

**TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH
THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S TABLETS AND TALKS
ADDRESSED TO CHILDREN**

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
PRAYERFULNESS, STUDIOUSNESS, LOVE, FAITHFULNESS**

O my dear children! ... My highest wish and desire is that ye who are my children may be educated according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and may receive a Bahá'í training; that ye may each become a lighted candle in the world of humanity, may be devoted to the service of all mankind, may give up your rest and comfort, so that ye may become the cause of the tranquility of the world of creation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 141

It is incumbent upon Bahá'í children to surpass other children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have been cradled in the grace of God.

Whatever other children learn in a year, let Bahá'í children learn in a month. The heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá longeth, in its love, to find that Bahá'í young people, each and all, are known throughout the world for their intellectual attainments. There is no question but that they will exert all their efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the sciences and arts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 141

GOAL: TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S TABLETS AND TALKS

ADDRESSED TO CHILDREN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE

- To become familiar with the Tablets and talks that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to children

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell the children about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s meetings with children. Share the main themes of His Tablets and talks.
- Provide opportunities for the children to consult about what those Tablets and talks mean to them.
- Give the students time to study ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s addresses and Tablets to children.
- Assist children to create their own anthologies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets and talks addressed to children. Encourage the children to illuminate the pages in beautiful and reverent ways.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand the deep love and respect ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has for children
- To appreciate the loving concern ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had for the proper education of children
- To understand the station of children in the Bahá’í community

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell stories of some of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interactions with children.
- Encourage students to retell stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s relationships with children.
- Share passages from Bahá’í literature that describe ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s relationships with children.
- Give the students time to reflect upon the significance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s addresses and Tablets to children, and what it means to be a child in a Bahá’í community.

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SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE

- To realize the special station and responsibilities of Bahá’í children that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes in His Tablets and talks

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite the children to share their experiences as Bahá’í children.
- Help the class to list the actions ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wants them to do (e.g., strive for excellence; obey parents; study hard).
- Encourage children to develop a plan that includes goals for meeting some of the responsibilities outlined by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To strive to follow the guidance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provided in these Tablets and talks
- To recite and memorize some of these Tablets and talks

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Encourage the students to share with family members ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s special teachings for children.
- Assist the children to memorize at least one of the prayers ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed for children.
- Provide opportunities for children to achieve their goals of meeting the responsibilities outlined for them by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

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Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: SHARE STORIES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ WITH CHILDREN

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the deep love and respect ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has for children

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

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- large framed photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His later years or the photograph included before p. 1
- tray of candy, described below
- the story below or choose other stories from the List of Additional Resources

1. Lovingly gather the children around the framed photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Ask children if they know Who this wonderful Person is. Tell them that once, when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá met a group of Bahá’í children in San Francisco, California, He said, “You are all my grandchildren.” (*Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 51) Invite the children to imagine how nice it would be to have ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as one’s grandfather! Then remind them that He really IS their spiritual Grandfather.
2. Ask the children if they know what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would do when He visited children: He brought them little gifts – often candy! Bring out a beautiful tray of candies; give one to each child to enjoy as you tell them stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with children. Use the sample stories below and, if possible, add some of the other stories suggested in the List of Additional Resources.

Story 1: When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in New York City in 1912, Juliet Thomson records, “May Maxwell and I were together in the Master’s room. He was lying back on His pillow, May’s baby crawling over Him, feeding first the baby, then May and me with chocolates.”¹ That baby grew up to be Mary Maxwell, who later married the Guardian Shoghi Effendi and was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God.

Story 2: When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the Maxwell home in Montreal that same year, He told His secretary, “Today I was wasting on the *chaise lounge* in my bedroom and the door opened. The little girl came in to me and pushed my eyelids up with her small finger and said, ‘Wake up, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!’ I took her in my arms and placed her head on my chest and we both had a good sleep.”²

When Rúhíyyih Khánum repeated this story in later years she used to say that once when her mother complained to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that she was naughty, the Master had said, ‘Leave her alone. She is the essence of sweetness.’³

3. If you choose to add the story “The Black Rose,” by Anthony Lee, have chocolates on hand, to demonstrate how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá held one up to the African-American boy’s face. If you choose to tell the story of October 22 in Oakland, California, have marshmallows on hand, to give each child two handfuls. For other stories, see if it is possible to relate the story to your choice of candy for the children.

¹ Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*, p. 252

² Nakhjavani, *A Tribute to Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khanum*, p. 11

³ *ibid.*

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ACTIVITY: REVISIT/RENEW THE ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ KEEPSAKE BOX

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Tablets and talks that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to children

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the deep love and respect ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has for children

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To recite and memorize some of these Tablets and talks

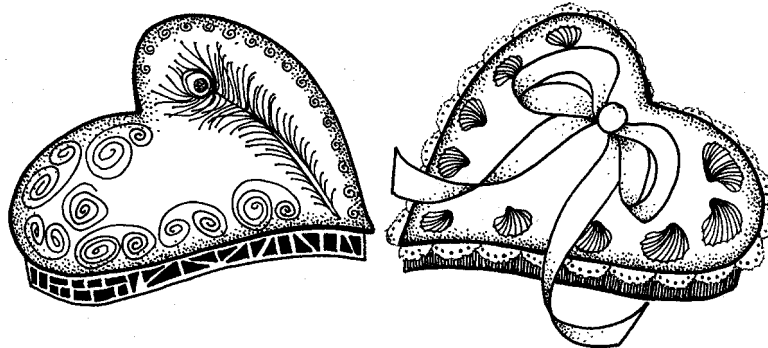
INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred Writings; Engage the mind and heart; Use of memorization and reflection; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 15 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- ask children in advance to bring from home the keepsake box made in the prior activity, p. 6. If this activity has not yet been done, it may be done at this time, or you may choose to make a second box.
- specially prepared quotations, for each student, from Tablets or prayers for children by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Some passages written by the beloved Master for or about children are included in this Lesson Planning Guide, p. 48. Other passages written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to children are included in *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 140-142. Prayers for children by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are included in *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 34-39.

1. If the children have their boxes from the previous activity, invite them to examine and share the items in their box, and to remember ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s immense love for them and all children.
2. Present to the students a few of the prayers revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for children, which you have printed in advance. Alternately, the children may carefully copy these prayers in their best handwriting. Invite individuals to read or recite these, then place the prayers in their keepsake boxes for safe-keeping.
3. Working in the whole group, or in teams of two, lead the children to memorize one of these prayers or passages. Encourage the children to recite this prayer or passage daily.
4. At the beginning of the next class, recite this prayer or passage in the whole group. Continue to incorporate it into your regular devotions as a class.



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ACTIVITY: CREATE A COLLAGE INSPIRED BY ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S TALKS TO CHILDREN

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To become familiar with the Tablets and talks that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to children

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the deep love and respect ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has for children; To understand the loving concern ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had for the proper education of children

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To recite and memorize some of these Tablets and talks

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Establish a loving environment; Engage the mind and heart; Use of stories; Use of reflection; Use of manipulatives; Use of consultation; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- photographs of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with groups of children, one sample is provided below. See the List of Additional Resources for other options.
- Story, “Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” p. 47 of this Lesson Planning Guide
- small envelope with rose petals inside for each student
- large piece of paper for mounting the collage for each student
- rich selection of collage materials, including cut-out pictures of roses, other flowers, trees, flowered wrapping paper, a variety of textured papers, and beautiful fabric scraps

1. Display photographs taken of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with gatherings of children during His visit to America.
2. Read to the children the story on p. 47. If possible, also read other stories mentioned in the List of Additional Resources. During the introduction to the story on p. 47, give each child a small envelope containing a rose petal. Encourage the children to add them later to their keepsake boxes.

Abdu’l-Bahá at the MacNutt home in Brooklyn, NY



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3. Invite the children to listen for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comparisons of children to trees, plants and beautiful roses, and His description of Bahá’u’lláh as the skilled Gardener. Ask them to close their eyes and imagine the garden scenes that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes.
4. As you conclude the stories, go to each child separately, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did in San Francisco,¹ and say, “May He bless this child.” Explain to the children that when we use the words of the beloved Master, we are not pretending to be Him, as no one can adequately portray ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When we use His words and copy His actions, we are following His example.
5. Briefly discuss the metaphors used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in this talk.
6. Invite the students to create a collage that represents the garden of humanity, inspired by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk. Encourage children to make these scenes of beauty using the materials listed above.
7. Encourage the students to select one of the short quotations on p. 48 to copy in their best handwriting to add to their collage. Encourage them to memorize this verse.
8. Invite the children to describe their completed garden collages, incorporating the memorized verse in their description. Plan to take the completed gardens to show to another class at the Bahá’í school, to the children’s parents or grandparents, or to the Nineteen Day Feast.

Remember to invite the students to recount their teaching success with their gardens during the next class.



¹ *Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 52

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ACTIVITY: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S INSTRUCTIONS FOR BAHÁ’Í CHILDREN

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To realize the special station and responsibilities of Bahá’í children that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá describes in his Tablets and talks

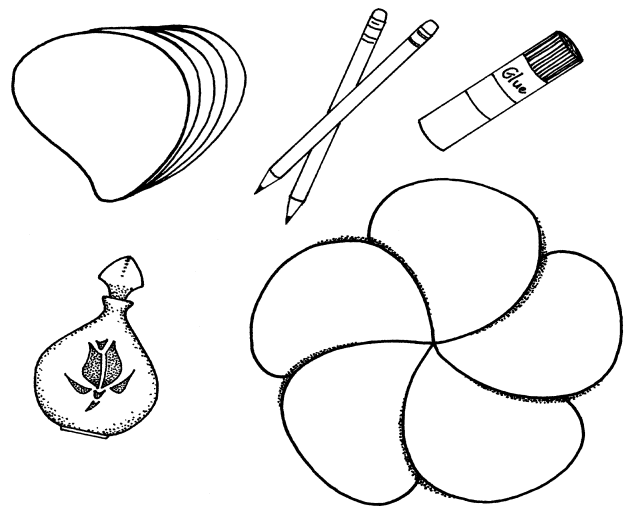
ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To strive to follow the guidance ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides in these Tablets and talks

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Direct use of the Bahá’í sacred Writings; Engage the mind and heart; Use of art; Use of reflection

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- colored paper cut in rose petal shapes for each student
- glue sticks
- rose oil or water



1. Give each child five or more colored papers cut into the shape of rose petals. Explain that you are going to explore more deeply ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talks to children and identify goals to express the special station He describes for children.
2. Remind the students that one of the ways that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed His great love for children is by giving us special instructions that we can follow. Some of these instructions are included on p. 49, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Instructions for Children.” After you read each quotation aloud, ask the students to describe actions that they can do to follow the instructions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Assist as needed to write their responses on the petal-shaped papers.
3. When several action steps have been recorded, assist the children to assemble their petals into a complete flower: use a glue stick to lightly attach overlapping edges, with ends meeting in the center, adding each petal in circular fashion. Dab a little rose oil or rose water in the center of the completed paper flower.
4. In pairs, invite the students to read again the actions they described on their petals. Then ask each student to silently select one of these actions to do every day. Ask each student to decorate the works on that petal to remind them of the promise they are making to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
5. Encourage the children to keep their pledge roses in their ‘Abdu’l-Bahá keepsake boxes to remind themselves of their promise to work toward that special station ‘Abdu’l-Bahá envisions for children.
6. Tell the students how much you have enjoyed studying with them about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and let them know the time, place and topic for the next unit of study.

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Resource Pages



Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

By Ramona Allen Brown
pp. 50-51

Later that Saturday afternoon, October 12, Helen and Ella held a party at their Oakland home for the children to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It was a lovely and amusing sight to see the little ones rush to Him. The Master would take them in His arms, kiss them, and hold them on His lap. He gave them candy and flowers. To each of us He gave an envelope containing rose petals from the Holy Shrines. The children welcomed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by singing “Softly His Voice Is Calling Now.” Then the Master spoke to the children:

What radiant children these are! How radiant! What radiant and beautiful children!

These will become very good, because they will receive Bahá’í education. They will be reared beneath the shelter of Bahá’u’lláh. They are just like fresh plants which have been sown in the Garden of Abhá. They will be reared through the heat of the Sun of Reality. Assuredly, amongst them will appear souls—most blessed souls—each one of whom will be a radiant candle in the world of humanity, souls who will shine from the Eternal Horizon even as stars shine.

They are very, very (charming) indeed—exceedingly (charming). A tree is different in its various states of development, such as when it is nigh unto fruitage, when it comes under the education of the gardener, when a fresh plant, from the very beginning is to be reared and cultured by a skilled gardener, because the latter—the fresh plant—can be educated according to the wishes of the gardener, and the gardener can train each branch just as he wishes it to grow.

Now, these children are fresh plants which have fallen into the hands of the gardener. Therefore, they will be very well educated, they will become fruitful trees; they will become very blessed trees; they will become most delectable trees. The Gardener is blessed, and the skill of the Gardener will become manifest in them.

ADDRESSED TO CHILDREN

‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S WORDS ABOUT CHILDREN

These children must be reared with infinite, loving care, and tenderly fostered in the embraces of mercy, so that they may taste the spiritual honey-sweetness of God’s love...

‘Abdu’l-Bahá,
Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 21

I hope ... that these children, reared one and all in the holy Teachings, will develop natures like unto the sweet airs that blow across the gardens of the All-Glorious, and will waft their fragrance around the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá,
Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 133

These children are even as young plants, and teaching them the prayers is as letting the rain pour down upon them, that they may wax tender and fresh, and the soft breezes of the love of God may blow over them, making them to tremble with joy.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá,
Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 139

...for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that ‘Bahá’í’ is not just a name but a truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá,
Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 143

O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness.

Bahá’í Prayers, p. 35

O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness.

Bahá’í Prayers, p. 35

O Lord! Make these children excellent plants. Let them grow and develop in the Garden of Thy Covenant, and bestow freshness and beauty through the outpourings of the clouds of the Abhá Kingdom.

Bahá’í Prayers, p. 35

O God! Educate these children. These children are the plants of Thine orchard, the flowers of Thy meadow, the roses of Thy garden. Let Thy rain fall upon them; let the Sun of Reality shine upon them with Thy love. Let Thy breeze refresh them in order that they may be trained, grow and develop, and appear in the utmost beauty. Thou art the Giver. Thou art the Compassionate.

Bahá’í Prayers, p. 34

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‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ’S INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILDREN

O ye candles which have been lighted by the fingers of the Blessed Perfection!
Praise be to God that ye are illumined by the light of knowledge and are earnestly striving to acquire noble virtues. At the threshold of the Abhá Beauty ye are regarded with favour and in the school of education ye are suckling babes at the breast of arts and sciences. I beseech God that ye may be so highly distinguished in sciences that your fame will be noised throughout all regions and your fair name will be on the lips of all enlightened people; that ye may become the means of the exaltation of the Cause of God and the exponents of the manifold blessings of the Abhá Beauty.
May the Glory of the Most Glorious rest upon you!

Bahá’í Prayers and Tablets for the Young, p. 28

God willing, thou wilt be loving and obedient to thy father and mother, kind and considerate to thy brother and sister, and wilt grow from day to day in faith and certitude.

Tablet of the Heart, p. 18

If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 159-60

Every day at first light, ye gather the Bahá’í children together and teach them the communes and prayers. This is a most praiseworthy act, and bringeth joy to the children’s hearts...

Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 139

While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 129

In a time to come, morals will degenerate to an extreme degree. It is essential that children be reared in the Bahá’í way, that they may find happiness both in this world and the next. If not, they shall be beset by sorrows and troubles, for human happiness is founded upon spiritual behaviour.

Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 127

A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well-behaved -- even though he be ignorant -- is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light.

Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 135

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LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star:

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

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

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 51-52, 56-57

Armstrong-Ingram, R. Jackson, *Written in Light, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the American Bahá’í Community 1898-1921*, pp. 18-21, 74-75, 86-87, 116-119

Honnold, Anna-Marie, *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*

Mehrabi, Jacqueline, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 29, 37

Perkins, Mary, *The Servant of the Glory*, pp. 240, 287

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star:

“If an Animal Be Sick” May-June 99

Music:

Sears, Hand of the Cause William, narrated by, with various artists, *Happy Ayyám-í-Há*, “O God! Educate These Children”

Bauman, Roya, *Love Setteth the World Aflame*, “O God, Guide Me”

Engle, Susan and Marks, Jean, *Loving Hands*, “Children’s Prayer”

Davis, Mary, *On Wings of Prayer*, “O God! Protect These Children”, “O Lord! I am a Child”, “Make This Youth Radiant”

Parrish, Paul, *Selections from the Bahá’í Writings*, “O God, Guide Me”, “O Dios, Guiame”

Mackay, Caroline, *Suite: Mothers & Angels*, “Little Sister’s Prayer”

Dozier, Eric & Friends, *To The Glory of God*, “O God, Guide Me”

Lenz, Jack, *We Are Bahá’ís*, “O God, Guide Me”

Voigt, Irish, Burough, Barrel, *We Will Have a School*, “O God, Guide Me”

Reference:

Balyuzi H.M., *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 157, 168, 181, 261, 378, 382-383, 390

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.