t need the money anyway. What does Miguel do?</p>

TOPIC: 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



**A Day in the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká**

*Written and illustrated by Cindy Paalbo ©1992*

"'Abdu'l-Bahá was known as the Light of 'Akká. He helped and served everyone who lived there. See if you can find the places "'Abdu'l-Bahá might visit today.

- Does someone need a coat for the winter?
- Is a family hungry?
- Can you find a sad heart that needs cheering?
- Does a letter need to be written to help a friend in far-off Persia?

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

**TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAHÁ’U’LLÁH**

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**LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

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**Stories and Articles:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“The Master’s Electrician: Curtis Kelsey” March-April 00

“Naw Ruz in ‘Akká” March-April 00

“Following the Footsteps of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” September-October 92

“Joseph Meets ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” Special Edition 92

“In the Master’s House”, “Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” November-December 92

“Light in the Darkness” November-December 94

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Blessed Master*, pp. 6-12, 18-19, 45, 80-84, 85-87

Mehrabi, Jacqueline, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 11-13, 16-17, 22-24, 27, 31

Perkins, Mary, *The Servant of the Glory*, pp. 29-40, 45-48, 52, 54-58, 63-69, 76-89, 94, 99-102, 129, 176-77, 256-290

**Worksheets and Coloring Pages:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“A Day in the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká” November-December 92

**Activities:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“Make a Frame” Special Edition 92

“No Time For Anything Else” November-December 95

**Music:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“‘Abdu’l-Bahá” November-December 92

“Reverence” November-December 95

**Drama:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“Unfriendly Governor” November-December 92

**Poetry:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“Thinking of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Funeral” November-December 92

**Reference:**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Wisdom of the Master*, pp. 7-11

Balyuzi, H.M., *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 36-37, 39-41, 43-44

Yazdi, Ali, *Blessings Beyond Measure, Recollections of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi*, pp. 14-20, 24-37

Gail, Marzieh, *Summon Up Remembrance*, pp. 108-109

Phelps, Myron H., *The Master In ‘Akká*, pp. 75-94

**List other favorite resources:**

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Teacher Training Center, or submit your findings to the Educational Materials web site.

# TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

## THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:  
LOVE, COURAGE, CERTITUDE, SACRIFICE**

...Thousands of Mashriqu’l-Adhkárs, dawning-points of praise and mentionings of God for all religionists will be built in the Orient and Occident, but this being the first one erected in the Occident has great importance. In the future there will be many here and elsewhere; in Asia, Europe, even in Africa, New Zealand and Australia; but this edifice in Chicago is of especial significance...

*‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 67-68.*

The Bahá’í House of Worship is dedicated to the praise of God. The House of Worship forms the central edifice of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár (the Dawning-place of the Praise of God), a complex which, as it unfolds in the future, will comprise in addition to the House of Worship a number of dependencies dedicated to social, humanitarian, educational, and scientific pursuits. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár as “one of the most vital institutions in the world,” and Shoghi Effendi indicates that it exemplifies in tangible form the integration of “Bahá’í worship and service.” Anticipating the future development of this institution, Shoghi Effendi envisages that the House of Worship and its dependencies “shall afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant.” In the future, Bahá’í Houses of Worship will be constructed in every town and village.

*Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Notes, pp. 190-191*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



### KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role in the construction of the first House of Worship in the West
- To know that the temple in Wilmette, Illinois, is the Mother Temple of the West, that it was the first *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* built in the Occident
- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laid the cornerstone for the Mother Temple of the West with His own hands
- To know the significance of the term *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* (Dawning-place of the Praise of God)

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Show pictures or slides of the House of Worship in Wilmette and share facts about it. Explain and discuss the meaning of the term *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*.
- Invite the students to make a list of things they already know about the House of Worship and the things they would like to know.
- Research Bahá’í literature to verify what they already know about the House of Worship and to answer their new questions.
- Discuss the meanings of the quotations inscribed above the entrances to the House of Worship. Illustrate these quotations with artwork.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between gathering in the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* for early morning prayers and gathering for early morning prayers in one’s own home.



### WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encouraged the Bahá’ís of the West in order to build the House of Worship
- To reflect on the sacrifices of the friends to build the House of Worship

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share with the class stories of the difficulties encountered by the Bahá’ís during the construction of the House of Worship.
- Learn the refrain to “The Temple Song.”
- Learn about the architect of the House of Worship and how he worked on this project.
- Make a model or drawing of the House of Worship, and add gardens and buildings to represent the supportive service agencies that will be created in the future.
- Discuss the significance of the nine entrances to the House of Worship, and other symbolic aspects of the architectural design.





## SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE

- To perceive the significance ‘Abdu’l-Bahá placed on the House of Worship for social and economic development

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Provide opportunities for students to share experiences they may have had at the House of Worship or what they think it would be like to go there.
- Share a slide show or video of the House of Worship. Describe what everyone likes best about it.
- Give students the opportunity to share what the House of Worship means to them as Bahá’ís, and what it could mean to a non-Bahá’í friend.
- Identify the types of Institutions that are part of the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*.
- Compare the functions of the Bahá’í Houses of Worship with the functions of the Houses of Worship in other religions.



## ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE

- To formulate a plan to use the theme of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Mother Temple of the West to teach the Faith

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Prepare a presentation about the House of Worship and present it to the community at a teaching activity, or to a non-Bahá’í friend or family member.
- Prepare a quiz or question-and-answer game using facts about the House of Worship. Play the game with adults in the community.
- Collect funds or plan a community fundraiser. Send contributions to the National Bahá’í Fund, specifically earmarked for the House of Worship.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST**

### **Sample Activities**

#### **ACTIVITY: A VIRTUAL TRIP TO THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP IN WILMETTE**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE:** To know ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role in the construction of the first House of Worship in the West

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of science; Use of consultation

**SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY:** 25 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

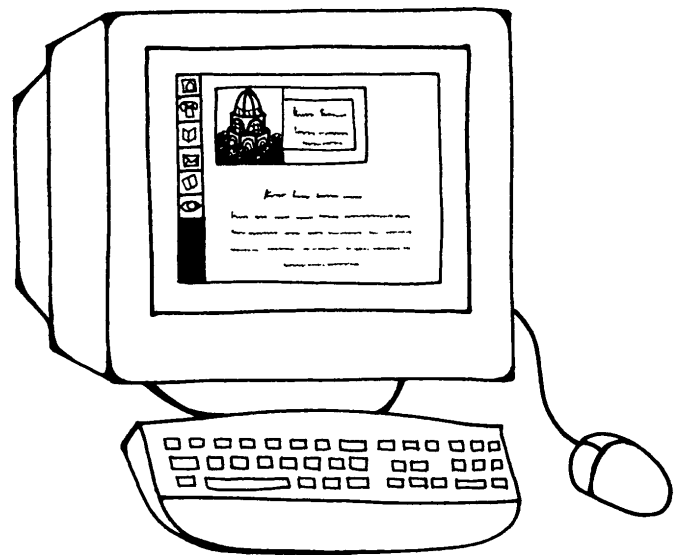
- computer with Internet access

1. Introduce the topic of the House of Worship, or *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*, by reading aloud to the children the following quotation about the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*:

Although to outward seeming the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* is a material structure, yet it hath a spiritual effect. It forgeth bonds of unity from heart to heart; it is a collective centre for men’s souls. Every city in which, during the days of the Manifestation, a temple was raised up, hath created security and constancy and peace, for such buildings were given over to the perpetual glorification of God, and only in the remembrance of God can the heart find rest. Gracious God! The edifice of the House of Worship hath a powerful influence on every phase of life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 95

2. Tell students that they will be taking a virtual trip to the Mother Temple of the West. Invite the children to respond to the questions: Where is the House of Worship in North America? Have you visited it or other Bahá’í Houses of Worship? Invite the students to describe their visits.



3. Take children to a computer with internet access.
4. Log onto the Internet.
5. Go to [www.us.bahai.org](http://www.us.bahai.org)
6. You will see a live picture of the Bahá’í House of Worship on the left sidebar. Click where it says “Click here to view the larger image.”
7. Look at of the House of Worship and identify what is seen. Look at the current view of the House of Worship: discuss what season it is, and how the scene may change at another time of year. List their answers. When the site has been sufficiently explored, log off.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**  
**TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST**

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**ACTIVITY: THE STORY OF THE BUILDING OF THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP**

**KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES:** To know ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role in the construction of the first House of Worship in the West; To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laid the cornerstone with His own hands

**WISDOM OBJECTIVE:** To understand that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encouraged the Bahá’ís of the West to build the House of Worship

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of consultation

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 35 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- pp. 34-36 of this Lesson Planning Guide
- *The Dawning Place* by Bruce Whitmore, if available
- photographs or postcards of the House of Worship for each student
- construction paper, colored cardboard or wood strips, and glue for each student

1. Inform the children that they are going to find out exactly how the House of Worship came to be. In your own words, tell the story “The Mother Temple of the West,” p. 34 of this Lesson Planning Guide.
2. Read to your students the story “Nettie Tobin and the Cornerstone,” p. 35.
3. Discuss the requisites for Houses of Worship: nine sides with nine entrances, representing openness to peoples of all religions. The number nine is also the number of Bahá.
4. Inform the children that three designs were considered for this House of Worship. If you have access to *The Dawning Place*, show the children the designs on pp. 90-93. Discuss how these designs meet the requisites.
5. Share how the Louis Bourgeois model was selected by relating the stories included on p. 36: Louis Bourgeois’ drawing the figure in the sand; his dream of seeing the dome atop the building; Mr. Bourgeois’ description of the symbolism of his design.
6. Provide each student with a photograph or postcard of the House of Worship. Provide supplies for the student to make frames for their pictures of the Mother Temple of the West.

**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST**

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**ACTIVITY: CREATE A MODEL OF THE HOUSE OF WORSHIP AND ITS DEPENDENCIES**

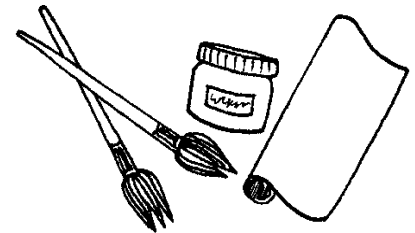
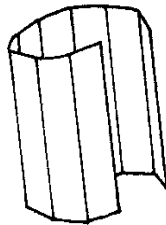
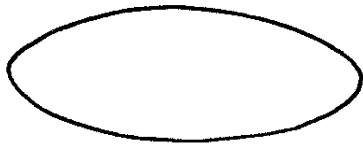
**SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE:** To perceive the significance ‘Abdu’l-Bahá placed on the House of Worship for social and economic development

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of consultation; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 1 HR.

**Materials Needed:**

- cardboard circle, 12"-14" in diameter for each student or team of students
- cardboard rectangle 8.5" x 11" for each student or team of students
- paper or plastic bowl for each student or team of students
- a variety of small boxes for each student or team of students
- foil, paper, cloth, paint
- shells, buttons, seeds, clay, dry pasta, etc.
- chalkboard or chart paper
- dictionary

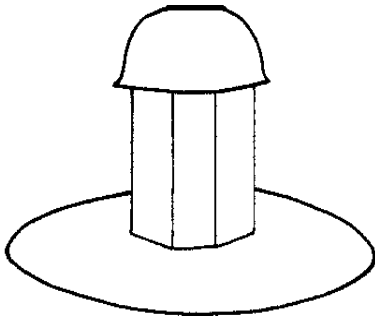


1. Invite the students to consider the meaning of the term “social development.” Discuss their ideas then ask a few students to look up the definitions of “development” and “social” and share the definitions of these words.
2. Now ask what they think “social development” means. Write an agreed-upon definition on the chalkboard or on chart paper.
3. Follow the same steps for the term “economic development.”
4. Once again refer to the quotation on p. 28 about the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*. Explain to the students that they will be constructing models of this wonderful institution ordained by Bahá’u’lláh that will foster the spiritual, social, and economic development of all people.
5. Begin with the cardboard circle, 12"-14" in diameter. This is the base of the House of Worship.

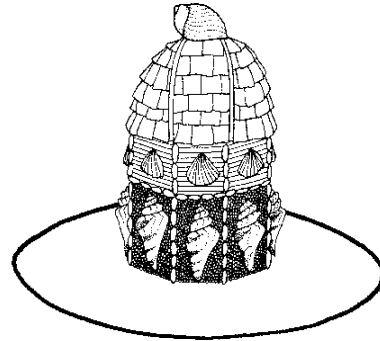
## TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST

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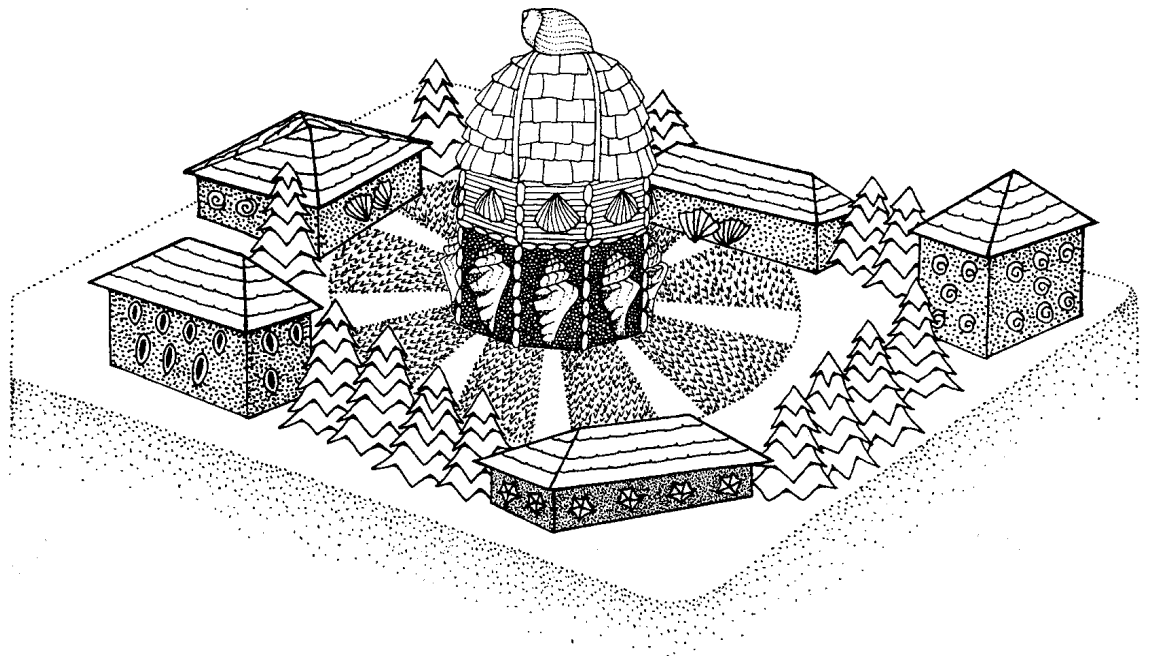
6. Then make a frame from the cardboard rectangle folded into nine sides and taped in place. Use the bowl for a dome.



7. Cover the frame with foil, paper, cloth or paint. Decorate with shells, buttons, seeds, clay, pasta, etc.



8. Add buildings made from small boxes to represent the additional buildings that will eventually surround each House of Worship – educational, social and humanitarian facilities – such as homes for the aged, schools, orphanages, and hospitals.



**GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

## **TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST**

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### **ACTIVITY: GAIN INSPIRATION FROM THE SACRIFICES OF EARLY BELIEVERS**

**WISDOM OBJECTIVE:** To understand that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encouraged the Bahá’ís of the West to build the House of Worship; To reflect on the sacrifices of the friends to build the House of Worship

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 35 MIN.

**Materials Needed:**

- stories on p. 34 of this Lesson Planning Guide or, if available, *The Dawning Place* or *Corinne True*
- nice writing paper and pens

1. Invite the students to reflect on the sacrifices it would take to build this first House of Worship in the West. Explain that many, many friends from all over the world contributed to this process and that Hand of the Cause of God Mrs. Corinne True was given special responsibility for this important project.
2. Share the short story, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá Encourages Corinne True’s Service,” p. 34 of this Lesson Planning Guide, or refer to the books cited to conduct the following discussion.
3. Invite the students to imagine themselves as Corinne True and refer to the letter from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggesting that she become involved in the building of the House of Worship. (For additional information, refer to *The Dawning Place*, pp. 22-23 or *Corinne True*, pp. 41-42.)
4. Ask the students what they would do if they received such a letter. How would they feel? What do they think Corinne True did?
5. Explain that Mrs. True dedicated all her energy to this great responsibility. Discuss with them the importance of her pilgrimage to her service. (See *The Dawning Place*, pp. 26-35 or *Corinne True*, pp. 60-61 for more information.) Explain the importance of her visits and experiences with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who not only encouraged the Bahá’ís of the West to build the House of Worship, but also promoted the principle of equality of women and men by asking Mrs. True to undertake this important service.
6. If possible, tell stories of sacrifices that Corinne True and other early believers made for the Mother Temple of the West. If you do not know these stories, refer to the books cited or invite the children to imagine the actions that it would take to build this House of Worship. Discuss their ideas.
7. Encourage the students to write a thank you letter to the early believers involved in the construction of the House of Worship. Ask the children to include pledges of the steps they are taking to make their dreams of service to the Faith come true. Provide nice writing paper and pens. If necessary, transcribe the letters of the younger children as they relate to you what they would like to say.
8. After the students have written their letters, invite the children to send them, along with a cover letter from the teacher, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, Bahá’í National Center, 1233 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201. The children may wish to include greetings to the National Spiritual Assembly in their letters. They may also wish to read their letters at the next Nineteen Day Feast before sending them to the National Spiritual Assembly.

## TOPIC: THE MOTHER TEMPLE OF THE WEST

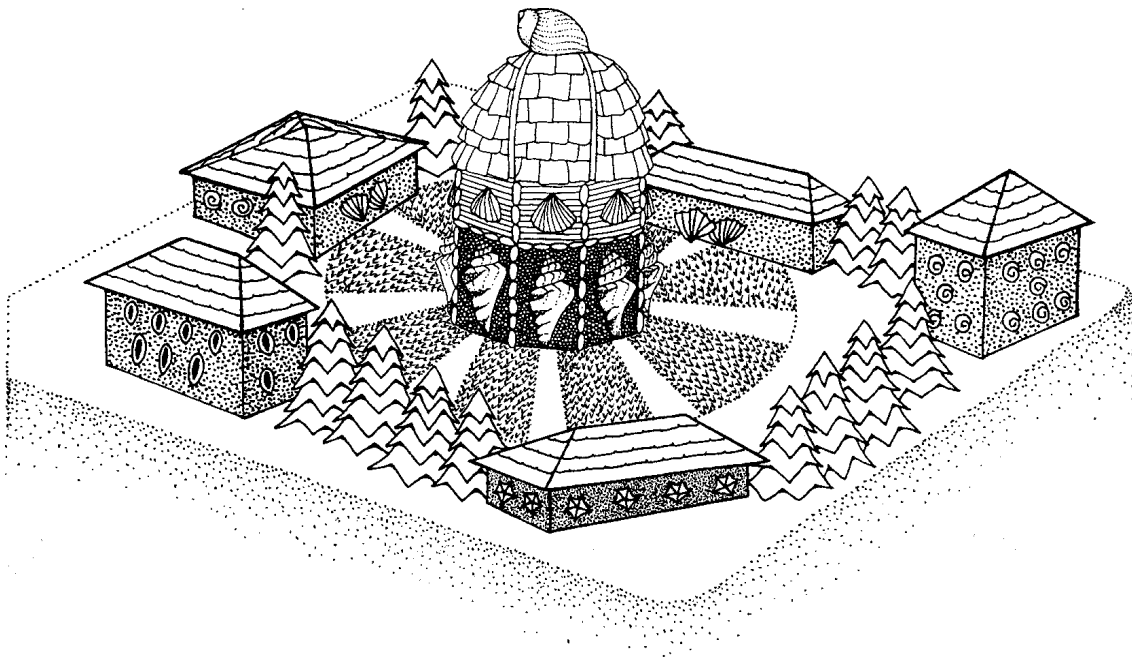
### ACTIVITY: USE THE MOTHER TEMPLE IN TEACHING ABOUT THE FAITH

**ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE:** To formulate a plan to use the theme of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Mother Temple of the West to teach the Faith

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS:** Engage the mind and heart; Use of peer teaching; Use of stories; Use of manipulatives

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN. + PRESENTATIONS

1. In teams of two, ask the children to plan and practice ways to teach their friends about the importance of the Mother Temple of the West, using either their framed photographs or postcards or the model they have just completed. These presentations may be made at firesides, Holy Day commemorations, or specially designed events.
2. Consult with children to assure that each team plans a specific time and place for their presentation: Will they share their presentations with their friends when they come to visit? Will they make a presentation for the local Bahá'í School or Nineteen Day Feast? Will they plan a fireside as a class? Are they able to take their presentation to their academic school for Show and Tell?
3. In subsequent classes, remember to invite the children to describe the presentations they have made.



Resource Pages



### The Mother Temple of the West

Nine years after the name of Bahá’u’lláh was first mentioned in North America, plans were made to build the Mother Temple of the West. Early in 1903, in Chicago, a small but dedicated group of Bahá’ís learned that the Bahá’ís in Ashkhabad, Russian Turkistan, began construction of the world’s first Bahá’í House of Worship, the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*, the Dawning-place of the Praise of God. These friends wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to beg His permission to begin construction of the first House of Worship in the West. They immediately collected more than \$1000 for this project.

That same spring ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote back. He wrote, “I was rejoiced through your endeavors in this glorious Cause, made with joy and good interest. I pray God to aid ye in exalting His Word, and in establishing the Temple of Worship, through His Grace and ancient Mercy.”

Then the friends began to work and strive until the Temple was built!<sup>1</sup>

### ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Encourages Corinne True’s Service

Eight days after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the friends in America permission to build the House of Worship, He wrote to Mrs. Corinne True, “Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with a great power from His Supreme Kingdom and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend....”

She understood that He had written “instructions about the Temple to my utter astonishment that placed a great responsibility on my shoulders.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1907, Mrs. True was able to go on Pilgrimage. There in the Holy Land, she met with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Before she could give Him a scroll signed by almost 800 believers who wanted to help build the House of Worship, He came to her, picked it up and said, “*Mashriqu’l-Adhkár!* This ... is what gives me great joy. Go back ... and work for the Temple; it is a great work, the best thing you could do, Mrs. True.”

He praised her and answered her many questions about where and how it should be built. He even described what the temple should look like, with nine sides, nine avenues radiating from the building, and nine gardens, each garden with a fountain in its center.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whitmore, *The Dawning Place*, pp. 3-5

<sup>2</sup> Rutstein, *Corinne True*, pp. 40-42

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* pp. 60-61





## Nettie Tobin and the Cornerstone

Reprinted from *The American Bahá'í*, January 19, 2002

According to *The Story of the Bahá'í Funds* (published by the National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea):

Nettie Tobin was a woman of immeasurable purity, devotion and humbleness. She was very poor and constantly struggled to provide for her two sons. In the early years of the Temple project she was very troubled because she had a great longing to contribute some small gift to the building of the Mother Temple of the West, but was unable to do so. Then one night she had a dream and heard a voice saying, “Get a stone! Get a stone! Get a stone!”



The next morning she hurried to a construction site near her home. She saw a small pile of stones near one of the walls of the new building and asked the foreman if she might have one. He replied that she could since the stones were unfit for use in the building.

Nettie returned home and contacted an elderly Persian Bahá'í to seek his assistance. They wheeled an old baby carriage to the building site and placed one of the rejected stones inside. From there they went to the car line and, despite the protests of the conductor, succeeded in getting the carriage onto the car.

They had to make two transfers on their long trip from Chicago to northern Evanston. Shortly after leaving the last car, the carriage collapsed; but Nettie was not to be prevented from reaching her goal. She saw a young boy pulling a coaster wagon and quickly persuaded him to help. Nettie, the old man and the boy placed the stone in the wagon and pulled it a very long way to the future site of the House of Worship. As they struggled to pull it to the center of the site, the wagon tipped over and the stone fell to the ground.

The stone rested on that spot until May 1912. On that day a great circular tent was pitched and many people gathered inside to hear ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speak on the importance of this first House of Worship which would be erected in the western world. After His speech was concluded, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá emerged from the tent and moved to a nearby open area, eagerly followed by the gathering. He looked about Him and saw a stone—a stone unknown to anyone, had been placed there by a devoted lady a long time before—and He chose that stone to be the permanent marker of the dedication ceremony.



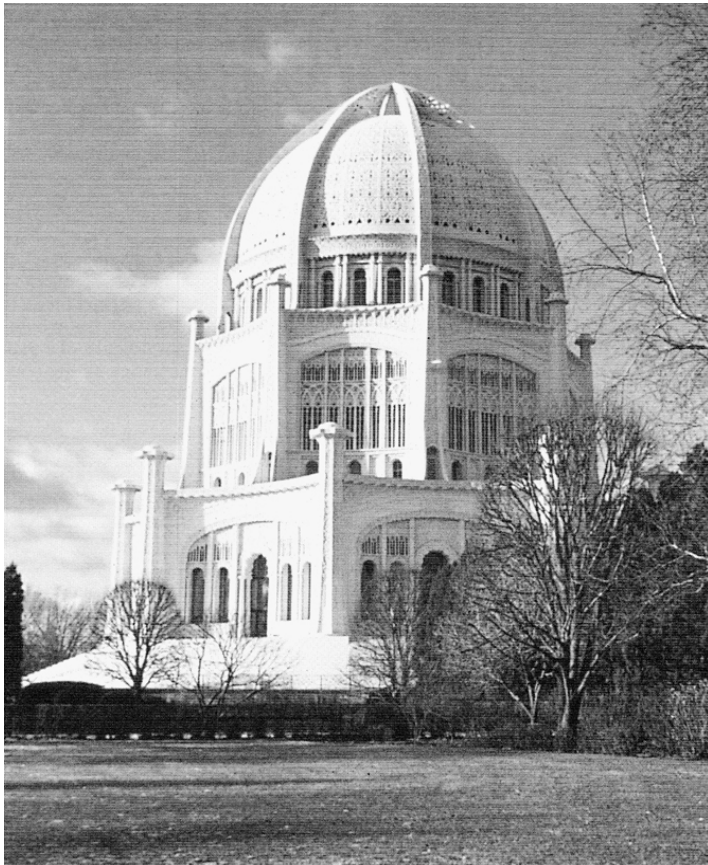
### Louis Bourgeois' Inspiration for Temple

Three excerpts from *The Dawning Place*, by Bruce Whitmore



I had been something of an amateur astronomer and had thought with wonder of the beautiful spiral curves which the heavenly bodies trace in the sky as they circle the sun in their elliptical orbits that cut each other in different planes and that move forward as the whole solar system moves.

I was standing by the seaside, and, as an inspiration made me see how these pure mathematical lines of astronomy could be worked into designs of wonderful beauty, I traced on the sand of the seashore such figures as I have wrought into the dome of that temple. (p. 78)



In another account Louis Bourgeois noted that it took him three months to find a dome that would be in satisfactory proportion to the structure below it. "I became impatient," he lamented, "and was almost frantic trying to complete the design. Then one morning I had about given up hope when, in a flash of light, I was awakened and saw the dome of this building. It was on the building. I got up and snatched a piece of wrapping paper and made a sketch of the building and the dome and then went back to bed. I arose the next morning and there I found my temple." (p. 82)

"The Bahá'í Movement," says Mr. Bourgeois, "is a fusing of the essential spiritual elements of all religions and all philosophies.... All the teachings that have held the minds of men and ennobled them are found to be very much alike in essence. The doctrines of Christ, of Buddha and of Mohammed greatly resemble each other. As with religions so it is with architecture. If you resolve the different architectural systems to their idealistic basis, laying aside all extreme forms, you will see that they harmonize so perfectly that they can be blended without one discordant note." (p. 95)

GOAL: TO KNOW ABOUT THE LIFE OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ  
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**LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

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**Stories & Articles:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“The Stone Rejected by the Builder” January-February 98

“The Rose of Love,” May-June 99

“A Carpet to the Rescue,” July-August 00

“Keeping the Bahá’í Temple Healthy,” September-October 00

“Temples of Light,” “The Cornerstone’s Tale,” “Louis Bourgeois, Genius and Mystic,” September-October 01

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 57-58, 63

Armstrong-Ingram, R. Jackson *Written in Light*, pp. 10-13, 62-63, 84-85, 106-107, 110-111, 120-121

Perkins, Mary, *Servant of the Glory*, pp. 157-158, 202-203, 232, 289

**Worksheets and Coloring Pages:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“Build Your Own Bahá’í House of Worship,” January-February 00

**Activities:**

*Brilliant Star:*

“City of Núr,” January-February 95

**Music:**

Miller, Grant Hindin, *Rivers of Light*, “*Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*”

**Poetry:**

White, Roger, *Another Song, Another Season*, “The Appointment”

**Reference:**

Balyuzi, H.M., *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 185-187, 336-337, 443-444

Rutstein, Nathan, *Corrine True*, pp. 147-150

Whitmore, Bruce, *The Dawning Place*, pp. 42-48, 49-52, 53-65, 76-86

**List other favorite resources:**

If you find any additional resources, please notify the National Teacher Training Center, or submit your findings to the Educational Materials web site.

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Page for NOTES