

**TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND
THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

**‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE EXEMPLAR
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH**

**SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
REVERENCE, OBEDIENCE, GENEROSITY, KINDNESS**

My name is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My qualification is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My reality is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My praise is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Thraldom to the Blessed Perfection 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.

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

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá’u’lláh’s peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His word, the embodiment of every Bahá’í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá’í virtue... styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 42

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is our perfect Example of how to live a Bahá’í life
- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not a Manifestation of God
- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the first person to recognize His Father’s Station
- To know some of the many titles that have been bestowed on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Center of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh, the Mirror of His Light, the Remembrance of God, the Most Mighty Branch from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Servant of God, the Mystery of God, etc.

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Tell stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and how He served others. A possible source is *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn some of the many titles given to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá through crossword puzzles, word searches, word scrambles, etc.
- Use art and craft activities to investigate the meaning of the metaphors and images used in the Titles of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Research the Writings to learn about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s early recognition of His Father’s Station.
- Read “To Live the Life,” by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Discuss what it means to us as Bahá’ís.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To understand ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s self-appointment as the Servant of Bahá
- To recognize the uniqueness of this Mystery in human history

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Make a book of stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s service to others. Draw or color a simple illustration for each story.
- Teach the song “Look at Me” and learn the chorus in Sign language.
- Discuss with the students what reasons they think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had for giving Himself the title “Servant of Bahá.” Discuss what it means to be a servant of Bahá.

TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE EXEMPLAR
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To connect an understanding of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s behavior and actions to one’s personal choices and behavior
- To reflect on the effects of our words and actions on those around us
- To realize how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s all-encompassing love and patience has aided us in bringing freedom and joy to our everyday lives
- To ponder and appreciate the divine love shown to us by Bahá’u’lláh through the appointment of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Relate the details of difficult situations that have occurred in the students’ lives. Discuss how they think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would act in similar situations.
- Create opportunities for the students to show how they think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would want us to behave.
- Discuss how it feels to serve or do special things for others, and how they respond to our actions. Point out that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá acted in certain ways regardless of the response of others. Explore why.
- Invite children to share episodes from their own lives when the example set by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá helped them decide what to do or say.
- Help the students to identify the ways that they can be the servants of Bahá.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVES

- To apply knowledge of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s responses to specific situations to one’s own behavior and choices in life

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Explore with the students ways in which they can serve others.
- Encourage the students to do one kind deed every day for someone. Record what they have done in a special journal to share with their class or family.
- Encourage the children to share the song “Look at Me” with family or community members.
- Encourage each student to teach this song to another person.

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Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: MYSTERY OF GOD SCIENCE DEMONSTRATION

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know some of the many titles that have been bestowed upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the uniqueness of this Mystery in human history

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Engage thoughts and feelings; Use of science

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- salad oil, water, food coloring, jar with tight-fitting lid
- funnels
- small glass jar with lid or sturdy Zip-Loc plastic bag for each student

1. Show students a container of salad oil and a container of water. Tell them these represent the two sides of our nature: human and divine. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water, to make it more visible. Pour some of each ingredient into a glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. Tell students this can be a model for our two natures living in the same person. Move the fluids around in the jar.
2. Help each student to make an oil and water model of their own, utilizing funnels and small glass bottles or sturdy Zip-Loc plastic bags. Encourage them to have fun moving the two elements back and forth, watching them separate, etc.
3. Tell them there is a Mystery of God that Shoghi Effendi tells us about. He tells us that in the Person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá...
“...the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.”
World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 134
4. Ask the students to imagine being able to completely blend the oil and water so that there was no visible difference between them. Point out that, in the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we can see the blending of these incompatible characteristics mentioned by Shoghi Effendi (human nature and superhuman knowledge).

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ACTIVITY: MYSTERY HUNT – ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IS THE MYSTERY OF GOD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know some of the many titles that have been bestowed upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the uniqueness of this Mystery in human history

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Employ Bahá’í literature; Use of stories; Use of games

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- **in advance**, prepare the classroom using the items listed with clues below
- small photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for each student
- candies on a tray
- glue sticks
- *Lote Tree* album or other music

1. Invite the students to act as detectives, using clues to discover the Mystery of God.
2. Explain that they are all going to work together to find each clue, taking turns to read these hints aloud. When Clue 1 is read, look for an object in the room that seems to relate to the clue. Look on it or under it for a numbered

envelope. If it’s not the number you’re looking for next, put it back! If it is the next number, open it up! Designate one student to read the clue aloud while everyone listens. Then invite the class to continue looking for the next numbered clue, until they finally discover the Mystery of God.

List of Clues and Related Items

The Mystery of God is:

- 1) “the stainless Mirror of His light”
- 2) “the unerring Interpreter of His Word”
- 3) “His most exalted handiwork”
- 4) “the Branch of Holiness”
- 5) “the Center and Pivot”

- 6) “the magic name”
- 7) “the Trust of God”

- *mirror (attach Clue 2)
- *English/Spanish or other bilingual dictionary (attach Clue 3)
- *piece of pottery, or other handcraft (attach Clue 4)
- *branch (attach Clue 5)
- *wreath, dream-catcher, or other circular object with a center (attach Clue 6)
- *top hat, wand, scarf, etc. (attach Clue 7)
- *treasure box, filled with one small photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for each student, and this message:

“He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] is...the ‘Mystery of God’ – an expression by which Bahá’u’lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which...indicates how in the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.”

Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 134

3. Ask one student to read aloud the message in this box. Reverently hand each student a photo of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Ask them to choose a special place in their prayer book – perhaps inside the front cover – to mount their photograph with a glue stick. Encourage them to choose a portion of the quotation, or one of the Titles, for

instance, “Mystery of God – ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” to write below the photograph.

4. While they work, play the song, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá” from *Lote Tree*. Pass around candies on a beautiful tray as a reward for their detective work.

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ACTIVITY: TRUST WALK – ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IS THE TRUST OF GOD

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES: To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is our perfect Example of how to live a Bahá’í life; To know some of the many titles that have been bestowed upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To connect an understanding of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s behavior and actions to one’s personal choices and behavior; To reflect upon the effects of our words and actions on those around us

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of games; Use of nature

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 30 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- cards with locations written on them
- blindfolds for half of the students

1. Introduce ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the “Trust of God,” Who provides us with “unerring guidance.” See what it is like to try to emulate Him!
2. Work in teams of two: one is blindfolded, the other will attempt to guide unerringly, with words of instruction and a guiding hand on the other’s elbow.
3. Invite the blindfolded person to select a card from the basket, which names a particular location on your Bahá’í School campus. The sighted guides must help each person arrive there safely.
4. As each pair reaches the designated spot, instruct the partners to switch roles. The new guides must safely assist their partners back to the classroom.
5. When all have reassembled in the classroom, discuss the walk: What doubts, fears, or



difficulties arose? Were there successes and feelings of safety? Remind the class that we all do our best, but only ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is perfect; He alone gives us unerring guidance and is the Perfect Exemplar. If we follow ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example, He will guide us perfectly and safely.

6. Close with the prayer “O God, guide me...”

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ACTIVITY: STORIES – ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ IS THE CENTER AND PIVOT OF THE COVENANT

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is our perfect Example of how to live a Bahá’í life

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES: To connect an understanding of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s behavior and actions to one’s personal choices and behavior; To reflect upon the effects of our words and actions on those around us; To recognize how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s all-encompassing love and patience aids us in bringing freedom and joy to our everyday lives

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To use the knowledge of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s responses to specific situations in one’s own behavior and choices in life

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Employ Bahá’í literature; Use of stories; Use of reflection; Use of art

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 50 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- crust of bread and dried slice of apple, wrapped in a cloth, for each student
- chart paper or chalkboard
- journals or writing paper for each student
- pens or pencils

1. Share the following words from Shoghi Effendi with the class:
“He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] is...the Center and Pivot of Bahá’u’lláh’s peerless and all-enfolding Covenant.”

World Order of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 134
2. Refer to the image of the “center” or “pivot” of a wheel (or of the wreath or dream-catcher used in the mystery hunt). Relate this to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role as the Center to Whom we are all to turn, a single point of unity and obedience, as opposed to dissension and everyone going their own way.
3. Divide students into groups of three or four. Assign a separate story, demonstrating the power of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example, to each group. Instruct the groups to read their stories and identify the ways in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provided guidance through His example. Stories are from *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 11 of this Lesson Planning Guide.
4. After reading the stories, encourage each group to prepare to tell the class about their story, and describe the virtues ‘Abdu’l-Bahá demonstrates in that story. As each group shares aloud with the full group, list the virtues that are identified.
5. Direct attention to the list of attributes. What is our responsibility regarding ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example? Read aloud His words:
“Another commandment I give unto you, that you love one another even as I love you...look at Me, follow Me, be as I am.”

quoted in *An Early Pilgrimage*, p. 42
6. Briefly discuss the implications concerning how we should live our lives.
7. Ask the students to sit together in a circle of chairs, each with a pencil and writing journal (or provide nice sheets of notepaper). Invite them to listen to another wonderful story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Activity continues on next page ➤

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8. Place the wrapped packages of bread crusts and apples in a basket nearby as you begin to share with them “The Present,” from *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 12 of this Lesson Planning Guide. While reading the story, do not allude to the fact that the traveler sent ‘Abdu’l-Bahá his lunch. When you reach the part of the story in which the traveler presents the cotton package, pause reading. Tell the class that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reaction to opening this parcel was exceedingly joyful, but do not reveal what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá found inside.
9. Before completing the story, hand each student one of the little packages. Explain to the children that they will find in their package exactly what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá found in His. Ask them not to open the packages.
10. Instruct students to take their chair, their journal, and their unopened package to a place where they can be alone, preferably out of sight of anyone else. When they find a private place, they are to sit on the ground facing their chair. Ask them to imagine that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is sitting in their chair. Children may then open their package to discover the present that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá received from the man. Ask students to think about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reaction, and try to understand what it was that made Him feel so happy. Invite them to write a short letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in their journal, expressing their thoughts and feelings. Encourage the students to quietly imagine how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá might respond to their individual letters.
11. After a few minutes, call everyone back to the circle and discuss the reflections of all. Encourage those who would like to share their letters to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to do so. Finish reading the story “The Present” to the children.
12. Close by singing together the song “Look At Me, Follow Me.”

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Resource Pages



Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

collected and edited by Annamarie Honnold

Encouragement

In Paris on one occasion a man from India stated frankly to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ‘My aim in life is to transmit as far as in me lies the message of Krishna to the world.’

In His loving way the Master replied: “The Message of Krishna is the message of love. All God’s prophets have brought the message of love. None has ever thought that war and hate are good. Every one agrees in saying that love and kindness are best.”

A negative approach would have hurt this man. The Master did not offer argument. Instead He showed appreciation, and thus He encouraged this devout follower of Krishna.

Selflessness

During ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s last days in America, the Bahá’ís were eager to show their love and gratitude by contributions of money, but these He refused. “I am pleased with your services,” He told them, “and I am grateful for all you have done for the members of My family. They are acceptable, but the best of all presents is the love of God which remains preserved in the treasuries of hearts. Material presents remain for a time but this lasts forever. These presents require chests and shelves for safe keeping while this is preserved in the repositories of the minds and hearts and remains eternal and immortal forever in the divine worlds. I shall, therefore, convey to them your love which is the most precious of all gifts. No one uses diamond rings in our home and no one wants rubies. That house is free from all these things.

“I, however, accept your presents but I leave them in your safe keeping with the request that you will kindly sell them and send the proceeds to the funds for the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*.”

Gentleness

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, an interpreter, and Howard Colby Ives, at that time a Unitarian minister, were alone in a reception room. Colby Ives later wrote: “‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been speaking of some Christian doctrine and His interpretation of the words of Christ was so different from the accepted one that I could not restrain an expression of remonstrance. I remember speaking with some heat: ‘How is it possible to be so sure?’ I asked, ‘No one can say with certainty what Jesus meant after all these centuries of misinterpretation and strife.’

“He intimated that it was quite possible.

“It is indicative of my spiritual turmoil and my blindness to His station, that instead of His serenity and tone of authority impressing me as warranted it drove me to actual impatience. ‘That I cannot believe,’ I exclaimed.

“I shall never forget the glance of outraged dignity the interpreter cast upon me. It was as though he would say: ‘Who are you to contradict or even to question ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!’

“But not so did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá look at me. How I thank God that it was not! He looked at me a long moment before He spoke. His calm, beautiful eyes searched my soul with such love and understanding that all my momentary heat evaporated. He smiled as winningly as a lover smiles upon his beloved, and the arms of His spirit seemed to embrace me as He said softly that I should try my way and He would try His.”

Generosity

At one time the Master had a fine cloak of Persian wool, which had been given to Him. When a poor man appealed to Him for a garment, He sent for this cloak and gave it to him. The man took it but complained, saying it was only of cotton.

“No,” ‘Abbás Effendi assured him. “it is of wool;” and to prove it He lighted a match and burned a little of the nap. The man still grumbled that it was not good. ‘Abbás Effendi reproved him for criticizing a gift, but He ended the interview by directing an attendant to give the man a *mejidi* (a coin then worth about four francs). It was observed that if someone vexed the Master, He always gave him a gift.

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Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

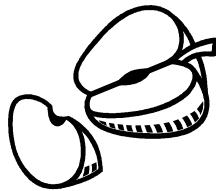
by Jacqueline Mehrabi, p. 38

The Present

The table was full of delicious food and everyone sat down to enjoy a great feast. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was there, passing the plates piled high with good things to eat. Then one of the friends gave ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a present.

It had been sent from a very poor man who lived in Russia, who gave the only thing he had to give – his dinner. It was wrapped up in a clean cotton handkerchief. Inside was a shriveled apple and a piece of dry, black bread.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá looked at the present and was very happy. He pushed His plate of food away and He ate the old apple and the hard bread and broke bits off to share with the friends.



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LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Brilliant Star:

“Q & A with Sylvia Parmalee,” “Who Is the Mystery of God?” March-April 01
“Following the Footsteps of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” September-October 92
“In the Master’s House,” “Our Shield” November-December 92
“I Want to Be Just Like You” Special Edition 96
“The Power of Example, Learning to Pray with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” September-October 98
“Admiring Nature with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” May-June 99

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. iii, 20, 27-32, 36-39, 42, 48-49, 60-71, 77-78, 84
Armstrong-Ingram, R. Jackson, *Written in Light, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the American Bahá’í Community, 1898-1921*, pp. 24-26
French, Patti Rae, *Are You Happy?*
Lee, Anthony, *The Scottish Visitors, A Story About ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Britain*
Mehrabi, Jacqueline, *Stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 27-36, 38-42, 45-47

Worksheets and Coloring Pages:

Brilliant Star: “Look at Me, Follow Me, Be as I Am” Special Edition 96

Activities:

Brilliant Star:

“Secret Servants” Special Edition 99
“If I Could Have Asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” March-April 98
“Look at Me, Follow Me, Be as I Am” Special Edition 96

“Secret Essence,” “Light Up Your World” November-December 94
“He is Our Shelter,” “Photograph of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” November-December 92

Music:

Music of the Bahá’í World Congress, “Dastam Begir, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” “Look at Me, Follow Me,” “Tribute to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”
Engle, Susan and Marks, Jean, *Loving Hands*, “Make Me More Like You”
Farrar, Gary, Heroes, *Saints and Martyrs*, “The Master”

Lenz, Jack, *The Greatest Moments*, “Walking in the Footsteps”
Narges, Narges, “Dastam Begir, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”
Sears, Hand of the Cause William, narrated by, with various artists, *Happy Ayyám-í-Há*, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá”
Spiro, Marc and Leslie, *Artists for the Arc*, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

Drama:

Herald of the South, “Heralds of the Covenant”

Poetry:

Brilliant Star: “Most Great Branch” November-December 92, “Mystery of God” Special Edition 92
Herrmann, Duane, *Voices From a Borrowed Garden*, “The Master”
White, Roger, *Another Song, Another Season, Poems and Portrayals*, “Glimpses of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” pp. 63-73

Reference:

The Dynamic Force of Example, pp. 17-25
Maxwell, May, *An Early Pilgrimage*, pp. 25-26
Townshend, George, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Master*, pp. 15-21

Wilhelm, Roy, Cobb, Stanwood and Coy, Genevieve, *In His Presence, Visits to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 61-63
Winckler, Bahíyyih Randall, *My Pilgrimage to Haifa*, November 1919, pp. 38-40

List other favorite resources:

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Page for NOTES

TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND
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‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

SPIRITUAL QUALITIES RELEVANT TO THIS TOPIC:
LOYALTY, ENTHUSIASM, STUDIOUSNESS

In accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá’u’lláh hath made the Center of the Covenant the Interpreter of His Word—a Covenant so firm and mighty that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 44

My station is the station of servitude—a servitude which is complete, pure and real, firmly established, enduring, obvious, explicitly revealed and subject to no interpretation whatever...I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted in *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 41

**TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE

- To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the One authorized by Bahá’u’lláh as the Interpreter of His Writings

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Define and discuss the word “interpret.”
- Find the statement in the Writings in which Bahá’u’lláh gives ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the authority to interpret His Writings.
- Explore with the students why we need an Interpreter for the Writings, e.g., hidden mysteries, unity.
- Assist the students to research the Writings for other references to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as Interpreter of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.



WISDOM OBJECTIVES

- To reflect upon and understand the value of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings
- To understand that no other person has the authority to interpret the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh for others, except ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
- To understand the importance of the authority of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings as the protection of the unity of the Bahá’í world community

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Invite the students to share some times when they needed someone to help them understand something.
- Reflect upon what could happen if we did not have an Interpreter for Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings.
- Find examples in the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá where He has interpreted or explained the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh.
- Explore the history of other Religions to identify the circumstances surrounding the Ascensions of the Manifestations, and how the absence of clearly appointed Interpreters resulted in the fragmentation of their followers into sects.

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH



SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVES

- To discern that the interpretations and explanations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the Bahá’í Teachings are divinely guided
- To understand that all Bahá’ís are responsible to read the Bahá’í Writings and understand them for themselves
- To see the importance of adherence to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings as essential to the unity of the Faith

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Share passages from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that refer to divine guidance and the unity of the Faith. Discuss what this means to us as Bahá’ís.
- Invite the students to attempt to explain the meaning of a complex statement or situation. Show that Bahá’u’lláh has preserved the unity of the Faith by appointing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the sole Interpreter of His Writings.
- Give the students opportunities to read passages from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and to share their own insight about the meaning of these passages.
- Encourage students to pose questions that they would like answered. Then invite them to research the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, individually and in groups, to find answers to their questions.



ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE

- To continually study the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to gain a deeper understanding of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Give the students the opportunity to become familiar with the titles of books that were written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Inspire the class to prepare readings from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Writings to share at the Nineteen Day Feast or Holy Day activities.
- Encourage the students to create a daily plan for their study of the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
- Assist the students to memorize a passage of any length from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Writings.

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

Sample Activities

ACTIVITY: SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the One authorized by Bahá’u’lláh as the Interpreter of His Writings

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the value of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Education directed towards God; Employ the Sacred Writings; Use of science; Use of reasoning

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 20 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- clear jar with one quart of water
- food coloring
- half-cup of liquid bleach
- *Some Answered Questions* by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

1. Show the students a clear jar of water. Ask them to imagine that this water is like the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, full of mysteries and hidden meanings. Then imagine that one of us has a question about a teaching, such as the relationship between soul, mind, and spirit. One by one, invite the students to symbolically add their own interpretation of soul, mind, and spirit by squeezing a drop of food coloring into the water. They may also like to state aloud their opinions on this subject. Continue until the water is highly colored by opinions and interpretations, clouding its clarity. Do not stir or shake the jar.
2. Ask, “How can we know the truth about this Teaching, when we have so many different viewpoints?” The answer: Bahá’u’lláh appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as sole Interpreter of His Laws and Teachings. In His *Will and Testament*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appointed Shoghi Effendi as the Interpreter of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings. Today, all Bahá’ís and Bahá’í Institutions still refer to these authoritative interpretations.
3. Look up the word “interpret” in the dictionary; explain how this definition applies to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.
4. Turn to *Some Answered Questions* and read ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s explanation of the relationship between soul, mind, and spirit, pp. 208-209, or another subject of your choice.
5. Turn the students’ attention back to the murky water in the jar. Watch what happens as the liquid bleach is poured in: the water gradually becomes clear! Make comparisons with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s authorized interpretation of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh: He makes it all clear, purified with His divinely given wisdom.

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

ACTIVITY: SHRINK-ART IMAGES

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the value of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of art; Use of reasoning; Study of the Writings

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- shrink-art plastic and pens (available in craft stores)
- magnifying glass
- oven

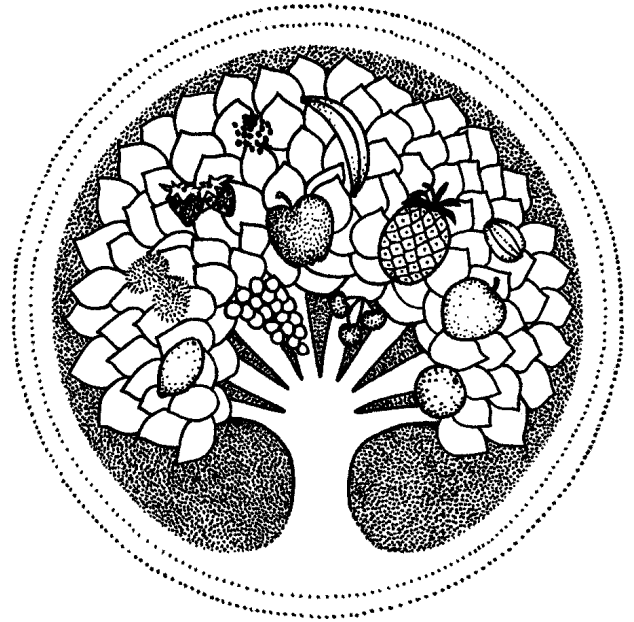
1. Give each pair of students a quotation by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that contains a visual analogy of one of Bahá’u’lláh’s Teachings. Examples from *Promulgation of Universal Peace*:

- The surface of the earth is one home... (p. 107)
- The divine Prophets are as the coming of spring...(p. 127)
- ...humanity is one family... (p. 107)
- Bahá’u’lláh has addressed the world of humanity, saying, “Verily, ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.” This signifies that the entire world of humanity is one tree. The various nations and peoples are the branches of that tree. Individual members of mankind are represented by the twigs and blossoms. (p. 373)

2. Using four-inch circles of shrink-art plastic and pens, invite them to draw a visual representation of the analogy.

3. Shrink the learners’ artwork in an oven as directed. The resulting disks will be small.

4. When ready, or at the next class session, discuss how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s analogies help us to understand Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings. Divide the students into pairs, giving each a paper with four to six quotations from Bahá’u’lláh. Instruct them to use a magnifying glass to look at the shrink-art disks to find one that magnifies or illustrates the meaning of the quotations of Bahá’u’lláh. Using the art disks as their guide, ask that they match the passages of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with those from Bahá’u’lláh. Matching examples from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* listed in corresponding order:



- Contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. Then will the effulgence of the world’s great Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and the occupants of one and the same throne. (p. 217)
 - In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendid light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors. (p. 62)
 - The incomparable Creator hath created all men from one same substance... (p. 81)
 - Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. (p. 218)
5. When finished, share the quotations of Bahá’u’lláh’s and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s corresponding images with the group.

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

ACTIVITY: RESEARCHING THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the value of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Study of the Writings; Use of reflection; Use of research

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

Materials Needed:

- photocopies of five quotations from *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh*, below
- chart paper or chalkboard

1. Remind the students that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – and after Him the Guardian – is the sole authorized Interpreter of Bahá’u’lláh’s words. Ask them why they think this is an important truth in our Faith. Record their answers on chart paper.
2. Pass out the following quotations from *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh* pertaining to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s authority as the Successor of Bahá’u’lláh and Interpreter of His Writings. As each quotation is read, ask students to look at the chart to see if the reason in the quotation is included in their list, or if it needs to be added.
3. When all quotations have been read, ask the question again and have the students give answers from their completed list.

“That ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not a Manifestation of God...though the successor of His Father...are verities which lie embedded in the specific utterances of both the Founder of our Faith and the Interpreter of His teachings.”

~ Shoghi Effendi

“My station is the station of servitude – a servitude which is complete, pure and real...and subject to no interpretation whatever...I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation.”

~ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“I am, according to the explicit texts of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the Kitáb-i-’Ahd the manifest Interpreter of the Word of God...Whoso deviates from my interpretation is a victim of his own fancy.”

~ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá’u’lláh’s peerless and all-enfolding Covenant...the unerring Interpreter of His Word...in the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge have been blended and are completely harmonized.”

~ Shoghi Effendi

“I affirm that the true meaning, the real significance, the innermost secret of these verses, of these very words, is my own servitude to the sacred Threshold of the Abhá Beauty, my complete self-effacement, my utter nothingness before Him. This is my resplendent crown, my most precious adorning...No one is permitted to give these verses any other interpretation.”

~ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

ACTIVITY: THE GAME OF TELEPHONE

WISDOM OBJECTIVE: To understand the importance of the authority of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings as the protection of the unity of the Bahá’í world community

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of games

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 25 MIN.

1. Play the game “Telephone”: Invite everyone to sit together in a circle. Instruct one student to think of a rather long statement, with many details, such as, “Nancy was going to the Nineteen Day Feast at the Bahá’í Center on Tuesday night, when her car ran out of gas in the middle of nowhere, and she saw a terrific meteor shower!” This student then starts the message by whispering it in the ear of the person sitting next to her or him. The listener then tries to repeat the message accurately, whispering it in the next person’s ear, and so on around the circle.
2. When the message is finally whispered to the last person, the person must repeat aloud this message. The student who started the message should then state the original message. The results are usually hilarious, as the final statement rarely resembles the original.
3. Ask the students if they have ever been misunderstood. Encourage volunteers to share the specifics of their misunderstanding, the feelings surrounding it, and consequences of it. In most cases, misunderstandings result in hurt feelings and negative consequences. Then ask the class to think about what might happen to the Faith if Bahá’ís misunderstood the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. List their responses.
4. Take a moment to reflect upon how important ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings is for maintaining unity and joy in the Bahá’í community.
5. After this period of silent reflection, invite several of the students to share examples of how the unerring interpretation of the Master helps the Bahá’í community stay unified and happy.



GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

ACTIVITY: INVESTIGATING THE BAHÁ’Í WEB SITE

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE: To know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the One authorized by Bahá’u’lláh as the Interpreter of His Writings

WISDOM OBJECTIVES: To understand that no other person has the authority to interpret the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh for others, except ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; To understand the importance of the authority of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings as the protection of the unity of the Bahá’í world community

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OBJECTIVE: To recognize the importance of adherence to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation of the Writings as essential to the unity of the faith

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Engage the mind and heart; Use of research

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN.

Materials Needed:

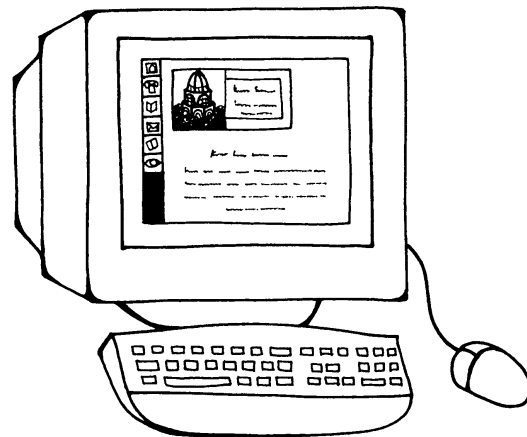
- computer with Internet access

1. Go to the Web site <http://www.bahai.org>. Select “Central Figures & Institutions” and then select “‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Center of the Covenant.” Finally select “‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Words of His Father.” Read the quotations about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Bahá’u’lláh and discuss:

- Who appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the Interpreter of Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings?
- Why is it important that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá alone be the Interpreter of the Writings after the passing of Bahá’u’lláh?
- What are some of the words Bahá’u’lláh uses to describe his Son?
- Bahá’u’lláh describes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a Sacred Branch. How is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá like the branch of a tree in His relationship with Bahá’u’lláh and with His Writings?

2. Now select “A Day in the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” and read the account there. Then explore these questions:

- Why were all those people waiting for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? How did He treat them?
- What are some of the things He taught them about the Bahá’í Faith?
- Did people need to become Bahá’ís for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to care for them?



3. Now select “The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.” Read those quotations and discuss:

- What are some of the attributes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentioned in the quotations?
- Who is speaking about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? What is the significance of this?
- Was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá perceived as the leader of the Bahá’í Faith? Why is this important for the unity of the Faith?
- One of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s titles is The Exemplar. What evidence of this title is included in the passages you just read?

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

ACTIVITY: PREPARE A TALK ON ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH’S WRITINGS

ELOQUENT SPEECH OBJECTIVE: To explain the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His Station as the Interpreter of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TOOLS: Manifest faith and thoughts in deeds; Use of memorization; Use of research

SUGGESTED TIME FOR ACTIVITY: 45 MIN. + FIRESIDE

Materials Needed:

- computer with Internet access
- shrink-art plastic and pens, oven (optional)

1. Invite the students to work in groups to compile notes of their research from the Bahá’í Web site and their answers to the questions posed in the previous activity, and to prepare a talk or fireside presentation about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s role as the Interpreter of the Faith. Ask each group to present information and insights from one of the links mentioned in the preceding activity.
2. Encourage them to consider including a participatory exercise, such as the science experiment or shrink-art match-up to illustrate their points.
3. Invite the students to share their presentations in the class and then to plan how and when to share them with others. At the next class, invite students to describe the presentations they made to others, including the response of the listeners. Encourage them to plan to continue the conversation about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with interested seekers.

GOAL: TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THE STATION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
TOPIC: ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ AS THE INTERPRETER
OF THE TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Stories & Articles:

Afshin, Mahnaz, *The Beloved Master*, pp. 92-93

Perkins, Mary, *The Servant of the Glory*, pp. 93, 106, 122, 210-211, 228

Activities:

Brilliant Star:

“I Know What ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Said” July-August 96

Reference:

Balyuzi, H.M., *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 270, 317, 494

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.