



Teaching Children's Classes

First Branch Course
of Book 3

Ruhi Institute



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Books in the Series:

Below are the current titles in the series designed by the Ruhi Institute. The books are intended to be used as the main sequence of courses in a systematic effort to enhance the capacity of youth and adults to serve their communities. The Ruhi Institute is also developing a set of courses that branch out from the third book in the series for training Bahá'í children's class teachers, as well as another set from Book 5 for raising up animators of junior youth groups. These, too, are indicated in the list below. It should be noted that the list may undergo change as experience in the field advances, and additional titles will be added as a number of curricular elements under development reach the stage where they can be made widely available.

- Book 1 *Reflections on the Life of the Spirit*
- Book 2 *Arising to Serve*
- Book 3 *Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1*
 - Teaching Children's Classes: First Branch Course of Book 3*
 - Teaching Children's Classes: Second Branch Course of Book 3*
 - Teaching Children's Classes: Third Branch Course of Book 3*
 - Teaching Children's Classes: Fourth Branch Course of Book 3*
- Book 4 *The Twin Manifestations*
- Book 5 *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth*
 - Initial Impulse: The first branch course of Book 5*
 - Widening Circle: The second branch course of Book 5*
- Book 6 *Teaching the Cause*
- Book 7 *Walking Together on a Path of Service*
- Book 8 *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*
- Book 9 *Gaining an Historical Perspective*
- Book 10 *Building Vibrant Communities*
- Book 11 *Material Means*
- Book 12 *Family and the Community*
- Book 13 *Engaging in Social Action*
- Book 14 *Participating in Public Discourse*

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A Few Thoughts for the Tutor

Branching off from the third book in the Ruhi Institute’s main sequence, this course is intended for those who, having taught youngsters in the first year of a program for their spiritual education, have chosen to dedicate themselves to this field of service. It is the first in a series of courses that will address the aim and content of lessons that children will study following Grade 1. It is envisioned that, after completing this specialized series of courses and conducting the corresponding lessons, teachers will have gained a great deal of insight into what it takes to foster the spiritual development of the young and will have strengthened the skills and abilities, qualities and attitudes, needed to act effectively in this field. Equally important, they will form part of a corps of teachers that can be mobilized by institutes to sustain an expanding system for child education in their regions, one that can accommodate a growing number of youngsters in different age groups from a variety of backgrounds whose parents are, invariably, eager for them to start out their lives on a sound moral footing. Those who serve as tutors of this and subsequent courses will be able to bring to their study, then, an invaluable trove of practical knowledge drawn from the vast pool of experience thus being created.

It is suggested that, in preparing to guide a group through these pages, every tutor review the introductory remarks in Book 3, *Teaching Children’s Classes, Grade 1*, which describe the Ruhi Institute’s program for the spiritual education of children and discuss some of the principles and concepts that give it shape. This course, together with the next one, further develop a core concept introduced in Book 3—that those gem-like qualities that children are to mirror forth can best be seen as faculties of the human soul, as permanent structures on which a noble and upright character is built. It is this fundamental conviction that distinguishes the program from other educational approaches, which view the development of a goodly character primarily in terms of behavior modification, and that informs the sequencing of content across the entire program.

This branch course and the one that follows focus on those habits and patterns of conduct that give expression to the inner spiritual qualities explored in Grade 1. In this sense, though the question of behavior is addressed, it is, in fact, the dynamic relationship between the development of spiritual qualities and the formation of attitudes and habits that is the real concern of the material presented to teachers. They will need, above all, to keep this dynamic relationship in mind.

Indeed, the first unit of this book, “Love of His Beauty”, begins by asking teachers to reflect on their experience in conducting classes for children in Grade 1 and on some of the insights they gained into the educational process fostered by its twenty-four lessons, each structured around a particular spiritual quality. On this basis, the unit introduces several inter-related themes that, among the exhortations found in the Writings of the Faith, point to those patterns of thought and conduct that an educational process should nurture in the young. The remainder of the unit is given over to an exploration of three such themes that address ideas fundamental to the relationship between human beings and their Creator—turning to God in

prayer, adhering to the laws of God, and seeking knowledge. It is hoped that study of the unit will help teachers deepen and consolidate their own understanding of relevant concepts, before considering the lessons, included in the second unit, that are elaborated around these same themes.

In addition to nine lessons for children, arranged into three sets, the second unit contains preparatory sections for teachers to analyze their content. The core components of these lessons remain the same as those for the first grade. Each lesson revolves around several key concepts related to the overarching theme of the set, which are outlined in the paragraphs that introduce the quotation for memorization. Teachers will need to rely on their experience in teaching Grade 1 and apply the insights they acquired in studying the first unit here, as they determine how to explain the relevant ideas to their students. To assist them, a series of questions for every set of lessons is provided in the preparatory material, and the tutor should make sure that participants adequately explore them together. The understanding they gain will be called upon not only in introducing the central concepts of the lessons but also in carrying out the other components, all of which will, in some way, reinforce what the children are learning. Most notably, like the quotations for memorization, stories remain one of the core elements of these lessons, and this period of the class will offer teachers an opportunity to engage children in a discussion of concepts, at an appropriate level.

As for the other components, there are certain differences between these lessons and those in Grade 1 that should be mentioned. Instead of cooperative games, children will engage in activities to develop their skills in creative drama. In parallel, their skills and abilities related to the visual arts will be taken further through activities that, building on coloring, explore three basic elements of art—line, shape, and texture. Though more complex than those in Grade 1, the activities in these two areas are designed in such a way that they will draw naturally on a teacher's experience in working with his or her students the previous year. A tutor will clearly want to help participants in the course think through how they will manage the art and drama activities, but this should not divert their focus from the central components of the lessons.

It should be noted that some supplies and resources will be needed for the drawing and art activities, including copies of art sheets, which are appended at the end of the second unit. For ease of reference, they can be downloaded by teachers from the website of the Ruhi Institute. Also available there is a collection of some seventy songs, along with their recordings, to assist teachers in identifying a few to sing in each lesson that will reinforce its central ideas. Of course, teachers should by no means limit themselves to the songs found in the collection, and they should be encouraged to look to songs from their local culture as well.

Finally, a few words should be said about how it is envisioned the material provided in each lesson will be offered. The content in each of the lessons here and in subsequent branch courses is quite extensive, and it is intended to be spread across several class periods. As mentioned in Section 33 of the second unit, this will require that teachers establish a suitable rhythm of activity in every session, while maintaining focus on the central themes under discussion. In this, the tutor should be able to share a great deal of practical knowledge garnered from the field. There is, then, some degree of flexibility in the delivery of content, which, it is hoped, will enable teachers to respond to their particular circumstances, in a dynamic way, as children move from one set of lessons to the next.



Love of His Beauty

Purpose

To enable teachers to reflect on their experience in conducting classes for children in the first year of a six-year program for their spiritual education and to explore three themes, gleaned from the Writings of the Faith, that shed light on our relationship with our Creator and on the habits and pattern of conduct that are a manifestation of the spiritual qualities addressed in Grade 1

SECTION 1

It is assumed that you, like others taking up the study of this book, *Teaching Children's Classes: First Branch Course of Book 3*, have already gained valuable experience in this field of service, having spent a joyful year working with youngsters in Grade 1. As you know, each lesson in that grade is structured around a particular spiritual quality, with the aim of contributing to the development of the character of children. In this and the next branch course, you will explore a series of themes around which several sets of lessons have been elaborated for teaching children, generally between the ages of 6 and 8, who have completed the first year of a six-year program for their spiritual education. These lessons seek to establish the habits and pattern of conduct that are a manifestation of the inner qualities taking root in the children's hearts and minds. Each set addresses some aspect of the praiseworthy conduct you will strive to reinforce in them.

Both branch courses consist of two units. The first unit is dedicated to an exploration of the themes themselves, to provide teachers with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of key related concepts. The second unit contains the lessons, divided into sets of three. There are three sets in this course and four in the next, for a total of twenty-one lessons. These twenty-one lessons are similar in structure to those found in Grade 1. There are, however, a few slight variations in the elements of the curriculum, which are discussed in the preparatory sections for teachers, also included in the second unit. In studying these two branch courses, participants are encouraged along the way to reflect on the insights they have acquired thus far in this area of endeavor, strengthening the foundation on which they will continue their efforts to impart spiritual education to the young.

SECTION 2

As you will remember, the first unit of Book 3 examines some of the main concepts and principles that shape the Ruhi Institute's program for the spiritual education of children. Let us review them again here in light of your experience.

1. To gain insights into the potentialities latent in children, we focused our attention on the analogy, found in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, of a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Spiritual qualities, such as purity and truthfulness, and the powers of the human mind to discover the mysteries of nature, produce beautiful works of art, and express noble and uplifting thoughts, we said, are among those gems that proper education should foster. Think of your students and mention some of the gems that you uncovered in them.

2. Two other important concepts introduced in the first unit of Book 3 were those of the love of God and the fear of God. Children need to learn that we have been created out of the infinite love of God and that we are continually nurtured and protected by it. Fear that this love will not reach us if we disobey Him keeps us on the straight path. How did you try to nurture these two fundamental sentiments of the human heart in your students? How convinced are you now of their centrality to the development of a praiseworthy character in children?

3. In that unit, we mentioned that spiritual education draws on the force of attraction to beauty. Fostering spiritual qualities in children gives proper direction to this force; it attracts their hearts towards the beauty of a good character, the beauty inherent in the Sacred Word, the beauty of exemplary conduct, the beauty of lofty thoughts and, most importantly, the Beauty of the All-Glorious. Did the memorization of the Sacred Word and listening to the stories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá nurture in your students this attraction? What changes did you notice in their words and conduct that indicated an increased attraction to beauty?

4. We also discussed that, in assisting children to acquire a praiseworthy character and an upright conduct, you will of course be mindful of their behavior. Nevertheless, you were cautioned not to reduce the task of nurturing the latent capacities of children to the modification of behavior. The attitudes and habits which are aspects of a commendable character will only take root if they are the manifestations of spiritual qualities, those fundamental attributes of the human soul essential for our eternal journey towards God. Write below some of the insights you gained into the dynamics of such qualities, as you engaged the students in the various activities of the lessons in Grade 1, each of which revolved around one spiritual quality. Then make a list of some of the habits and attitudes the children in your class began to form as their understanding of the corresponding spiritual qualities was enhanced. In carrying out this exercise, consider, too, how your own understanding of these qualities, based on the Writings of the Faith, gradually increased and how your efforts to manifest them affected your interactions with the children.

Having gone through the above exercises, discuss your answers with the members of the group with whom you are studying this course.

SECTION 3

The last exercise in the previous section reminded us that the kind of training and instruction the young ones in the community receive should not focus solely on the modification of behavior. Rather it must be primarily concerned with the development of spiritual qualities, qualities that, manifesting their brilliance in words and deeds, serve as the basis on which desirable attitudes and habits are formed. Proper education, therefore, should give rise to certain patterns of thought and conduct through which the beauty of an upright and noble character can be seen. Several interconnected themes among the exhortations found in the Writings of the Faith give us an indication of what strengthens the appropriate patterns of thought and conduct in children. These include turning to God in prayer, adhering to the laws of God, seeking knowledge, living in harmony with others, respecting human dignity, being a good friend, and devoting one's life to service. The first three themes, addressing ideas fundamental to the relationship of the individual with God, are taken up in this branch course. The next four themes, concerning the relationships one establishes with one's fellow human beings, will be the subject of the second branch course.

You may wish to pause for a moment to consider why deliberation on the following three themes, each the focus of one set, is essential to any effort that seeks to contribute to the development of a praiseworthy character in children. Write down some of your thoughts in the spaces provided:

Turning to God in prayer: _____

Adhering to the laws of God: _____

Seeking knowledge: _____

SECTION 4

The theme of Set 1, turning to God in prayer, is not new to you. In Grade 1, you were encouraged to speak to the children, whenever occasion permitted, about the purpose and significance of prayer in a language that was accessible to them. You also organized the classes so that they opened and came to a close with prayers, often recited by the children from those they had committed to memory. Your own growing understanding of the nature of prayer, enhanced by study of the courses of the main sequence, including the first unit of Book 3, has

no doubt contributed to your ability to nurture the children in your care at the breast of the love of God and to awaken in them the desire to turn continually towards God in supplication. As you have done so, the following two quotations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have surely been in the forefront of your mind:

“The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence.”¹

“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.”²

In building upon what was achieved in the previous year, you should remember that, before all else, it is the love of God that motivates us to pray, for when we do so we express our longing to speak to our Beloved. At the same time, the act of prayer itself fans the flame of the love of God in our hearts and increases our attraction to His Beauty. Let us reflect on the following quotation:

“Know thou that it belongeth to the weak to make entreaty to the Source of strength, and that it becometh the petitioner of heavenly grace to humbly supplicate to Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Lord of grace abounding. Whosoever the worshipper communeth with his Lord, turneth wholly unto Him, and supplicateth some portion of His boundless grace, then this very act of supplication is a light unto his heart, a collyrium unto his eye, a source of life unto his soul, and a cause of exaltation unto his being. Observe then how, when thou dost thyself commune with God and recitest ‘Thy Name is my healing’, thy heart is thrilled, thy soul transported with the rapture of the love of God, and thy spirit drawn towards His heavenly Kingdom. Through these sensations, moreover, thy receptive capacity is increased, and the more capacious the container, the more copious its contents; the more vehement one’s thirst, the sweeter in one’s palate the outpouring bounty of the cloud. This is the mystery of supplication; this is the wisdom of praying for the fulfillment of one’s needs.”³

To think about how you will help the children further their understanding of the nature of prayer and its significance, decide whether the following statements are true. Do not be content with simply answering each one but discuss its implications with the other members of your study group.

_____ Thinking about prayer as conversation with God creates in children the desire to pray.

_____ Understanding what prayer signifies creates in children the desire to pray.

_____ Understanding what prayer signifies helps children to develop the habit of reciting prayers daily.

_____ The children’s love of God will motivate them to pray daily.

- _____ The children’s fear of displeasing God will motivate them to pray daily.
- _____ One’s understanding of the nature of prayer must continually advance as one grows, if the habit of daily prayer is to be sustained over a lifetime.
- _____ For the habit of prayer to be established on a sound basis and to be sustained over a lifetime, it is essential to nurture the love of God in one’s heart.
- _____ It is only befitting that, in seeking God’s bounty through our prayers, we should acknowledge our weakness and testify to God’s strength.
- _____ The habit of supplicating God in prayer helps children acquire true humility, an essential attribute of a noble character.
- _____ Supplicating God in prayer kindles the fire of His love in the hearts of the children.
- _____ Just as the rain refreshes young plants, the recitation of prayers in melodious tones refreshes the tender hearts of children.
- _____ The habit of turning to God in prayer develops spiritual perception and intellectual acuity.
- _____ Prayer is a channel through which we receive divine blessings.
- _____ Supplicating God in prayer increases our capacity to receive His gifts and bounties.
- _____ Children need to understand that prayer nourishes their souls.
- _____ Reciting prayers cheers the hearts and delights the souls of children.

The last quotation above impresses upon us the fact that prayer and supplication to God release human potentiality. Human capacity increases through the power of divine attraction. The greater the intensity of our thirst, the larger will become the receptacle by which we receive God’s bounty and grace. Discuss with the other members in your group the implication of this idea for the spiritual development of children. Write some of your conclusions in the space below.

SECTION 5

True knowledge and understanding, spiritual and intellectual perception, keen intellect and wisdom are among the gifts that God has deposited within human reality. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that prayer engenders “the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence”. Should we not be assured, then, that by developing the habit of turning to God in prayer a child’s capacity to receive these bounties will increase manifold?

The following passages give us insights into the measureless gifts which God has conferred upon the human being:

“First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding.”⁴

“Say: In this day, the fertilizing winds of the grace of God have passed over all things. Every creature hath been endowed with all the potentialities it can carry. . . . Every tree hath been endowed with the choicest fruits, every ocean enriched with the most luminous gems. Man, himself, hath been invested with the gifts of understanding and knowledge.”⁵

“Intellect is, in truth, the most precious gift bestowed upon man by the Divine Bounty. Man alone, among created beings, has this wonderful power.”⁶

“This light of the intellect is the highest light that exists, for it is born of the *Light Divine*.”⁷

Reflect on the above passages by filling in the blanks in the sentences below.

- a. _____ and _____ among the _____ that the Almighty has _____ upon humanity is the gift of _____ .
- b. In this _____ , the _____ winds of the _____ have _____ over all _____. Every _____ has been _____ with all the _____ it can carry.
- c. Every _____ has been _____ with the _____ , every ocean _____ with the most _____. Every human being has been _____ with the _____ of _____ and _____ .

- d. _____ is, in truth, the _____ gift _____ upon man by the _____. The human being _____, among _____, has this wonderful _____.
- e. This _____ of the _____ is the _____ light that exists, for it is _____ of the _____.

That our inner sight may be opened and that we may thus become recipients of myriad bounties, such as the ones mentioned above, is a main theme of numerous prayers revealed by the Central Figures of the Faith:

“Brighten our hearts, O my Lord, with the splendor of Thy knowledge, and illumine our sight with the light of such eyes as are fixed upon the horizon of Thy grace and the Dayspring of Thy glory.”⁸

“Grant, O my God, that I may not be reckoned among those whose ears are deaf, whose eyes are blind, whose tongues are speechless and whose hearts have failed to comprehend.”⁹

“Illumine our hearts, grant us discerning eyes and attentive ears.”¹⁰

SECTION 6

As the love of God grows in the hearts of children through prayer, so does their longing to acquire heavenly qualities and perfections. When the mirror of the heart is polished time and again with the burnish of divine love, it will be able to reflect with ever-growing brilliance the attributes of God—those qualities that were the focus of the lessons you taught in Grade 1. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states in this regard:

“The love of God is spoken of as fire, for it burneth away the veils, and as water, for it is the source of life. In short, the love of God is the inmost reality of the virtues of the world of humanity. Through it, human nature is purified. Through the love of God, one is delivered from the defects of the human world. Through the love of God, one maketh progress in the realm of virtues. The love of God is the cause of the illumination of the world.”¹¹

Take a moment now to reflect on your own experience and discuss the following question with the members of your group: Why is strengthening the habit of praying regularly so vital to the development of spiritual qualities in children? Below is some space for you to write down some of your conclusions.

Your reflections must have given you fresh insights into the influence prayer exerts on the character of children. To explore this important concept further, let us take the example of a few specific qualities and consider how the habit of praying regularly fosters their development. To this end, several excerpts from the prayers and Writings of the Faith, some of which are already familiar to you from your study of Book 3, have been selected and organized below into three sets. Reflect on the quotations in each set, which shed light on a particular spiritual quality, and discuss the statements that follow them. You are then encouraged to write in the spaces provided a few similar statements that describe how communion with God fosters in children the development of the quality under consideration.

“For when the true lover and devoted friend reacheth the presence of the Beloved, the radiant beauty of the Loved One and the fire of the lover’s heart will kindle a blaze and burn away all veils and wrappings.”¹²

“Should there be ignited in thy heart the burning brand of the love of God, thou wouldst seek neither rest nor composure, neither laughter nor repose, but wouldst hasten to scale the highest summits in the realms of divine nearness, sanctity, and beauty.”¹³

“Burn thou brightly with the flame of this undying Fire which the All-Merciful hath ignited in the midmost heart of creation, that through thee the heat of His love may be kindled within the hearts of His favored ones. Follow in My way and enrapture the hearts of men through remembrance of Me, the Almighty, the Most Exalted.”¹⁴

- The moments children dedicate to prayer are the sweetest because conversing with God enkindles the fire of divine love within their hearts.
- The habit of praying regularly keeps the fire of the love of God burning brightly in the hearts of children.
- The fire of love that communion with God enkindles in the hearts of children enables them to impart warmth and love to others.

“Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful.”¹⁵

“Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I give Thee thanks inasmuch as Thou hast called me into being in Thy days, and infused into me Thy love and Thy knowledge.”¹⁶

“Wherefore, be thankful to God, for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thine heart. Thus hath His grace encompassed thee, and encompassed the whole of creation.”¹⁷

“The truth is that God has endowed man with virtues, powers and ideal faculties of which nature is entirely bereft and by which man is elevated, distinguished and superior. We must thank God for these bestowals, for these powers He has given us, for this crown He has placed upon our heads.”¹⁸

- Prayers revealed by the Central Figures of the Faith remind children of the manifold bounties God has showered upon them, for each one of which they must be thankful.
- The habit of prayer creates in the hearts of children a profound sense of thankfulness for receiving God’s love and drawing closer to Him.
- Prayer engenders profound thankfulness in children for all the powers and virtues God has bestowed on them.

“Close thine eyes to this nether world, open them to the countenance of the incomparable Friend, and commune intimately with His Spirit.”¹⁹

“Say: Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it.”²⁰

“Commune with the remembrance of the Friend and shun the enemy. Your enemy is such things as ye have acquired of your own inclination, to which ye have firmly clung, and whereby ye have sullied your souls. The soul hath been created for the remembrance of the Friend; safeguard its purity.”²¹

“O servants! Pleasant is the utterance of the Friend: Where is the soul who will taste its sweetness, and where is the ear that will hearken unto it? Well is it with him who, in this day, communeth with the Friend and in His path renounceth and forsaketh all save Him, that he may behold a new world and gain admittance to the everlasting paradise.”²²

- The habit of praying helps children detach themselves from the unpleasant things of this world and place their complete reliance on God.
- Communion with God cleanses the hearts of children from unworthy thoughts and desires.
- The fire of divine love that prayer ignites within the hearts of children burns away the veil of self and passion.

Reflecting on the above quotations will have helped you to see not only how the spiritual qualities of enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment should be present in moments that we converse with God but also how the habit of praying fosters the development of these qualities. No doubt there are many other qualities that have this dynamic relationship with prayer. Mention a few and discuss how children can learn to manifest them through communion with God and how the habit of daily prayer serves as a potent means for their development.

SECTION 7

In your efforts to help the children in your class further their understanding of the power of prayer, you will naturally speak of its effects. They should know that we can implore God to fulfill our sincere wishes for ourselves and for others; we can beseech Him to, among other things, protect us, sustain us, dispel our sorrows, remove our difficulties and ordeals, heal the sick, comfort the bereaved, unite the hearts, aid those in need, and confirm His loved ones in their efforts to serve the Cause and humanity. Passages such as the following from prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are a small sampling of such invocations:

“Shelter under Thy protection, O Thou Spirit of purity, Thou Who art the All-Bountiful Provider, this enthralled, enkindled servant of Thine.”²³

“Lord! Pitiful are we, grant us Thy favor; poor, bestow upon us a share from the ocean of Thy wealth; needy, do Thou satisfy us; abased, give us Thy glory. . . .

“Give us our daily bread, and grant Thine increase in the necessities of life, that we may be dependent on none other but Thee, may commune wholly with Thee, may walk in Thy ways and declare Thy mysteries.”²⁴

“Befriend me in my loneliness and accompany me in my exile. Remove my sorrow. Cause me to be devoted to Thy beauty.”²⁵

“Have mercy, O Lord, on the feeble, make whole the sick, and quench the burning thirst.”²⁶

“O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose.”²⁷

“Turn the distressing cares of Thy holy ones into ease, their hardship into comfort, their abasement into glory, their sorrow into blissful joy, O Thou that holdest in Thy grasp the reins of all mankind!”²⁸

Children should also recognize that we can pray for the development of spiritual qualities in ourselves and in our fellow human beings. We supplicate God, for example, to “fill up” for us “the cup of detachment from all things” or beseech Him “to clothe Thy loved ones in the robe of justice and to illumine their beings with the light of trustworthiness.” Write in the space below from the prayers you already know by heart, or from those you wish to commit to memory, similar phrases in which we ask of God to cast upon our souls the light of His names and attributes.

Words in prayers such as the above give us insight into the nature of the bounties we seek from God. But they also give us a language with which to supplicate Him. Bahá’u’lláh, in one soul-stirring prayer, says:

“I render Thee thanks, O Thou Who hast lighted Thy fire within my soul, and cast the beams of Thy light into my heart, that Thou hast taught Thy servants how to make mention of Thee, and revealed unto them the ways whereby they can supplicate Thee, through Thy most holy and exalted tongue, and Thy most august and precious speech.”²⁹

Ultimately, you will want the children in your class to understand that God answers our entreaties and supplications in accordance with His unerring wisdom and that through prayer we learn to place our whole trust and confidence in God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“It behooveth the servant to pray to and seek assistance from God, and to supplicate and implore His aid. Such becometh the rank of servitude, and the Lord will decree whatsoever He desireth, in accordance with His consummate wisdom.”³⁰

And you no doubt remember these words of His that you committed to memory when studying Book 1:

“O thou who art turning thy face towards God! Close thine eyes to all things else, and open them to the realm of the All-Glorious. Ask whatsoever thou wishest of Him alone; seek whatsoever thou seekest from Him alone. With a look He granteth a hundred thousand hopes, with a glance He healeth a hundred thousand incurable ills, with a nod He layeth balm on every wound, with a glimpse He freeth the hearts from the shackles of grief. He doeth as He doeth, and what recourse have we? He carrieth out His Will, He ordaineth what He pleaseth. Then better for thee to bow down thy head in submission, and put thy trust in the All-Merciful Lord.”³¹

We all strive to attain the state in which, seeking God’s assistance at all times and under all conditions, we acknowledge that, in His consummate wisdom, “He doeth what He willeth and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.” Discuss the significance of this state with your group.

SECTION 8

An attitude of reverence is integral to the pattern of conduct that you are striving to reinforce in the children, particularly as it relates to prayer. This attitude stems from the sense of awe and wonder one feels in the presence of God, as if a speck of dust is turning towards the sun. Reverence is an attitude born of humility before God. As you are aware from the experience you gained in teaching the lessons of Grade 1, the conversations you have with the children in your class about the nature of prayer are essential to shaping this attitude in them. On the basis of what you have studied in this unit so far, identify those concepts the understanding of which will help you reinforce in your students an attitude of reverence. Write your thoughts in the space provided.

Besides the explanations you offer in conversation with the children, the environment you create during those periods of the class dedicated to prayer will contribute greatly to

strengthening this attitude. You may find it helpful to describe some of the features of such an environment, drawing on the insights you acquired last year in this regard.

Now think about how you as a teacher help your students learn about the attitude of reverence that should characterize the act of prayer. Specifically, as with so many of the attitudes and habits you are hoping to nurture in the children, much will depend on consistency, on encouragement, and on your own example. The way in which you conduct yourself before, during, and immediately following the periods dedicated to prayer will be observed closely by the children and will provide them with an idea of what it means to be reverent. Discuss with your group the following scenarios and the impact they may have on the children's understanding of prayer and the attitudes they develop towards it:

- a. The teacher rushes through the time dedicated to prayer and occasionally decides that one prayer is enough and, for expediency, recites it him- or herself.
- b. The teacher prepares the space for prayer in advance. When the children arrive, they are greeted, asked to find a place to sit, and reminded that the class will soon begin with the recitation of prayers.
- c. The teacher usually says the opening prayer by reading from a book but asks the children to say prayers by heart.
- d. Before opening prayers, the teacher quietly selects a few children to recite prayers. When it is time to begin, the teacher reminds the students of the reasons we open the class with prayers and describes the beauty of a reverent atmosphere.
- e. If one or more children giggle as prayers are being recited, the teacher waits until the class has regained its composure before continuing with prayers.
- f. The teacher watches the children carefully during the recitation of prayers to make sure they are sitting properly and corrects them if they are not.
- g. When the last prayer has been said, the teacher moves on to the next activity quickly.
- h. During the recitation of prayers, the teacher is immersed in the verses, seeking God's bounty and blessing.

- i. The teacher often steps away while prayers are being recited to prepare for the rest of the lesson.
- j. If there is not enough time, the teacher omits the closing prayer.
- k. When the last prayer has been said, the teacher remains silent for a short period and, occasion permitting, comments briefly on the words of the prayers that were chosen and mentions their effect on the souls of all those in the class.

To conclude our discussion on the theme, turning to God in prayer, it would be valuable to commit to memory these words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, if you have not already done so:

“Praised be God, ye two have demonstrated the truth of your words by your deeds, and have won the confirmations of the Lord God. 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: that they should, at every morn, turn their faces toward the Kingdom and make mention of the Lord and praise His Name, and in the sweetest of voices, chant and recite.

“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.”³²

SECTION 9

In the next few sections, we will reflect on the theme, adhering to the laws of God, around which the lessons of Set 2 revolve. Here again, as with the previous theme, fostering the love of God in the hearts of children will be one of your main concerns. You will need to help the children understand that love of God protects and nurtures each of us. Without it, we will lose our way and perish. The desire to draw close to God motivates us to do that which is pleasing in His sight and to observe whatsoever He ordains.

“For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing—and to this the Almighty is My witness—is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.

“Build ye for yourselves such houses as the rain and floods can never destroy, which shall protect you from the changes and chances of this life. This is the instruction of Him Whom the world hath wronged and forsaken.”³³

“For lovers have no desire but the good-pleasure of their Beloved, and have no aim except reunion with Him.”³⁴

“Make me ready, in all circumstances, O my Lord, to serve Thee and to set myself towards the adored sanctuary of Thy Revelation and of Thy Beauty. If it be Thy pleasure, make me to grow as a tender herb in the meadows of Thy grace, that the

gentle winds of Thy will may stir me up and bend me into conformity with Thy pleasure, in such wise that my movement and my stillness may be wholly directed by Thee.”³⁵

“To express his gratitude for the favors of God man must show forth praiseworthy actions. In response to these bestowals he must render good deeds, be self-sacrificing, loving the servants of God, forfeiting even life for them, showing kindness to all the creatures. He must be severed from the world, attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá, the face radiant, the tongue eloquent, the ear attentive, striving day and night to attain the good pleasure of God. Whatsoever he wishes to do must be in harmony with the good pleasure of God. He must observe and see what is the will of God and act accordingly.”³⁶

Write down a few of the phrases from the above quotations that you will want to keep in mind when you speak to the children about why we should bring our thoughts, words, and conduct into conformity with God’s teachings and seek His good pleasure in everything we do.

SECTION 10

God’s love flows to humanity through His Manifestations, Who make His Will and Purpose known to us. From age to age, They reveal laws and commandments that, through our adherence to them, we might draw closer to Him as individuals and that society may progress. These laws govern our spiritual existence, guide us on the path towards Him, and help us to understand that which He desires for us. In a passage written by the Universal House of Justice we read:

“Just as there are laws governing our physical lives, requiring that we must supply our bodies with certain foods, maintain them within a certain range of temperatures, and so forth, if we wish to avoid physical disabilities, so also there are laws governing our spiritual lives. These laws are revealed to mankind in each age by

the Manifestation of God, and obedience to them is of vital importance if each human being, and mankind in general, is to develop properly and harmoniously. Moreover, these various aspects are interdependent. If an individual violates the spiritual laws for his own development he will cause injury not only to himself but to the society in which he lives. Similarly, the condition of society has a direct effect on the individuals who must live within it.”³⁷

Meditate on the following words of Bahá’u’lláh about the nature of God’s commandments:

“Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation.”³⁸

“Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it.”³⁹

“O people of Bahá! Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being.”⁴⁰

“Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power. To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!”⁴¹

“The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man’s supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.”⁴²

“True liberty consisteth in man’s submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. Happy is the man that hath apprehended the Purpose of God in whatever He hath revealed from the Heaven of His Will that pervadeth all created things.”⁴³

Further, ponder the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“He enjoined upon us only laws, ordinances, and teachings that bestow life to the soul and cause it to draw nigh unto the Best-Beloved.

“His laws all grant liberation rather than restriction; they confer freedom rather than limitation; they impart joy and radiance rather than constraint.”⁴⁴

The above quotations speak of the laws and commandments of God as an ocean and the children of men as fish; as lamps of His loving-providence unto His servants; as keys of His mercy for His creatures; as the choice Wine He has unsealed with the fingers of might and power; and as mighty strongholds for the preservation of the world of being. With the other

members of your group, consider how these images help us understand why adhering to the laws of God is so essential to the life of the individual and to the progress of society at large.

Your own understanding of the nature of God's laws will, of course, have a significant influence on how you discuss the subject with the children. In this connection, it will be important for you to remember that the commandments of God are not mere rules telling us what to do and what not to do; they are, in essence, statements about the reality of human existence. Look at the sentences below. Which ones suggest that the laws of God are a mere set of rules imposed on us, and which ones are in agreement with the above quotations that describe the laws as, for instance, lamps of God's loving-providence? Put a "1" next the former and a "2" next to the latter.

_____ The commandments of God restrict our behavior and restrain us from following desires that are not worthy of our station as human beings.

_____ The commandments of God free us from worldly desire and allow us to attain our true station as human beings.

_____ We are not forced to follow the laws of God, but we bring difficulty upon ourselves when we resist them.

_____ It is not out of fear of God's wrath that we follow His laws but rather out of the knowledge that His laws illumine our path and protect us.

_____ As we strive to follow the laws of God, the talents and capacities with which we have been endowed become more and more manifest.

_____ If we break the laws of God, we invite His vengeance.

_____ If we do not follow God's guidance, we find ourselves falling farther and farther away from the light of His all-encompassing wisdom.

_____ Following the laws of God is a great challenge with which we struggle throughout our lives.

_____ Following the laws of God is a source of profound joy and contentment.

_____ Following the laws of God enables us to manifest our higher nature and to overcome shortcomings and corrupt desires that would otherwise lead to our abasement.

_____ The commandments of God help us understand our station as human beings and the spiritual qualities with which we should adorn ourselves.

SECTION 11

Our obedience to the laws of God is a natural expression of our love for Him. A sunflower naturally turns towards the sun, seeking the source of light. Similarly, our souls yearn for the light of God, seeking illumination from that One Source. In following His laws, we are nurtured by His bountiful care and grow in the warmth of His love. Reflect on the quotations below that tell us about the nature of God's commandments.

“That which beseemeth you is the love of God, and the love of Him Who is the Manifestation of His Essence, and the observance of whatsoever He chooseth to prescribe unto you, did ye but know it.”⁴⁵

“The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: ‘Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.’”⁴⁶

“O Son of Man! Neglect not My commandments if thou lovest My beauty, and forget not My counsels if thou wouldst attain My good pleasure.”⁴⁷

“He declareth that observance of the commandments of God emanateth from love for the beauty of the Best-Beloved. The seeker, when immersed in the ocean of the love of God, will be moved by intense longing and will arise to carry out the laws of God.”⁴⁸

Clearly the way in which you speak about the love of God and the fear of displeasing Him, particularly as it relates to our efforts to obey His teachings, will have a profound effect on the hearts and minds of the children. Below are several sentences which one might hear from time to time. For each, decide which of the following qualities, attitudes, or feelings such a comment could foster in the children. In some cases, more than one may apply. Before proceeding with the exercise, you may wish to review the sections in the first unit of Book 3 that discuss the subjects of the love of God and the fear of God, especially Section 12.

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| a. sense of guilt | h. perseverance |
| b. fear | i. submissiveness |
| c. humility | j. sense of superiority |
| d. trust in God | k. self-righteousness |
| e. devotion | g. love of God and fear |
| f. resignation | of displeasing Him |

_____ We should do whatever God asks of us, otherwise He will punish us.

_____ We should do whatever God asks of us because we love Him and wish to win His good pleasure.

- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, otherwise our souls will not progress.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, if we want to become better than others.
- _____ No matter what we do, God will always love us, for His love is infinite; however, we never want our actions, our wrongdoings, to prevent His love from reaching us.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us if we truly love Him.
- _____ Out of our love for God, we do whatever He asks of us.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, even if we find it difficult.
- _____ Our mistakes should not prevent us from doing whatever God asks of us; He will give us the strength to overcome our shortcomings.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, even if we do not like it.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, no matter how little we understand it.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us, because He knows what is best for us; He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.
- _____ Only those who do what God asks of them are truly worthy of His love.
- _____ We should do whatever God asks of us because it will bring us true happiness.

Discuss with the other members of your group how an obedience that is born of the love of God helps us to remain joyful and content even in times of adversity.

SECTION 12

You have already reflected on how the act of prayer contributes to the development of spiritual qualities in children. To pray daily is only one of the many commandments that have been enjoined on us by God through His Manifestations. Now think about the question of obedience in general. How does the acquisition of spiritual qualities assist a child, as he or she grows into adulthood, in observing God's commandments? How does adherence to His commandments enhance spiritual qualities?

Let us explore these two questions in the context of a few specific spiritual qualities: contentment, courage, and faithfulness. First read the sets of quotations below. Then reflect on the statements that follow and try to add a few others.

“O Son of Man! Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.”⁴⁹

“Be thou content with the commandment of God, the True One, inasmuch as sovereignty, as recorded in the Mother Book by the hand of God, is surely invested in Him Who is His Remembrance.”⁵⁰

“I beg of Thee, O my God . . . to ordain that my choice be conformed to Thy choice and my wish to Thy wish, that I may be entirely content with that which Thou didst desire, and be wholly satisfied with what Thou didst destine for me by Thy bounteousness and favor.”⁵¹

- We cannot wholeheartedly obey God’s commandments unless we renounce our own wishes and submit to His Holy Will and pleasure.
- Lack of contentment with God’s Will leads to rebellion, and rebellion shatters hope of receiving His bounties.
- When we adhere to the laws and teachings of God, we become free of unworthy wants and desires.

“The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.”⁵²

“O Son of Man! For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.”⁵³

“Strive as much as ye can to turn wholly toward the Kingdom, that ye may acquire innate courage and ideal power.”⁵⁴

- Adhering to divine standards requires courage.
- Developing courage helps the young stay away from acts that are contrary to the teachings of God.
- Children gain courage when they understand that obedience to the laws of God nurtures and protects them.

“Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder.”⁵⁵

“O my Lord and my Hope! Help Thou Thy loved ones to be steadfast in Thy mighty Covenant, to remain faithful to Thy manifest Cause, and to carry out the commandments Thou didst set down for them in Thy Book of Splendors . . .”⁵⁶

“He, truly, is to be obeyed in whatsoever He commandeth, and decreeth, and revealeth, and is to be loved in everything He, through His sovereignty, enjoineth, and, through His power, ordaineth.”⁵⁷

- Faithfully obeying God’s commandments enables us to manifest the powers and capacities inherent within our inmost reality.
- When we love God in everything He urges us to do, we are able, under all conditions, to remain faithful to Him.
- Faithfulness is manifested in deeds that conform to what pleases God.

Which other spiritual qualities are required of those who wish to adhere to God’s commandments—qualities that are at the same time strengthened through obedience to His laws? The following passage from Bahá’u’lláh, for example, will help you to reflect on the significance of steadfastness in adhering to the laws of God:

“Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God, your wholehearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.”⁵⁸

SECTION 13

Discipline is central to an individual's efforts to live a life that is in conformity with the commandments of God. Ultimately such discipline must arise from within an individual through the force of divine attraction; it is a consequence of a growing appreciation of the nature of the laws revealed by God's Manifestation and the exercise of will. Identify a few of the heavenly exhortations that children should learn to follow diligently. What are some daily practices that will assist them in this regard? How can the setting of the classroom contribute to their development?

You must have found through experience that children are able to develop the necessary discipline when expectations are made clear to them and when they are encouraged to strive to meet the standards of a praiseworthy conduct. Nevertheless, as we discussed in Book 3, appropriate use of reward and, at times, mild sanctions can assist the young in advancing towards these standards. Mention some of the rewards that you found most effective in encouraging the children in your class last year. What were some of the sanctions that you occasionally applied and the circumstances under which you did so? Discuss with the other members of your group the effectiveness of the approaches you took.

One way to encourage diligent, disciplined behavior is, of course, through the atmosphere created in the class. How can a teacher assist children in contributing to a joyful yet disciplined atmosphere of learning?

With your group, discuss how the following situations might affect the children and the atmosphere of a class:

- a. The teacher demands absolute obedience in class without allowing the children to ask questions.
- b. The teacher disregards unruly behavior, convinced that children best develop their capacities when their freedom is not curtailed by the imposition of standards of conduct.
- c. The teacher ignores improper conduct, believing that children should learn for themselves by making their own mistakes.
- d. Whenever possible, the teacher tries to help the children to understand why they are asked to adhere to certain standards of conduct.
- e. The teacher only points out undesirable and disruptive behavior and does not call attention to instances when children are showing praiseworthy conduct.
- f. The teacher acknowledges and praises commendable conduct and tells the children that such behavior brings joy to the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

To end your study of these sections focused on the theme of adhering to the laws of God, you may wish to memorize the following words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which will surely be a source of joy to you as a teacher of children:

“Your letter hath come and imparted great delight, with its word that, praised be God, the youth of the Abhá paradise are verdant and tender from showers scattered out of clouds of heavenly grace, that they thrive and flourish in the April rains of heavenly guidance and are progressing day by day.

“It is certain that each and every one of them will grow to be as a banner of guidance, a symbol of the bestowals that come from the realm of the All-Glorious. They will be sweet-singing nightingales in the gardens of knowledge, gazelles delicate and comely, roaming the plains of the love of God. You must attach the greatest importance to the education of children, for this is the foundation of the Law of God and the bedrock of the edifice of His Faith.”⁵⁹

SECTION 14

In the previous sections, you reflected on the importance of helping children develop habits and patterns of conduct that are in conformity with God’s teachings and commandments. Good behavior is not, of course, to be acquired blindly. We are not machines programmed to act in a certain way. All of us have to work consciously for our own spiritual and intellectual development, which implies a passion to pursue knowledge. Seeking knowledge, then, is the theme of Set 3.

You recall from your study of Book 1 that the capacity to know God and to love Him, a capacity that God has conferred solely upon human beings, “must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.” Knowledge and action, springing from our love for God, are interrelated. It is because of the dynamic relationship between the two that the lessons on seeking knowledge follow those focused on obedience. The opening paragraph of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, tells us that the recognition of God’s Manifestation for today and obedience to His commandments are twin inseparable duties enjoined upon us:

“The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behooveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.”⁶⁰

In a Tablet Bahá’u’lláh mentions that knowledge of God is dependent upon obedience to His laws and teachings:

“For man’s knowledge of God cannot develop fully and adequately save by observing whatsoever hath been ordained by Him and is set forth in His heavenly Book.”⁶¹

The above passages suggest that we cannot be satisfied with simply knowing the truth but are expected to act upon it. Knowledge should lead to action, and deeds that are in accord with the teachings cannot but deepen our knowledge and understanding. You may find it useful to write down some of your thoughts about the relationship between knowledge and action—specifically between knowledge of God and actions in conformity with His teachings.

SECTION 15

In teaching the lessons of Set 3, you will probably not address the relationship between knowledge and action explicitly with the children, whose understanding of these concepts is still in an early stage of development. However, you will want to cultivate in them an intuitive awareness of this important relationship. To reflect further on this in the context of child education, consider the following sentences and decide which are true. Remember that you should not be content with simply choosing an answer but should discuss the implications of each statement with the other members of your study group.

- _____ While knowledge is important, children do not need to understand the reasons that they are asked to do things. They should be taught to do what they are told. Knowledge leads to arrogance and gives rise to a rebellious attitude and a reluctance to submit to authority.
- _____ Young children are not able to understand abstract concepts and relationships. They must simply be told what to do and learn the reasons for things in time, as they get older.
- _____ The only way for children to learn how to conduct themselves properly is by following the good examples of others.
- _____ Knowing that they will be punished or rewarded for their conduct is sufficient to encourage children to behave well.
- _____ Children should learn to obey and should not ask too many questions about things they do not understand.
- _____ While it is important to encourage a thirst for knowledge and cultivate inquisitive minds, children should not get the impression that they may refuse to obey if they do not receive answers and explanations which satisfy them.
- _____ Unless children develop a thirst for knowledge, they will not learn to think for themselves and will blindly imitate their peers and others.
- _____ Knowledge should not be imposed on children. They should be given freedom to arrive at their own conclusions about truth.
- _____ Concepts and ideas should not be explained to children. They should learn by themselves through discovery and play.
- _____ Children should begin to learn from an early age to draw upon their physical, spiritual, and intellectual powers in order to acquire knowledge.
- _____ One important way to help children acquire faith and grow in certitude is to allow them to express doubt and to acknowledge what perplexes them; they can then be provided, in appropriate measures, with sound explanations.
- _____ As children gain knowledge of God's creation, their love for Him grows, and obedience to the laws of God is a natural response to the love of His Beauty.

_____ A child's thirst for knowledge should lead him or her to develop greater and greater spiritual perfections.

SECTION 16

It is clear that one of the motivating purposes of our lives is to seek knowledge, especially the knowledge of God. We acquire knowledge of God through His Manifestations; the teachings They bring "liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding." We also acquire knowledge by studying God's creation, in which the signs of His greatness and power can everywhere be seen. In this sense, we often speak about two sources of knowledge, the Book of Revelation and the Book of Creation, which we study through religion and science. In this light, you may wish to read the following quotations:

"The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshaling the divine proofs and evidences."⁶²

"Indeed, O brother, if we ponder each created thing, we shall witness a myriad consummate wisdoms and learn a myriad new and wondrous truths."⁶³

"Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment."⁶⁴

"There is no contradiction between true religion and science. When a religion is opposed to science it becomes mere superstition: that which is contrary to knowledge is ignorance."⁶⁵

"Religion and science are the two wings upon which man's intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress."⁶⁶

"Although to acquire the sciences and arts is the greatest glory of mankind, this is so only on condition that man's river flow into the mighty sea, and draw from God's ancient source His inspiration. When this cometh to pass, then every teacher is as a shoreless ocean, every pupil a prodigal fountain of knowledge. If, then, the pursuit of knowledge lead to the beauty of Him Who is the Object of all Knowledge, how excellent that goal; but if not, a mere drop will perhaps shut a man off from flooding grace, for with learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on error and indifference to God."⁶⁷

In your work with the children, you will, of course, be trying to encourage in them the thirst for knowledge, drawn from both the Book of Revelation and the Book of Creation. Consider the list below. Knowledge of some of the things listed comes largely from one or the

other sources. Mark them with an “R” or a “C” accordingly. For those that draw on knowledge from both sources, mark them with a “B”.

- _____ How electricity works
- _____ How plants draw energy from the sun
- _____ Why the planets revolve around the sun
- _____ How the physical senses work
- _____ How different societies have lived throughout the ages
- _____ How some illnesses are cured
- _____ How species perpetuate themselves
- _____ How to live in harmony with the natural environment
- _____ How symmetry and proportion contribute to beauty
- _____ The expansiveness of the universe
- _____ The interconnectedness of all things in the universe
- _____ The purpose of civilization
- _____ What are the sources of true wealth
- _____ What is the source of true happiness
- _____ How to achieve true liberty
- _____ The purpose of our lives
- _____ The oneness of humanity
- _____ The harmfulness of prejudice
- _____ The true capacity of human beings
- _____ The dual nature of human beings
- _____ The necessity of cooperation
- _____ The oneness of God
- _____ The dangers of superstition
- _____ The limitations of human understanding

SECTION 17

Knowledge, we know, is central to social existence. Through its application we can learn how to create a better world. We can do this as we use scientific knowledge to contribute to the forces for social good, in accordance with the Divine will and purpose. Educational systems that fail to incorporate spiritual knowledge are unable to channel adequately the inherent potential and capacity of children and young people.

There is a wonderful story about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which illustrates this idea: Once, while speaking to a teacher from England, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked what subjects he taught in school. The gentleman told Him that he taught Latin, English, algebra, and geometry. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then asked him if he also addressed spiritual matters in his classes. The gentleman replied that there was no time for spiritual education in school. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made no comment, but He did not need to! From His question and His silence, the gentleman understood that both material and spiritual education are necessary for human advancement.

You should know that, from an early age, children can begin to appreciate the importance of seeking knowledge and developing their minds by applying what they learn to improving the world around them. The following quotations are intended to assist you as you reflect further on this idea in the context of the classes you will be teaching:

“There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.”⁶⁸

“The investigating mind is attentive, alive; the callous and indifferent mind is deaf and dead.”⁶⁹

“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.”⁷⁰

“Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.”⁷¹

“In this day the choicest fruit of the tree of knowledge is that which serveth the welfare of humanity and safeguardeth its interests.”⁷²

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- a. There are certain _____ that have been established as the _____ of the Faith of _____. The _____ of these is _____ and the use of the _____, the expansion of _____, and insight into the _____ of the universe and the hidden _____ of Almighty God.
- b. The investigating mind is _____, _____; the callous and indifferent mind is _____ and _____.

- c. While the children are yet in their _____ we are to
- _____ them from the breast of _____ ,
 - foster them in the _____ of all _____ ,
 - _____ them in the embrace of _____ ,
 - give them the _____ of every _____ kind of _____ ,
 - let them _____ in every new and rare and wondrous _____ and _____ ,
 - bring them up to _____ and _____ ,
 - accustom them to _____ ,
 - _____ them to _____ their lives to matters of _____ , and _____ , and
 - _____ them to undertake _____ that will benefit _____ .
- d. Every kind of _____ , every _____ , is as a _____ : if the fruit of it be the _____ of God, then is it a _____ tree, but if _____ , that tree is but _____ , and shall only feed the _____ .
- e. In this day the _____ of the tree of _____ is that which _____ the _____ of humanity and _____ its _____ .

Educational systems can encourage children to learn for many different reasons. Consider the following statements about knowledge, which one might hear from time to time, and discuss their implications for children’s behavior and their motivation for learning:

- a. Having knowledge makes us better than others.

- b. Gaining knowledge is necessary to get good grades and pass examinations.

- c. Someone with a great deal of knowledge will get a good job and earn the money needed to have the material comforts of life.

- d. Someone with a great deal of knowledge also has a lot of power and influence.

- e. Someone with a great deal of knowledge also has a considerable amount of personal satisfaction.

- f. Someone with a great deal of knowledge also has a great deal of responsibility.

- g. Someone with a great deal of knowledge has a duty to share it with others, in one way or another.

- h. Gaining knowledge opens up avenues of service to humanity.

With the members of your group, think of some examples of individuals who have used their knowledge for the benefit of your community. How might these examples assist you in explaining to the children the concept that knowledge is to be applied for the betterment of the world?

SECTION 18

The children in your class are naturally at the beginning of a lifelong journey of seeking and acquiring knowledge so that they can contribute to the advancement of society. To undertake this journey they will require a host of spiritual qualities. “Knowledge is praiseworthy”, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us, “when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger.” Let us think about this idea specifically as it relates to four of the spiritual qualities addressed in the lessons you taught the children in Grade 1: humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice. Below are sets of quotations and statements, each of which relates to one of these qualities. As you read them, reflect on how their development is intimately related to our ability to seek knowledge. Then try, in consultation with your group, to add a few additional statements to each set.

“Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicolored hyacinths of My knowledge. Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart.”⁷³

“We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed.”⁷⁴

“Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should anyone among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and goodwill. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.”⁷⁵

- Being submissive and resigned like the earth makes our hearts receptive to the knowledge of God.
- Without humility, our learning acts as a veil that shuts us out from God’s bounty and grace.
- In sharing our knowledge with others, we should show forth the utmost humility; otherwise our words will produce no effect.

“The heart must needs therefore be cleansed from the idle sayings of men, and sanctified from every earthly affection, so that it may discover the hidden meaning of divine inspiration, and become the treasury of the mysteries of divine knowledge.”⁷⁶

“O My Brother! Harken to the delightful words of My honeyed tongue, and quaff the stream of mystic holiness from My sugar-shedding lips. Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of thy heart, and water them with the water of certitude, that the hyacinths of My knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green in the sacred city of thy heart.”⁷⁷

“Would that pure and stainless hearts could be found, that I might impart unto them a sprinkling from the oceans of knowledge which My Lord hath bestowed upon Me, so that they may soar in the heavens even as they walk upon the earth and speed over the waters even as they course the land, and that they may take up their souls in their hands and lay them down in the path of their Creator.”⁷⁸

- To attain true understanding, we must strive for purity.
- The Word of God has the power to cleanse one’s heart from idle imaginings and selfish desires and enable it to receive illumination.
- Sharing our knowledge without purity of intention does not contribute to our own progress or the upliftment of others.

“The Sun of Truth is the Word of God, upon which dependeth the education of those who are endowed with the power of understanding and of utterance. It is the true spirit and the heavenly water, through whose aid and gracious providence all things have been and will be quickened. Its appearance in every mirror is conditioned by the color of that mirror. For instance, when its light is cast upon the mirrors of the hearts of the wise, it bringeth forth wisdom. In like manner, when it manifesteth itself in the mirrors of the hearts of craftsmen, it unfoldeth new and unique arts, and when reflected in the hearts of those that apprehend the truth, it revealeth wondrous tokens of true knowledge and discloseth the verities of God’s utterance.”⁷⁹

“Endeavor to the utmost of thy powers to establish the word of truth with eloquence and wisdom and to dispel falsehood from the face of the earth. Thus directeth thee the Dayspring of divine knowledge from this luminous horizon.”⁸⁰

- Seeking knowledge from the Sun of Truth is a distinguishing characteristic of a truthful person.
- God, through His Manifestations, gives us the standard of truth against which all learning must be weighed.
- To be truthful we must fight against falsehood and promote true knowledge.

“O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.”⁸¹

“What ‘oppression’ is greater than that which hath been recounted? What ‘oppression’ is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it?”⁸²

“We beseech God to aid thee to be just and fair-minded, and to acquaint thee with the things that were hidden from the eyes of men. He, in truth, is the Mighty, the Unconstrained. We ask thee to reflect upon that which hath been revealed, and to be fair and just in thy speech, that perchance the splendors of the daystar of truthfulness and sincerity may shine forth, and may deliver thee from the darkness of ignorance, and illumine the world with the light of knowledge.”⁸³

- To investigate reality, we need to develop the spiritual quality of justice, the quality that will help us see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears.
- Idle fancy, vain imaginings, and selfish desires weaken the faculty of justice; they are veils that obscure our inner eyes and prevent us from perceiving the light of true knowledge.
- Justice demands that we uproot oppression, and the greatest oppression occurs when individuals yearn for knowledge but do not know from what source to seek it.

Here we have considered how humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice are essential to our lifelong efforts to attain the shores of the ocean of true knowledge. In consultation with the members of your group, identify other spiritual qualities that attainment to true knowledge requires and which are, in turn, fortified by our quest for understanding.

SECTION 19

From the earliest days of their lives, children seek to make sense of the world around them, and their thirst for knowledge is great. One of the most essential tasks before you as a teacher of Bahá'í children's classes is to nurture in your students their natural desire to look for truth and to seek insights into reality.

Many factors influence children as they progress in their development—whether their physical, intellectual, or spiritual development—but the issue of motivation is fundamental to a child's learning at every age. The way in which you as a teacher approach the question of knowledge, and in particular the way in which you view the potential of the children to grow in understanding, will have a direct effect on their attitude towards learning. You will therefore want to think often about the subject of motivation. As we have discussed in many courses, understanding is itself the greatest of all motivators. When a student achieves understanding, the pursuit of learning becomes a source of continued joy. Clearly, then, in nurturing a thirst for knowledge in your students, you will exercise the utmost patience and strive to help them advance in their understanding. You will need to take care that none of your words or actions inadvertently dampen their desire to investigate reality and seek knowledge. It may be worthwhile for you to discuss with the other members of your study group how each of the following might have such a discouraging effect:

- a. A teacher who belittles children for asking too many questions and creates in them a fear of making mistakes.
- b. A teacher who believes there is an answer for everything and who does not allow for the kind of questions that are open ended and that do not admit a simple “yes” or “no” answer, leaving space for ambiguity where needed.
- c. A teacher who believes that all things are measurable and that all knowledge can be given out in portions, bit by bit, and who does not allow for the possibility that some learning, especially in the case of spiritual matters, consists of gaining insights.
- d. A teacher who treats all things at the same level so that a trivial piece of information, which can be understood quickly without any difficulty once and for all, is treated in the same way as a profound concept that is gradually understood in degrees over time.

- e. A teacher who cultivates in the children an over attachment to him or her and who fosters a need in them to look, in the end, to him or her for all answers.
- f. A teacher who talks about the importance of looking for truth but who makes comments from time to time that instill in the hearts of the children subtle prejudices, for example, by suggesting girls have less potential than boys.
- g. A teacher who talks about the importance of cooperation in seeking truth yet encourages competition among children.

To close your study of this unit on the three interrelated themes which you will soon be addressing with the young ones in your class, read the following passage and reflect on it in the context of the service you are rendering as a teacher of children. You may then wish to commit part or all of it to memory.

“O ye loved ones of the Abhá Beauty! O ye friends of the Almighty Lord! Unloose your tongues in thanksgiving for this supreme bestowal, and render praise unto the peerless Lord that ye were singled out for this grace and favor, and numbered amongst those who have attained the heights of servitude. Gird up the loins of endeavor, and step into the circle of the angels of the paradise of Oneness. Thus may ye, on the shores of the Most Great Ocean, net the fish that thirst for the seas of divine knowledge and, in the fields of unity, catch the gazelles that seek the meads of reality, so that through the unfailing aid and bounty of the Lord, ye may gather together all nations beneath the shade of the Word of Oneness. Thus may the fragrances of God spread through the East and the West, and the magnetic forces of the All-Merciful stir the world of being into motion. Thus may the mysteries of this holy Cycle be made manifest, the signs of the Dispensation of the Most Great Name be revealed, the garden of the world be rendered fertile, and the orchard of creation bear luscious fruits. Thus may the candle of Divine Unity be kindled, contingent limitations be consumed away by a single flame of the Lord’s burning Fire, the lights of guidance shine, and the darkness of ignorance and blindness be utterly obliterated.”⁸⁴

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Lessons for Children's Classes Sets 1–3

Purpose

To develop further the capability of teaching classes for children consisting of the memorization of prayers and quotations, songs, stories, drama, and drawing and art

SECTION 1

In the first unit of this book, we considered three themes—turning to God in prayer, adhering to the laws of God, and seeking knowledge—and explored their significance in the context of spiritual education. We also reminded ourselves that spiritual qualities underlie those attitudes and habits associated with a noble and praiseworthy character and, as such, must be continually reinforced. This unit contains nine lessons, in three sets, that address the themes mentioned above. They are preceded by a number of preparatory sections to help you reflect on your experience in presenting the elements of the Grade 1 lessons and examine the content of these nine, while keeping in mind that the development of spiritual qualities should remain your paramount concern.

SECTION 2

One principal element of the lessons for Grade 1—an element central to the educational process fostered by the entire six-year curriculum—is the memorization of prayers and quotations. In Sections 8 and 17 of the first unit of Book 3, “Principles of Bahá’í Education”, we reflected on the significant role this element plays in the spiritual development of children and in the enhancement of understanding. You may wish to take a moment to review those sections now. Memorization helps young children acquire the habit of turning to the Writings in all circumstances and enables them to draw on the creative power of the Word of God, strengthening thereby those patterns of thought and conduct that are closely aligned with it. To further explore this crucial element of the curriculum, let us read and meditate on the following passages:

“The Word of God may be likened to the life-giving breezes of the divine spring-time. When chanted in spiritual tones, it bestoweth the breath of life and granteth true salvation. It bringeth forth a garden of roses from the pure soil, and wafteth its musk-laden fragrance throughout the world.”¹

“In this day, true power and strength reside in the Supreme Elixir, which transformeth darkened realities into illumined souls and changeth the quintessence of ignorance into a sign of the All-Merciful. The Supreme Elixir is none other than the Word of God, which hath shed divine illumination upon the contingent world and wafted the fragrances of holiness throughout the earth.”²

“Say: The Word of God can never be confounded with the words of His creatures. It is, in truth, the King of words, even as He is Himself the sovereign Lord of all, and His Cause transcendeth all that was and all that shall be.”³

“All people must, however, fix their gaze upon the Word that hath dawned from the horizon of Divine Utterance. It is incumbent upon every soul to ponder its sovereignty and pervading influence, its might and all-encompassing power. . . . It is the begetter of the world and the educator of its people. It summoneth them that wander athirst in the vale of separation to direct their steps towards the ocean of reunion. It illuminateth the darkness of ignorance with the morning light of knowledge.”⁴

“Such are the mysteries of the Word of God, which have been unveiled and made manifest, that haply thou mayest apprehend the morning light of divine guidance, mayest quench, by the power of reliance and renunciation, the lamp of idle fancy, of vain imaginings, of hesitation, and doubt, and mayest kindle, in the inmost chamber of thine heart, the newborn light of divine knowledge and certitude.”⁵

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below:

- a. The _____ may be likened to the _____ breezes of the _____ .
- b. When chanted in _____ , the Word of God bestows the _____ and grants _____ .
- c. The Word of God brings forth a garden of _____ from the _____ .
- d. The Word of God wafts its _____ throughout the _____ .
- e. In this day, _____ and _____ reside in the _____ , which is _____ than the Word of God.
- f. This Supreme Elixir transforms _____ into _____ and changes the _____ into a sign of the _____ .
- g. This Supreme Elixir has shed _____ upon the contingent _____ and wafted the _____ throughout the _____ .
- h. The Word of God can never be _____ with the words of His _____ .
- i. The Word of God is, in truth, the _____ , even as He is Himself the _____ of all.
- j. _____ fix their _____ upon the _____ that has dawned from the horizon of _____ .
- k. It is _____ upon _____ to _____ the _____ and pervading _____ of the Word of God, its _____ and all-encompassing _____ .

- l. The Word of God is the _____ of the _____ and the _____ of its _____ .
- m. The Word of God summons them that _____ in the vale of _____ to direct their steps towards the _____ .
- n. The Word of God illuminates the _____ with the morning _____ .
- o. The mysteries of the Word of God have been unveiled that we may apprehend the _____ of _____ .
- p. The mysteries of the Word of God have been unveiled that we may _____ , by the power of _____ and _____ , the lamp of _____ , of vain _____ , of _____ , and _____ .
- q. The mysteries of the Word of God have been unveiled that we may kindle, in the inmost chamber of our _____ , the _____ of divine _____ and _____ .

Now reflect on your experience in teaching the children the twenty-four lessons of Grade 1, and write in the space below some of your observations regarding the influence that understanding and memorizing the Word of God exerts on the hearts and minds of the young ones in the community.

Different teachers will have had different experiences in helping children to memorize the Sacred Text. Share with the other members of your study group how you typically handled the period of memorization. What steps did you find to be most effective? In considering this matter, you may wish to ask yourself questions such as the following: If you worked with many children, did you divide them into smaller groups for memorization? If so, did you explain the meaning of the difficult words and sentences before dividing them? How did you manage if you had a few youngsters who learned the passages more quickly than others? What did you do with those who went at a slower pace? If some children had difficulty, how did you handle

it? How did you make sure that, even if he or she did not learn the passage well, every child felt a sense of accomplishment?

SECTION 3

You must have found singing songs an important element of the lessons in Grade 1 and have seen how music uplifts the spirit and fills the hearts of children with joy. To reflect further on this element, read the quotation below, which you will remember from Book 3. The additional sentences included here relate specifically to the role of music in education.

“The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit. Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted. It has wonderful sway and effect in the hearts of children, for their hearts are pure, and melodies have great influence in them. The latent talents with which the hearts of these children are endowed will find expression through the medium of music. Therefore, you must exert yourselves to make them proficient; teach them to sing with excellence and effect. It is incumbent upon each child to know something of music, for without knowledge of this art the melodies of instrument and voice cannot be rightly enjoyed. Likewise, it is necessary that the schools teach it in order that the souls and hearts of the pupils may become vivified and exhilarated and their lives be brightened with enjoyment.”⁶

Think about the lessons you taught last year. Do you remember times when the effect of a melody on your students was particularly striking? If you were to describe to someone the influence of music on the children, how would you do so? Although you did not teach music formally in your class, did you notice improvement in the children’s ability to sing? Did they learn to carry a tune better? Did they acquire a better sense of rhythm? Discuss these questions with your group.

SECTION 4

The majority of the stories in the lessons in Grade 1 are drawn from the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They are intended to offer children insight into the spiritual qualities that He manifested so perfectly. It is for this reason that, in preparing to narrate the story in each lesson last year, you reflected on some pertinent questions. How did your reflections assist you in recounting the stories and in conversing with the children about how they relate to the main theme of each lesson? How did the questions help you to raise their sights above the events portrayed to catch glimpses of the dynamics of the spiritual qualities involved?

It was mentioned in Book 3 that storytelling is an art, and factors such as tone of voice, gestures, emotions, rhythm and pace help a teacher to bring a story to life in the children’s minds. As you strove to learn storytelling techniques, you no doubt took care not to let them overshadow the purpose of this element of the curriculum, which is to help youngsters understand, in keeping with their capacities, certain profound truths. Your experience must have heightened your appreciation of the power of this unique art form to change patterns of conduct and enhance understanding. Can you describe some instances in which the effects of this power were particularly apparent in your class?

SECTION 5

Most of the games in the lessons in Book 3 were cooperative in nature; they were much more than a physical activity intended to keep the children busy. If you had to explain to someone the effects of cooperative games on youngsters, how would you do so? What skills

did they develop in your students? What attitudes did they promote? From what did the children derive a sense of accomplishment?

To assist the children in understanding how to play a given game, you probably had to practice it with them several times. Were there occasions when the games were either too easy or too difficult for some of the children? How did you handle the situation? Were you able to modify the games to better suit their level of capacity?

SECTION 6

Now let us examine the final activity of your class last year, coloring. What skills and attitudes did the children develop through carrying out this activity? Did they develop a greater appreciation of beauty and order? Did their ability to pay attention to detail and to focus on the task at hand increase? How did this activity provide them with an opportunity to exercise respect for others and to take joy in sharing resources with their fellow students?

In Book 3, it was suggested that you might take advantage of this period of the class to carry out a conversation with the children that would help them connect the depictions in the drawings with the qualities treated in the lessons. What was your experience in this regard? For example, did you find that you were able to illustrate for the children some of the practical ways in which the qualities addressed are manifested—this, without trivializing the profound nature of these attributes of the human soul? How did the conversations enhance the children’s understanding that spiritual qualities are expressed in the beauty of one’s behavior? How did the opportunity to articulate their ideas contribute to this understanding? Were you able to promote an environment in which all of the children were able to participate in creating a narrative around the depiction and experience the joy of such collaboration? Share with your study group some of the different approaches you took to this period of the class, writing down a few points from your consultations below.

SECTION 7

You surely became convinced while teaching the lessons of Grade 1 of the importance of establishing a close and loving relationship with the parents of the children of your class. You may wish to take a moment to review Section 26 of “Some Principles of Bahá’í Education”, which discusses this subject, and write a paragraph or two about the insights you gained into the role parents play in extending the provision of spiritual education beyond the period of the class. In doing so, try to address questions such as the following: Which educational concepts discussed in Book 3 did you share with them? How did they respond? What did you tell them regarding the specific qualities their children were learning about in class? Did the children recite at home the prayers and passages they were memorizing? Did their parents help them? Have some of the parents gone further and begun to assist more broadly with the provision of spiritual education to the children in your village or neighborhood? In what ways?

SECTION 8

Having reflected on your experience with the various elements of the lessons you conducted last year, let us now consider the three sets of lessons contained in this unit. To turn one’s heart to God and beseech His aid and assistance are fundamental to the habits and the pattern of conduct that all the lessons in this unit strive to reinforce. In the first set of lessons, then, you will be assisting the children in gaining a deeper appreciation of prayer as a most important aspect of their spiritual lives. Specifically, you will help your students to understand

the nature of prayer, why we pray, and how we conduct ourselves when we pray. It is suggested that you now read the three lessons of the set and write down the principal concepts presented in each one.

Lesson 1.1: _____

Lesson 1.2: _____

Lesson 1.3: _____

Discuss with the members of your study group how the principal concepts treated in each lesson reinforce one another.

SECTION 9

By the time the children have completed the Grade 1 lessons, they will have acquired the habit of reciting prayers by heart at the beginning of each class period. Nevertheless, you may need to remind them, as they take up this new set of lessons, that their classes open with prayers in order for them to make mention of God and implore His help and guidance. For every period, you should be ready to ask two or three students to say an opening prayer, after you yourself have done so. Unlike the lessons for Grade 1, where some prayers were suggested for you to recite, here you can make your own selection.

As for memorization, in Grade 1 the children learned to recite six prayers by heart over the course of twenty-four lessons. Now they will be asked to memorize one new prayer with each set. Not all of your students will, of course, learn at the same pace. Some will advance faster than others. But it is expected that almost every child will be able to memorize one prayer while going through the three lessons of a set. Below is the prayer suggested for Set 1.

“O Lord! I am a child; enable me to grow beneath the shadow of Thy loving-kindness. I am a tender plant; cause me to be nurtured through the outpourings of the clouds of Thy bounty. I am a sapling of the garden of love; make me into a fruitful tree.

“Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful, and Thou art the All-Loving, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing.”⁷

Memorization, as you know, is not a mechanical exercise that the children are expected to carry out. It is difficult to learn a passage by heart if one does not understand its meaning. As you introduce the prayer, remember that, if words key to this understanding are unfamiliar to the children, concrete examples should be given to illustrate their meaning. Identify any such words in the above prayer and write in the space below how you would explain them to your students.

SECTION 10

Each lesson of these sets, like those in Grade 1, contains a brief explanation that introduces its theme and the quotation for memorization. As you are aware from the experience you have gained, you will need to adjust these introductory statements to the level of capacity of your students. It will therefore be important for you to think carefully about each statement in advance and determine, in the context of the lesson as a whole, how to share the ideas with the children, remembering that your aim is to help them grasp the theme in preparation for memorizing the quotation.

In your study of Sections 4 through 8 of the previous unit, you reflected on the nature of prayer and its effect on the human soul, a subject already well familiar to you. Prayer, you know, is at once an expression of our love for God and a means by which that love further grows. Through prayer, our capacity to draw on the gifts that God has deposited within the human soul—the gifts of true knowledge and understanding, of spiritual and intellectual perception, of keen intellect and wisdom—is increased, as is our desire to reflect heavenly attributes and qualities. It is particularly important, then, that the habit of turning to God in prayer be cultivated in youngsters from an early age. In this light, direct your attention now to the introductory statements and the quotations to be memorized in this first set of lessons. In determining how you will present these to your class, you may find it useful to discuss with the members of your study group the following questions:

- a. How will explaining to the children that prayer is “conversation with God”, as mentioned in Lesson 1.1, strengthen the relationship they are developing with their Creator?

- b. How might you explain to the students in your class what it means to live in a state of prayer?

- c. How will the introductory remarks in Lesson 1.2 help the students in your class appreciate the wisdom of prayer and supplication to God?

- d. How will speaking of prayer as nourishment for the soul increase their understanding of its purpose and, in turn, strengthen in them the habit of praying daily?

- e. How will the comments in Lesson 1.3 help the children to realize that there is an inner condition towards which they should strive when they pray and to understand what that condition entails?

- f. You must have noted that the explanation in each lesson makes reference to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words and deeds. How will reminding the children of the wisdom of His utterances and the example He has set through His deeds enhance their understanding of the theme under consideration in each lesson?

To help the children understand the quotations they are committing to memory, you will need to spend some time discussing with them the meaning of difficult and unfamiliar

words and phrases. As in Grade 1, two sentences are provided to assist you in explaining such words. You are asked to draw upon the capacity you have developed through experience to create, with the help of others in your study group, one or more additional sentences for each and write them in the space below. Try to place the words in a context relevant to the cultural setting of the children you are teaching.

Intone: _____

Kindle: _____

Attract: _____

Longing: _____

Immerse: _____

Communion: _____

Entreaty: _____

Commune: _____

Essence: _____

SECTION 11

Although music will continue to be an element of your classes, you have not been provided with a song for each lesson, as in the lessons for first grade. Rather, a collection of songs is available as a separate volume, which includes the songs from last year and several new ones. Some of those in the collection are related to spiritual qualities, while others are concerned with the habits and pattern of conduct that children are striving to develop; still others have to do with the history of the Faith and its Central Figures. It is left to you to select a couple of songs for each lesson. As an assistance, a song or two is suggested for each set. In thinking about this component of your class, you should bear in mind an important idea: if the songs selected relate to the theme that you are trying to teach, they will reinforce what the children are learning.

We should also mention here that you need not limit yourself to the songs found in the collection provided. In every language of the world, there are beautiful songs that children will enjoy singing. As a teacher of Bahá'í children's classes, you should gradually compile your own book of songs and learn them well by practicing them with someone who knows them or by listening to a recording.

In addition to singing songs with the children, you may find it beneficial to carry out some simple activities to enable them to further develop their musical abilities. Clapping or drumming, for example, will improve their sense of rhythm. You are probably familiar with the activity in which the "leader" claps or drums a short rhythmic pattern and the others repeat it. Then, without missing a beat, the leader introduces another rhythmic pattern of the same duration as the first, and the others follow suit. The activity continues in this way, with new patterns being added and different children taking turns as the leader.

Another helpful activity of this kind can be undertaken in groups. For instance, you can divide the children into two groups and ask the first to begin clapping one rhythm. You can then ask the second group to come in with another rhythm, and the two groups continue clapping simultaneously. This activity can be done with as many as five groups, with each one clapping or drumming a different rhythm.

There are also activities that can increase the children's ability to carry a tune, for example, singing a round, in which one group begins a melody and one or two other groups enter at different times with the same melody. You, of course, will have to decide as you work with the children whether such additional activities would be of value. Remember that you are not trying to teach them music formally. Children love to sing songs, and this period of the class should be filled with joy and happiness.

Now, in light of the above, look through the collection of songs and select, together with your fellow participants in this course, two or three that would be appropriate to sing for each of the lessons of Set 1. For example, "Sing His Praises" might be suitable for the first lesson.

Lesson 1.1: _____

Lesson 1.2: _____

Lesson 1.3: _____

SECTION 12

Storytelling will remain a significant element of your classes this year. The stories in the nine lessons are very much like those in the lessons for the first grade, in terms of both language and content. They are, however, somewhat lengthier and will, therefore, require you to strengthen your storytelling skills—this, if you are to keep the children engaged in the learning process. As you did with the Grade 1 lessons, then, you should become well acquainted with each story, dedicating ample time to studying and practicing it in preparation for your class.

With the above in mind, reread the stories you will recount to the children in these first three lessons, remembering that, in each case, you will want to help the youngsters see beyond a series of events to grasp one or more ideas about the nature of prayer. Discussing the questions below with your fellow teachers may assist you in this respect.

Lesson 1.1 tells the story of Rúḥu’lláh, which will illustrate for the children the power of prayer. How will you explain to your students who Rúḥu’lláh was? How will you make sure they come to understand that his heart was so afire with the love of God that his prayers had the power to stir the hearts of others? What details about Rúḥu’lláh’s life are important for the children to learn from the story?

The story in Lesson 1.2 introduces the children to Lua Getsinger and describes a brief encounter she had with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the hallway one morning during her visit to the Holy Land. Narrating it should impress upon the children the importance of daily prayer, not as a ritual but as an essential means of nourishing our souls. How will you help the children see that, just like Lua, we should make sure that this part of our lives is not neglected. What are some other concepts that the story conveys about the nature of prayer? What details will you include in your narration to ensure your students grasp these ideas?

In the final lesson of Set 1, you will narrate a story about a man that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá taught how to pray. Seeing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the state of prayer enabled the man to get a glimpse of what it means to commune with God and inspired him to seek such a state. Later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s loving admonitions to the man deepened his understanding of the nature of prayer. What are some of the details in the story that will help the children understand the lesson ‘Abdu’l-Bahá taught to the man through both His deeds and His words?

SECTION 13

You know from the previous unit that the sets of lessons contained in this and the next branch course build on the discussion of spiritual qualities that were the focus of Grade 1. The habits and pattern of conduct that the lessons address are an outward expression of these qualities, which should take deeper and deeper root in the hearts of the children. In teaching the lessons, then, you will need to find ways to reinforce the development of such qualities.

In this respect, you will have noticed, when reviewing Set 1, that the three quotations the children learned in Grade 1 about enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment are included in the first lesson, for your reference. You reflected on these qualities in the first unit of this book and thought about their importance in forming the habit of turning to God in prayer. Discuss with the members of your study group how you might go about incorporating ideas related to these qualities as you conduct the lessons for Set 1, most notably when introducing the quotations for memorization and recounting the stories. Write some of your thoughts in the space below. Remember that you will also want to take the opportunity to remind the children of the verses they memorized and have them recite them as a means of review.

SECTION 14

As you saw in your review of the first set of lessons, activities related to drama have taken the place of the games played in the previous year. In each lesson, two types of activities are suggested. The first consists of fairly straightforward exercises designed to develop the skills and abilities of creative drama. The second set of activities is connected to the theme of the lesson. Usually, a scene or situation is presented for the children to improvise. In creative drama, when we speak of improvisation, we mean that the dialogue is not written or read but made up on the spot along with the action. It is like writing a story to which every member of the group contributes as it unfolds. The teacher provides the barest outline—the characters, the place, the storyline, that is, the beginning, middle, and the end—and lets the children use their imagination to act out the scene. The teacher, of course, has to guide the process closely. Questions such as “Who are you?” “Where are you?” “What is happening?” and “What are you planning to do now?” may be necessary to ensure the success of the improvisation.

With the other members of your study group, you are encouraged to look again at the drama activities included in Set 1, particularly those related to the themes of the lessons. How might you introduce each one, explain its objectives, and provide instructions for carrying it out? For example, in Lesson 1.1, what might you say to help the children understand that all

created things are, by their very existence, praying to God? How would you guide them as they act out being a field of corn, or some other crop, that is parched but then receives rain?

In Lesson 1.2, the second set of activities related to drama is meant to reinforce in the children's minds the idea that one gains strength from prayer. How would you explain the activities to the children in a way that will help them appreciate this purpose?

As for Lesson 1.3, the second set of activities will enable you to build on the many conversations you have had with the children on previous occasions regarding the attitudes they should manifest during prayer. How will you make sure that, in carrying out the suggested activities, your students grasp to some extent the idea that the reverence we show outwardly springs from an appreciation of the beauty and majesty of the Word of God?

SECTION 15

The artistic activities the children carried out in Grade 1 enhanced their appreciation of beauty and order and developed in them certain important skills and abilities, among them

paying attention to detail and focusing on the task at hand. These skills and abilities will be further cultivated in the lessons here. Each set includes a series of activities centered on one basic element of art. In each lesson, the children will first undertake one or two activities to help them become better familiar with the element addressed and more adept at utilizing it. They will then be guided to apply what they have learned to create a simple image related to some aspect of the theme of the lesson.

Review the activities in Set 1, which focus on the element of “line” in art. What preparations will you need to make in advance of each lesson? How will you describe to the children the purpose of the different activities and what is expected of them?

Lesson 1.1: _____

Lesson 1.2: _____

Lesson 1.3: _____

SECTION 16

Having examined the activities of the first set of lessons, take some time to practice teaching them with your fellow participants in this course: introducing the prayer that the children are expected to memorize, describing the central theme of each lesson, explaining words and phrases key to understanding the meaning of the quotations, singing songs you have selected, narrating the stories, and presenting the drama and artistic activities.

You may wish to carry out a similar exercise with the members of your study group after the review of Sets 2 and 3.

SECTION 17

We will now begin our review of the lessons of Set 2, which are concerned with the love of God and obedience to His laws and teachings. Building on the ideas treated in the previous set related to prayer, these lessons are intended to help the children think about the nature of God's commandments and the importance of following them. You may find it useful to look over the lessons and write down the principal concepts they explore.

Lesson 2.1: _____

Lesson 2.2: _____

Lesson 2.3: _____

How do the principal concepts treated in each of the lessons reinforce one another?

SECTION 18

Below is the prayer the children will memorize over the course of these three lessons. As always, you will want to help them understand the meaning of key words and phrases. What words might be unfamiliar to your students? How might you explain them?

“O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord.”⁸

SECTION 19

Now let us consider the themes of the three lessons of Set 2. As you will recall, in Sections 9 through 13 of the first unit of this book, you were given an opportunity to deepen your own understanding of the nature of God's laws and the relationship between obedience and love. You also reflected there on how the acquisition of spiritual qualities contributes to the observance of His laws and how adherence to these laws fosters, in turn, the development of such qualities. In this light, examine together with the other members of your study group the introductory statement and the quotation for memorization in each lesson, as you did for those of Set 1, and discuss the following questions:

- a. How will the analogy of the fortress in Lesson 2.1 help the children grow in their assurance of God's love for them?

- b. How might you explain to the children that happiness comes from following God's guidance and living in accordance with His teachings?

- c. Why is it important for the children to understand that it is because of our love for God that we obey His laws, the main idea addressed in Lesson 2.2?

- d. How would you explain to the children that, by following God's commandments, we develop spiritual qualities such as faithfulness, courage, and steadfastness?

- e. How will the explanation in Lesson 2.3 help the children see the laws of God as lamps of His loving providence?

It would be helpful to mention here that Bahá'u'lláh has revealed God's guidance to humanity in many forms, including laws, ordinances, exhortations, and principles. In general, in the three lessons of this set, the words "commandments" and "laws" are used in an inclusive sense. That said, you should remember that there is a distinction between, for example, a "law" and an "exhortation", especially when teaching Lesson 2.3, where, as you have seen, you will be bringing specific commandments to the attention of the children. Discuss with your fellow participants in this course how you would explain each of the laws below to your students.

- Commandment against backbiting
- Commandment against cruelty to animals
- Commandment to be courteous

Now, look at the words and phrases that have been identified as key to understanding the meaning of the quotations and read again the sentences that have been constructed for each one. Then write below one or two additional sentences that place the word or phrase in a context familiar to your students.

Stronghold: _____

Safe and secure: _____

Perish: _____

Omnipotent: _____

Address: _____

Observe: _____

Commandments: _____

Assuredly: _____

Loving providence: _____

Creatures: _____

SECTION 20

Now that you have thought further about ideas presented in these lessons, you may wish to identify with your fellow teachers a few songs that could reinforce the theme of each one. The song “I Want to Be Happy” is one example from the collection provided.

Lesson 2.1: _____

Lesson 2.2: _____

Lesson 2.3: _____

SECTION 21

As always, every lesson in this set includes a story that will offer the children some insight into its central theme. After rereading the three stories, discuss the questions below with your group.

The story in Lesson 2.1 is about Martha Root; it demonstrates her reliance on God during a perilous journey she undertook to teach the Cause in Latin America. How will you explain to the children who Martha Root was and the purpose of her travels? How will you relate the experience of Martha Root to the idea that God’s love is like a fortress? What details will be important to emphasize in the narration of the story if the children are to grasp its main theme?

Lesson 2.2 tells a story from the life of Ḥájí Muḥammad, describing an occasion when he spontaneously and joyfully followed the instructions of Bahá’u’lláh. What details will be important to convey in order to help the children understand the relationship between trust in God and obedience to His commands? How will you help them to see that Ḥájí Muḥammad’s complete compliance with the Blessed Beauty’s wishes was born out of his devotion and love for Him?

The story in the next and final lesson of Set 2 is also drawn from the life of Ḥájí Muḥammad. However, in this episode, which took place earlier in his life, we see that his own desire prevented him from heeding the wishes of Bahá’u’lláh. How can you tell this story in such a way as to reinforce in the minds of the children the importance of following God’s commandments and developing the qualities that will enable them to be obedient to His laws?

SECTION 22

Many a spiritual quality is developed as one learns to adhere closely to God's commandments. Three such qualities that we examined in the previous unit in relation to this overarching theme were contentment, courage, and faithfulness, and they are brought to your attention again—in the lessons of Set 2. Discuss with your group how, in teaching these three lessons, you might weave ideas related to these qualities into your conversations with the students—particularly during the periods dedicated to memorization and storytelling—and encourage them to recite the corresponding verses they memorized in Grade 1. Write some of your thoughts in the space below.

SECTION 23

Review the drama activities of each lesson in Set 2 and analyze them as you did those of the first set. Discuss with your fellow teachers how you might introduce the activities, explain their objectives, and give instructions for carrying them out, particularly those related to the themes.

In Lesson 2.1, for example, how would you arrange the class so that all the children have a chance to act out, in teams of three, the simple scenarios that help them think about actions pleasing to God? Are there any additional scenarios that you could present to the children?

The drama activity related to the theme of Lesson 2.2 asks the children to act out, in two different ways, the journey that Ḥájí Muḥammad's ship made from 'Akká to Jeddah: first pretending to be nervous passengers on the ship and then manifesting the same trust in God that Ḥájí Muḥammad demonstrated. What will you say to help your students think through how their actions in the two scenarios will differ?

Finally, how will you prepare the children for the skit in Lesson 2.3, in which they will act out, in teams of two, an imaginary trip to the market to buy vegetables for their mother? Do you know any other stories related to obedience that they could act out? What would happen if a teacher simply asked the children to do this type of activity without engaging them in a conversation that raises their consciousness about what the story is trying to teach?

SECTION 24

Now review the artistic activities in the three lessons of Set 2, which take up the element of “shape”. How will you explain to the children the purpose of each activity and what is expected of them? How will you prepare in advance for this portion of each lesson?

Lesson 2.1: _____

Lesson 2.2: _____

Lesson 2.3: _____

SECTION 25

In the lessons of Set 3, the children will be introduced to the idea that they have been created to know God and to love Him and that seeking knowledge through His Manifestations and through the study of His creation will be a central occupation of their lives. You will strive to strengthen within them the thirst for knowledge that they already possess and to raise their awareness of the importance of applying knowledge to the betterment of humanity. Further, you will consider with them the qualities and attributes that are essential for the investigation of reality. With these thoughts in mind, you should now look over the lessons of this set and write down below the principal concepts treated in each.

Lesson 3.1: _____

Lesson 3.2: _____

Lesson 3.3: _____

Now that you are familiar with the concepts addressed in the lessons, you may proceed with the study of the sections below, which will assist you in preparing for the task ahead.

SECTION 26

It is suggested that you help the children memorize the prayer below over the course of these three lessons. Before asking them to commit it to memory, you will want, as always, to assist them in understanding key words and phrases that may be new or difficult to them. Identify with the members of your group any such words and phrases and consider how you might go about explaining their meaning.

“O my God! O my God! Thou seest these children who are the twigs of the tree of life, the birds of the meads of salvation, the pearls of the ocean of Thy grace, the roses of the garden of Thy guidance.

“O God, our Lord! We sing Thy praise, bear witness to Thy sanctity and implore fervently the heaven of Thy mercy to make us lights of guidance, stars shining above the horizons of eternal glory amongst mankind, and to teach us a knowledge which proceedeth from Thee. Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!”⁹

SECTION 27

As you recall, Sections 14 to 19 of the previous unit were dedicated to the overall theme of seeking knowledge and the role its application plays in forging desirable patterns and habits of conduct in the lives of children. A central idea addressed there is that we seek knowledge from two sources—the Book of Revelation and the Book of Creation—knowledge that we acquire, diffuse, and apply to the advancement of civilization. It is in light of the mutually reinforcing relationship between knowledge of God and obedience to His teachings that the three lessons of this set follow those in Set 2, which revolve around the concept of adherence to the laws of God. With these ideas in mind, you are now asked to review the brief introductory statements and the quotations for memorization in Lessons 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3. To help you think about how you will present the theme of each one, discuss the following questions with your study group:

- a. It is essential that children understand, as mentioned in Lesson 3.1, that we attain the knowledge of God through His Manifestations, Who bring to us His teachings. How does this understanding strengthen their love for God and their desire to please Him?

- b. Can you think of some examples, in addition to the ones provided in the introductory statement, that will assist children in perceiving the signs of God’s perfection in everything He has created?

- c. What examples could you give to the children to help them understand what is meant in Lesson 3.2 by “knowledge of the sciences and the arts”?

- d. What are some examples of spiritual knowledge we gain from the Manifestations of God?

- e. How could you explain to the children what it means to apply knowledge to improve our communities?

- f. In what way could you help the children understand how knowledge is like a stronghold?

- g. Why is it important for children to begin to recognize, as mentioned in Lesson 3.3, that our understanding of certain things is always incomplete, no matter how much we learn?

- h. How does likening a seeker of truth to someone who searches for light, with no regard for the lamp from which it shines, help children understand the requisite qualities they should develop in their search for knowledge?

- i. How can children be helped to see that the search for knowledge extends beyond the classroom and acquire the attitudes and qualities that will enable them to learn throughout their lives?

You are encouraged to review the sentences that have been provided to help you explain to the children words key to grasping the meaning of the quotations they will memorize in this set. For each word, write one or two additional sentences that place it in a context familiar to your students.

Purpose: _____

Attain: _____

Presence: _____

Exert every effort: _____

Understanding: _____

Strain every nerve: _____

Accomplishments: _____

Utmost: _____

Ability: _____

Exertion: _____

SECTION 28

Having considered the quotations that the children are to memorize in these three lessons, you are encouraged to identify two or three songs that relate to the main theme of each. For example, “O Seeker” and “Táhirih, the Pure” from the collection of songs provided could be appropriate choices.

Lesson 3.1: _____

Lesson 3.2: _____

Lesson 3.3: _____

SECTION 29

Let us turn our attention to the stories that accompany the lessons of this set, which are intended to illustrate their central themes. After rereading the stories, discuss with the members of your study group the questions below.

Lesson 3.1 tells the story of the mission given to Vahíd by the king of Persia to interview the Báb and determine whether the claims He made were true. What details will you be sure to include in your narration to help the children follow the account? How will the story help them understand what it means to seek knowledge from the Manifestations of God and appreciate the importance of humility in this connection?

In Lesson 3.2, the children will learn about the sacrificial efforts of Susan Moody, an American doctor who followed the instructions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to go to Iran. What aspects of the story will you emphasize in your narration so that it strengthens the children’s desire to gain knowledge and apply it for the benefit of others? What qualities did Dr. Moody display in applying her knowledge for the betterment of the lives of the people of Iran, especially those of women and girls?

In Lesson 3.3, the students will learn about another valiant woman from Bahá’í history, the illustrious Ṭáhirih. How does the story describe Ṭáhirih’s love of truth and eagerness to seek knowledge—this, despite the enormous challenges she faced? What ideas will you emphasize in telling the story so that the children’s own desire to exert effort in the search for truth is strengthened?

SECTION 30

In the previous unit, we reflected on how four qualities in particular—humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice—strengthen and direct us in our efforts to search for truth, and you are reminded of their significance in the lessons of Set 3. As you teach these lessons, then, you will want to raise the children’s awareness of the importance of manifesting these and other spiritual qualities while seeking knowledge. Take a few minutes to identify with the other members of your group where in the lessons it might be natural to do this—for example, in introducing the quotations for memorization or in telling the stories. Write some of your ideas in the space provided. Remember, too, that you will want to remind your students of the verses they memorized in Grade 1 related to the qualities mentioned.

SECTION 31

To prepare to lead the children through the drama exercises of Set 3, review them now with your fellow teachers. Then decide how you will explain their objectives to your students, guide them through the steps of each activity, and provide them with clear instructions.

In the drama activity related to the theme of Lesson 3.1, the children are told that we can see the signs of God in all created things. They are then asked to imagine being an element of nature such as a mountain, a flower, or a cloud and to act accordingly. It may be worthwhile for you here to give some thought to how each of the elements mentioned in the lesson, and any others you may suggest for this activity, reveal the signs of God.

In Lesson 3.2, you will present to the children a few imaginary situations in which certain characters come into contact with Susan Moody. The children will then need to think about the qualities of Dr. Moody and describe them from the perspective of these characters. What do think the children will learn from this exercise?

The second part of the drama activities in Lesson 3.3 is intended to help your students understand what it means to search after truth. What insights do you hope the children will gain from the story of the village of Karu Karu?

SECTION 32

The final component of the lessons relates to the arts. In the previous sets, the children developed some familiarity with two basic elements of art—line and shape—and they will now learn about “texture”. You may already have noticed that the activities in Set 3 are somewhat more complex than the earlier ones. Read through the art exercises again and discuss with the members of your group how you will explain to the children the purpose of each activity and what is expected of them. Think, too, of what preparations you will need to make for these activities to proceed smoothly.

Lesson 3.1: _____

Lesson 3.2: _____

Lesson 3.3: _____

SECTION 33

Now that you have familiarized yourself with the various components of these nine lessons and have practiced carrying out the activities with your fellow teachers, it would be helpful to discuss a few practical considerations.

As you have seen, the material offered in these lessons is much more extensive than what was given to you in Grade 1, which could generally be covered in a single class period. Here, instead, you will need to determine how best to distribute the suggested activities across two or possibly three sessions. However you choose to do so, it will be important to make sure that the core elements of the lesson, which are intended to shed light on the habits and pattern of conduct that are a reflection of inner spiritual qualities—particularly, the quotation for memorization and the story—remain the central focus of each class period. In other words, it would not benefit the overall learning process for an entire class period to be dedicated solely, say, to drama or art. In this connection, you should take advantage of every opportunity, in implementing these other elements, to reinforce in the minds and hearts of your students the significance of the quotation they have memorized and the insights they have gained from the corresponding story.

You will be challenged in these lessons, then, to draw on your own experience in organizing the activities of each class period and in offering the content across several sessions. In this, your ability to review the ideas discussed with the children from one period to the next will need to be greatly sharpened. So, too, will you need to be conscious of the rhythm established in every session, making sure that those activities which require a great deal of movement are interspersed effectively with those that are more tranquil. Remember that you will have your notebook on hand, in which you are keeping track of your analysis of each lesson and recording your thoughts on how to teach it and your reflections on how the sessions unfold. You will also continue to make note there of each child's progress, which you will, of course, discuss with his or her parents during visits to their home.

Set 1

Turning to God in Prayer

LESSON 1.1

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

Open the class by reciting a prayer you have selected in advance. You can then ask two or three of the children to say one they know by heart. Afterwards, the students can start to commit to memory the prayer below. In introducing it, you should be prepared to explain through concrete examples any words and phrases which, key to understanding its meaning, may be unfamiliar to the children. It should be possible for most of your students to memorize the prayer while going through the three lessons of Set 1.

“O Lord! I am a child; enable me to grow beneath the shadow of Thy loving-kindness. I am a tender plant; cause me to be nurtured through the outpourings of the clouds of Thy bounty. I am a sapling of the garden of love; make me into a fruitful tree.

“Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful, and Thou art the All-Loving, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing.”¹⁰

As you move through the three lessons, you should seek opportunities during your discussions with the children to remind them of the spiritual qualities they learned about in Grade 1 that relate closely to the overall theme of this set, “Turning to God in Prayer”, particularly enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment. In doing so, you may also wish to remind them of the verses they memorized last year, which you could ask them to recite at appropriate times:

“Be ye enkindled, O people, with the heat of the love of God, that ye may enkindle the hearts of others.”¹¹

“Be thou happy. Be thou grateful. Arise to render thanks unto God, that thy thankfulness may conduce to an increase of bounty.”¹²

“Know that thy true adornment consisteth in the love of God and in thy detachment from all save Him . . .”¹³

B. Memorizing quotations

It is suggested that you put the explanation below in your own words in order to introduce the quotation for memorization.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that prayer is “conversation with God”. Through our prayers we speak to God of our love for Him. When we love a friend, it is natural we should wish to say so, even though our friend is aware of our love. Similarly, although God knows what is in our hearts, still we want to tell Him of our love for Him and thank Him for the bounties that He has showered upon us.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived in a state of prayer. His heart was always turned towards God. He often mentioned that there is nothing sweeter in life than prayer. When we converse with God each day, we draw closer to Him and our love for Him grows stronger. This love fills our hearts with incomparable joy. We should also know that God loves us

more than we can possibly imagine. So it is that we constantly receive His bounties as we pray to Him to guide us, to protect us, and to help us become worthy of His love. To aid us in our efforts to live our lives in a state of prayer, with our hearts always turned towards God, let us memorize the following quotation of Bahá'u'lláh:

“Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men.”¹⁴

Before the children begin to memorize the quotation, you should help them gain some understanding of its meaning by explaining words and phrases that may be new to them. The sentences below will assist you in doing so. You may wish, in addition, to create a few sentences that place the words in a context relevant to the cultural setting of your students.

Intone

1. She stood before the meeting with her head bowed and her eyes closed. Silence filled the room. Then she lifted her head and began to intone the verses of God in a melodious voice.
2. Bahereh taught her children to intone beautiful prayers at the beginning of each new day and in the evening before they slept.

Kindle

1. The grass in the field was very dry. In the intense heat of the summer, the dried grass caught fire. The heat of the sun kindled the fire.
2. After reading a few passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Florence felt the fire of the love of God kindled in her heart.

Attract

1. We enjoy looking at flowers because they are beautiful. We are attracted to their beauty.
2. When we feel God's love, we want to be near to Him. Our hearts are attracted to God by the power of His love.

C. Songs

As you carry out the various activities of this lesson, you could sing with the children one or two songs they already know, perhaps related to the spiritual qualities mentioned earlier—enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment—and help them learn at least one new song that you have selected to reinforce the ideas you shared with them in introducing the quotation above.

D. Story

For this part of the lesson, ask your students to sit quietly while you tell them a story that will help them understand what it means to live in a state of prayer.

During the early days of the Bahá'í Faith, many heroic souls did extraordinary things in service to God. This is the story of a young boy, Rúḥu'lláh Varqá, who lived in Persia during the time of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So great was Rúḥu'lláh's love for God, and so absolute his dedication to His Cause, that whenever we hear his name we think of a life of devotion and servitude.

When Rúḥu'lláh was about seven years old, he traveled with his father to the Holy Land. There, he had the great privilege of meeting Bahá'u'lláh, Who had brought to humanity God's message for this day. Rúḥu'lláh's heart became filled with love for Bahá'u'lláh, and he wanted nothing more than to serve Him. Upon returning home to Persia, he spent his time sharing with others news of Bahá'u'lláh's coming. Rúḥu'lláh was truthful, honest, courteous, and kind, and his words had a great effect on all who heard him. He rose at every dawn to pray and, with his heart turned towards God, passed each day in servitude to Him.

One day, Rúḥu'lláh was summoned to appear before an official. At that time, many people were fearful of the new message that was being spread throughout the land. They clung to the beliefs of the past, and the followers of the new Faith often became victims of harsh punishments. For this reason, Rúḥu'lláh's father was in great danger. As proof that he had raised his sons in this new Faith, Rúḥu'lláh was asked to say a prayer in the presence of the official. This, it was hoped, would be enough to convince the official to condemn his father. Calmly, Rúḥu'lláh prepared his heart to offer supplication to God. Then, in a melodious voice, he chanted a Bahá'í prayer of exquisite beauty. The official was deeply moved. He dismissed the matter immediately, saying he would not condemn a man who had raised a child so wonderful. And so Rúḥu'lláh's father was saved.

Later, when Rúḥu'lláh was about twelve years old, he would once again set out with his father to visit the Holy Land. This time, he would be blessed to pass his days in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who loved Rúḥu'lláh very much and especially enjoyed hearing him chant in his beautiful voice the many prayers he knew by heart. Rúḥu'lláh would leave the Holy Land ablaze with divine love, ready to sacrifice his all for the Cause of God.

E. Drama

To acquire the discipline yet freedom of movement needed to participate in creative drama, the children must learn to control their actions within a defined space. The following activities will contribute to the development of this ability:

1. Have your students stand about two meters apart from one another. Each child should imagine that he or she is standing in a corner of a square measuring about one and a half meters by one and a half meters. Ask them to draw with their eyes the boundaries of their imaginary squares. Then have each of them walk along the border of his or her own square.

2. Next tell them to imagine that there is a rope about a half a meter above the ground stretching across the middle of each of their squares. Ask them to jump over it, crawl under it, walk along it, hop along it, and go around it without leaving their squares.
3. Now ask them to pretend to be: a grasshopper jumping, a butterfly fluttering, a rabbit hopping, a cat walking, a bird gliding, a horse galloping, a frog lurching, a duck waddling—all without moving out of their squares.

The children also need to learn to cooperate and work together in unison. The following activities will help them develop some of the corresponding abilities:

1. Divide the youngsters into pairs. Think of a very heavy object that is familiar to them and ask each pair to pretend they are carrying it together.
2. Then ask each pair to pretend they are digging a well together.
3. Now tell them to imagine that one of the children has, with the permission of his or her parents, invited a friend over. One child in each pair is the host and the other is the guest. When the guest arrives, the host invites him or her to come in and offers something refreshing to drink. The children may take turns being the host and the guest.

The second type of activity is related to the theme of the lesson, the nature of prayer. Tell the children that they are now going to act out a situation and that, as they do so, they should keep in mind that prayer is conversation with God.

1. Begin by having the children return to their imaginary squares. Once they are in position, explain to them that, although we pray to God with words, other things, by their very existence, are asking for God's blessings and bounties. In this way, all created things are praying to God. A plant, for example, needs rain to grow. By its very existence, the plant prays, "O God! Send me rain!"
2. Now tell the children to pretend that they are a field of corn, or another crop with which they are familiar. For some days there has been no rain on the field. How do they look? Days pass, but there is not a cloud in the sky. The plants droop more and more, day by day. Silently they are praying. Then, suddenly, there is a clap of thunder in the distance. It grows louder and louder. You can use your hands or some instrument to make the noise of thunder. Then start slowly tapping on something, pretending to be rain. Gradually tap faster and faster. The rain has come, and little by little the plants raise their drooping leaves.

F. Drawing and art

The artistic activities in the first three lessons will strengthen the ability of your students to draw with lines. In preparation for Lesson 1.1, make copies of the corresponding drawing sheets provided at the end of the unit. You may also find it helpful to bring some blank pieces of white paper.

1. First pass out copies of Sheet 1, either one to each student or a few to be shared. With the class, go over the different types of lines shown in the squares: short lines, long lines, thin lines, thick lines, curved lines, and scribbles.

2. Next, hand out to each student a copy of Sheet 2 with blank squares. Ask the children to draw in their blank squares lines of the same types shown in Sheet 1. They can be encouraged to experiment with how to draw the various kinds of lines. For example, thick lines can be drawn by going over the same area multiple times or by simply putting more pressure on the pencil.
3. Now remind the students of the drama activity they carried out earlier where they pretended to be a field of corn or some other crop. Give each student a copy of Sheet 3 with the line drawing of a stalk of corn. Ask them to draw a few healthy stalks next to it, practicing their skills of drawing with lines. As an extension to this activity, you may ask the children to then draw on the other side of the page, or on a blank piece of paper, what the crops might look like if they did not receive rain for a few weeks.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 1.2

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

To begin the class, recite a prayer from memory and ask a few of your students to do the same. The children can then continue to memorize the prayer they started to learn in Lesson 1.1.

Remember that, as you move through this lesson, you should look for opportunities to weave into your discussions ideas related to the spiritual qualities of enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment, which the youngsters learned about last year.

B. Memorizing quotations

The following explanation will assist you in introducing to the children the quotation to be memorized:

We know that, when we pray, we are conversing with God. Through prayer, we express our love for Him, thank Him for all the bounties He has showered upon us, and ask Him to guide us. When we are sick, we pray to Him to bring us healing. When we are in difficulty, we supplicate His assistance. When we are in doubt and confused, we seek the light of His wisdom. We do not only pray for ourselves but also for our family, our friends, our community, and for all of humanity.

Once someone wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and asked: “Why should we pray? God has created us and knows what is best for every one of us. He has created the whole universe in perfect order and knows the best arrangement for things. What is then the wisdom of seeking His help and telling Him of our needs?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered that it is only proper for a weak one to supplicate the Strong One, for a seeker of bounty to implore the All-Bountiful One. Turning to God and seeking His gifts and bounties, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained, illumines the heart and brings life to the soul. We could say, then, that prayer is like food for the soul; it nourishes and strengthens it. Just as we must eat every day so that our bodies do not become weak and sick, we must give nourishment to our souls by turning our hearts and minds to God daily and conversing with the One Who has created us. This is why we are exhorted to pray every morning and every evening, in times of difficulty as well as in times of ease and comfort, when we are facing sickness as well as when we are enjoying good health, when we are sad as well as when we are joyful.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá assures us that if we pray for something that is in agreement with Divine wisdom, then God will bestow it upon us. But occasionally we unknowingly ask for things that will harm us, and God, in His infinite wisdom, does not grant our wish. No matter how much we may desire something, we are confident that He will do what is best for us. To help us remember why we pray, let us memorize the following quotation:

“It is the greatest longing of every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God to find time to turn with entire devotion to his Beloved, so as to seek His bounty and blessing and immerse himself in the ocean of communion, entreaty and supplication.”¹⁵

Here are some sentences that you could use, along with any additional ones you may wish to create in preparing for this lesson, to help your students understand the meaning of words in the quotation that may be new to them. The children are, of course, already familiar with the word “attracted” from your discussion in the preceding lesson; however, you may wish to review it with them.

Longing

1. When Tanya’s brother went away to university, she missed him very much. Tanya felt a great longing in her heart to be near her brother again.
2. Rodrigo was tired after working many hours in the fields, planting crops. At the end of the day, he longed to rest.

Immerse

1. In order to boil an egg, it must be completely covered with water. To boil the egg, you must immerse it in water.
2. After working on the engine of the car, Norman’s hands were dirty and greasy. So he filled a bucket from the well and put his hands into the water, washing off the dirt and grease. His hands were immersed in the water.

Communion

1. Because of difficulties in their own country, all the brothers left their homeland and went to different places around the world to look for work. Many years went by, and they did not see each other or speak to one another often. But they always remained in communion through their thoughts and prayers, and eventually they were joyfully reunited as old men.
2. When we pray, we turn our hearts to God and converse with Him. Prayer is communion with God.

Entreaty

1. One of the king’s subjects was in great need, so he begged the king to assist him. The king considered his subject’s entreaty and agreed to help.
2. The teachers were concerned about the small number of books in the school’s library, so they asked the principal to order additional ones. The principal listened to their entreaty and agreed to their request. Now there are enough books for all the children to read.

C. Songs

During the class periods dedicated to this lesson, you can find appropriate times to sing a few songs with the children, including at least one you have chosen to reinforce the above theme.

D. Story

After gathering the children together for this part of the lesson, explain to them that you will now tell them a story which will illustrate for them the importance of praying daily.

This is a story of one of the early Bahá'ís in the West, Lua Getsinger, and an important lesson she learned about prayer. Lua loved God very much, and she often turned to Him in eager supplication, that she might be enabled to live a life of service. She prayed, too, that she would learn to be more patient. But, even in this, she was so enthusiastic that she wanted to learn it quickly, without having to wait too long!

One day, when she was visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land, He helped her to see that there are some things for which we must always make time, no matter how hurried we might feel. Rushing off to breakfast without having said her usual morning prayers, Lua met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the hallway. He looked at her, staring deeply into her eyes. And what do you think He said to her? "Lua," He said, "you must never eat material food in the morning until you have had spiritual food." So it was that Lua learned she must never fail to draw sustenance from God's heavenly bounties, the source of true strength.

E. Drama

This part of the class begins with activities that will help your students develop skills and abilities related to drama.

1. As you did in the previous lesson, have the children stand about two meters apart and imagine that they are in their own squares. You may ask them each to walk along the border of his or her square.
2. Now ask the children to raise up their arms and, stretching from the tips of their toes to the tips of their fingers, reach towards the sky. Then tell them to relax and let their arms and head hang freely. Repeat this exercise three or four times.
3. Next ask your students to stand as tall as they can and raise their arms over their heads, pressing the palms of their hands together. They are candles burning brightly. Explain to them that you will slowly count backwards from ten. As you do so, they should pretend they are melting. By the time you reach zero, they should be like a pool of wax on the ground. The children should remain in that position until you give them the signal to move again.

The above exercises will have helped the children develop their skills of movement and physical expression. They will also need to acquire increasingly effective skills of verbal expression. To assist them, ask them to say "Good morning"

- as though they were respectfully greeting a teacher
- as though they were excited to see a friend
- as though they had met a friend who was feeling sad
- as though they were trying not to wake a sleeping baby

The second set of activities has to do with the theme of this lesson, why we pray. Tell the children that, for these activities, they should remember what they learned about earlier—that, just as we eat every day to maintain our physical health, we turn to God in prayer every day in order to keep our souls strong and healthy.

1. Begin by having the children return to their imaginary squares. Ask them to show that they are full of strength by pretending to lift some imaginary heavy objects, by jumping up high to reach something in an imaginary tree, and by building an imaginary tower.
2. Now tell the children to pretend they are getting hungry and feeling weak. Ask them to repeat the lifting, jumping and building exercises.
3. Then tell them that they are receiving food and beginning to feel strong again. Ask them to repeat the exercises once more.

F. Drawing and art

In preparing for this part of the class, make sure you have a sufficient number of the drawing sheets for Lesson 1.2 provided at the end of the unit.

1. First pass out copies of Sheet 1, either one to each student or a few to be shared. Point out to the children the different types of lines shown in the squares: continuous lines, broken lines, and lines that radiate from the center.
2. Now give each student a copy of Sheet 2 with three blank squares and ask them to fill in their squares with the same kinds of lines.
3. Next, in handing out Sheet 3, remind the children of their earlier discussions about the importance of nourishing our souls by turning our hearts and minds to God in prayer every day, just as we nourish our bodies by eating nutritious foods. Have them look at the images of the eggplant and lemon on Sheet 3. Explain to them that both are drawn with a continuous line, and the line in the lemon also radiates from the center. Ask them to draw the two images, without lifting their pencils, in the empty squares provided.
4. Lastly, have the children use an eraser to remove small segments of their drawings to create broken lines. They should then show their drawings to one another and ask their friends whether the eggplant and lemon are still recognizable.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 1.3

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

After beginning the class in the usual manner, with the recitation of prayers, review with the children the one they have been memorizing over the last two lessons. Since they will start to learn a new prayer in the next lesson, you should make sure they can say this first one well.

While going through this final lesson of Set 1, you should, as before, find opportunities to help the children recognize the importance of manifesting the spiritual qualities of enkindlement, thankfulness, and detachment when turning to God in prayer and encourage them to recite the corresponding verses they learned last year.

B. Memorizing quotations

The following ideas will assist you in presenting the quotation that the children are expected to memorize:

When we pray, we must always remember that we are in the presence of God, the Almighty. We show humility before Him and act with reverence. We are told that God has created everything in this vast world for us except the human heart, which belongs to Him. So just as we do not touch our finest clothes when our hands are covered with dirt, we must cleanse our hearts of even the smallest trace of envy and selfish desire when we approach God in prayer. We turn our attention away from everything else and focus our thoughts completely on Him. When we are in this state, we will find ourselves calm and serene and will taste the sweetness of God's love.

'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged the friends to keep their thoughts centered solely on God when praying. He urged them to forget the things of this world, what is going on around them, and even their own selves. To those who saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá in prayer, it seemed as if He had been carried away to another world. He was free of distractions, completely absorbed in conversation with God. As we focus our thoughts on God and pray to Him with reverence, we, too, feel our hearts overflow with His love. To help us remember how we conduct ourselves during prayer, let us memorize the following words of Bahá'u'lláh:

“O Son of Light! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it.”¹⁶

In helping the children to understand the above quotation, you may need to explain to them the meaning of the words below. The following sentences will assist you in doing so:

Commune

1. When Ioana plays the flute, everyone feels the joy of her music. Ioana communes with the audience through music.
2. When Hugo prays, he feels close to God. Through prayer, Hugo communes with God.

Essence

1. At the beginning of the school year, the principal spoke to all of the students in the school and reminded them that they should pay attention in class, do their homework, and read as much as possible. The essence of her advice was that they should study hard.
2. Ethan always thought about how to serve others and dedicated himself to helping people. Service was the essence of Ethan's life.

C. Songs

Remember that, while teaching this lesson, which may take two or three class periods, you will want to sing some songs with the children, including at least one new song that will help to reinforce the above ideas in their minds.

D. Story

It is suggested that you tell the children the following story:

During His travels in America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá once accepted to teach a very devoted Bahá'í how to pray. He told him to come to His residence at daybreak the next day. The believer's heart was filled with joy. He rose at dawn and rushed to the residence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When he entered the room of the Master, he found Him already in prayer. Realizing that he could not ask the Master any questions, he decided to do the same. So he kneeled on the floor and began to pray. He prayed silently for his relatives, for his friends and for himself. When he finished, he looked up and saw that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was still deep in prayer. So he decided to pray some more. He repeated all the prayers he knew over and over. Still there was no movement from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Now the believer noticed that one of his knees was beginning to ache and that his back was feeling uncomfortable. Next he heard the birds singing outside. Glancing around the room, he observed a large crack in the wall. Then he looked at the Master again and, all of a sudden, the expression on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's face created in him a strong desire to pray. He forgot everything else. The only desire in his heart was to be close to God and to converse with Him. He began to pray in a way he had never prayed before. The Master had taught him how to pray.

At that very moment 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose, approached him with a smile and said: "When you pray, you must not think of your aching body, nor of the birds outside the window, nor of the cracks in the wall! When you wish to pray you must first know that you are standing in the presence of the Almighty!"

E. Drama

As always, this period of the class begins with activities that are intended to help the children develop skills and abilities to participate effectively in creative drama.

1. Start by asking the children to stand in their imaginary squares. To make sure that their squares are well defined, have each of them walk along the border of his or her own square.
2. As in the preceding lesson, ask your students to raise up their arms, stretching them to the sky, and then relax. They should do this three or four times.
3. Now explain to them that you will call out a series of commands that they should instantly obey. The commands, which you should demonstrate to the children, are as follows:

FREEZE Stop all movement instantly and stand perfectly still

TURN FREEZE Turn halfway around and then freeze instantly

JUMP FREEZE Jump in the air and then freeze

TWIST FREEZE Jump in the air, turning halfway around, and then freeze

4. Then tell the children that, for the next exercise, they will move out of their imaginary squares. Ask them to walk around randomly in the area where the class is being held, making sure not to bump into one another. While they are walking, explain to them that you will call out the same commands and, once they have frozen, they should hold their positions until you give them the signal to move again. You should feel free to call out the commands as many times as you wish, in any order.

Now move on to the activities related to the theme of the lesson, which is about how we conduct ourselves during prayer. For this part of the lesson, you will need a prayer book. Remind the children that, when we pray with all our thoughts focused on God, we manifest awe and reverence towards Him. Then tell them that they will carry out a series of exercises which will help them understand what it means to treat a special object with reverence. We can show reverence, explain to them, in the way we position our bodies, in the way we move, and in the way we use our voices.

1. Begin by asking the children to return silently to their imaginary squares and to stand in a reverent posture. After a few moments, have them move into a reverent sitting position.
2. Now tell the children to imagine that they are holding a baby bird in their hands. Ask them to show that they are handling the bird gently and carefully.
3. Next tell the children to imagine that they are servants standing before the throne of a compassionate and just king. Ask them to show you how they would bow down before the king with respect and obedience.
4. Finally, while they are still standing in their squares, hold the prayer book for the children to see. Explain to them that this object is special because it contains the Word of God revealed by His Manifestation that we can read when turning to Him in love and devotion. Tell them that each child will have the chance to hold the prayer book, which they must handle with gentleness and reverence. Give the book to one of the

children and ask him or her to pass it to the next child, who should pass it to the next, and so on. As they pass it, each one should say, “It is your turn to hold this special book.” After handing the book over, every child should return to his or her imaginary square and sit in stillness and silence with eyes closed. The last child standing should return the book to you and then also sit.

5. After a few moments, you can thank the children for handling the prayer book with such reverence. Tell them that they will now move quietly to the drawing activity, one by one. Explain that you will gently tap one child on the shoulder and softly say “thank you”; he or she should then stand up, tap another child, repeat the words “thank you”, and go to the area designated for drawing. The other children should do the same, and the last one to be tapped may say “Thank you, everyone”, as he or she joins the rest of the class.

F. Drawing and art

As you did for the previous lessons, you will want to make ahead of time copies of the necessary drawing sheets to hand out to the children.

1. Begin this activity by passing out copies of Sheet 1 in the usual way—either one for each student or a few for the class to share. By now the children will be prepared for you to go over with them the different kinds of lines shown in the squares: straight and parallel lines, straight and crisscross lines, angular lines, and wavy lines. You can now provide each child with a copy of Sheet 2 with four blank squares. Ask them to draw the same types of lines in their squares.
2. For the next activity, the children will need Sheet 3, which has the alphabet twice, in uppercase and lowercase, with blank lines underneath each one. Remind your students that, as they know, sentences are made up of words, and words are made up of letters. Referring to the alphabet on the sheet, you should point out to them that letters are written with lines of different types—“c” has a curved line, capital “H” has two parallel lines, “z” has angular lines. Ask them to practice writing the alphabet, in uppercase and lowercase, on the blank lines.
3. To conclude the drawing activities for this lesson, the children will need a copy of Sheet 4 with the following prayer: “He is God! O God, my God! Bestow upon me a pure heart, like unto a pearl.” The children will remember this prayer from their Grade 1 lessons and will be eager to learn how to read and write it, if they do not already know how to do so. To help them, you can ask them questions such as “How many words are there in the prayer?” and “What kinds of lines do you see in the letters?” You could then have them practice writing the prayer on Sheet 5, carefully and with reverence.

G. Closing prayers

Set 2

Adhering to the Laws of God

LESSON 2.1

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

It is suggested that, after opening prayers, you review with the children the prayer from Lesson 1.1 that they now know by heart. You can then introduce the following prayer, which they will be memorizing over the next three lessons. Remember that you will need to explain the meaning of key words and phrases to the students before they begin.

“O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord.”¹⁷

In going through these three lessons, you will want to take every opportunity to help the children see how adhering to the laws of God, the overall theme of Set 2, calls for contentment, courage, and faithfulness—spiritual qualities they learned about in Grade 1. In this respect, it may be helpful for you to incorporate into your conversations with them the following quotations they committed to memory last year, which they can also be asked to recite at appropriate times:

“The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.”¹⁸

“The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.”¹⁹

“Happy is the faithful one who is attired with the vesture of high endeavor and hath arisen to serve this Cause.”²⁰

B. Memorizing quotations

To present the quotation for memorization, you may put the following explanation into your own words:

All of humanity has been created out of God’s love for His creation, and we are constantly nurtured and protected by His love. If for even a moment we did not receive the blessings of God, we would be lost. God’s love is like a fortress. A fortress is a mighty building with strong, thick walls that nothing can break through. When we are inside a fortress, we are safe from harm. In the same way, when our hearts are filled with the love of God and we try our best to please Him, we are protected in the fortress of His love; He will guide us and keep us out of harm’s way.

It is in heeding God’s guidance and living according to His teachings that we find true happiness, a happiness that will last forever. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we know, reflected all of God’s teachings perfectly. He said that His only joy in this world was to tread the path of God. We should do our utmost to follow His example, for otherwise we will assuredly be weighed down by sorrow and trouble. To help us remember that it is God’s

love that always keeps us safe and happy, let us memorize the following quotation of Bahá'u'lláh:

“O Son of Being! My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish.”²¹

It will be important to ensure that the children have a basic understanding of the above quotation before they begin to memorize it. The following sentences, together with any you may wish to construct yourself, will assist you in explaining words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to them:

Stronghold

1. To protect themselves from their enemies, the people built a large wall around the town. The town was made into a stronghold.
2. The farmer put his chickens in a coop to keep them safe from the foxes. The coop served as a stronghold for the chickens.

Safe and secure

1. The sheep got lost in the brush, and Marie had to find them so that the wild dogs would not get them. Now the sheep are back in the corral, safe and secure.
2. When a big storm came, all of the townspeople took shelter in the library. Everyone felt safe and secure inside its strong walls.

Perish

1. The village had seen little rain for many months, and everyone feared that the crops would perish without water.
2. After leaves fall off a tree, they gradually crumble and disappear into the soil. The leaves perish.

C. Songs

As with the previous lessons, you should find appropriate times when teaching this one to sing with the children a couple of songs they already know, as well as at least one new song that will reinforce the ideas discussed above.

D. Story

You can begin this part of the lesson by explaining to the children that you will tell them a story which will help them remember that, surrounded and protected by the love of God, we always follow His desire for us and do what is pleasing in His sight.

Some of you may have heard before of Martha Root. She was one of the early Bahá'ís of the West known for her heroic deeds and courage. As soon as she learned about the Faith, she was ready to spread the teachings far and wide. She wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá,

and He told her to follow her heart and travel the world to teach the Cause. “Roar out the call of the Divine Kingdom,” He replied. “Thou shalt witness great results and extraordinary confirmations.”

Now, Martha did not have much money, but she did have a talent for writing. So she decided that she could write stories and articles and sell them to newspapers, which would enable her to go from place to place and teach the Faith along the way. Someday you will learn more about the extraordinary travels she undertook over many years. Today we will hear the story of a trip she took from New York to South America. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had urged the Bahá’ís of the West to bring the teachings to that vast continent and to visit a special place there called “Bahia”. Martha made up her mind to go to that city first.

In those days, of course, the only way to make such a long trip was by sea. Her ship was delayed by almost a month, but it eventually set sail from New York and several weeks later reached Brazil in South America. She did not know anyone in that country and did not speak the language. Still, she knew that she would find a way to fulfill ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wish. It turned out that she had to take another boat to get to Bahia and after a few days arrived in that city. Martha made many friends there and shared with all of them the teachings of the Faith. She gave talks, published articles in local newspapers, and added Bahá’í books to the public library. But, of course, her trip was not over, and she traveled from city to city, and country to country. Her heart was always turned to God in love and devotion, and she prayed constantly for His guidance. And just as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had promised, doors opened to her everywhere she went.

Eventually, to get to the next country, Martha needed to cross the Andes Mountains. Now, the Andes Mountains are some of the highest in the world, and the peaks are covered in snow. To cross them requires strength and determination. Martha’s friends urged her not to go. It was wintertime, they said, and the passage would be cold and difficult. But Martha gathered a fur coat and other warm garments and set out with a small group on mules that was accompanied by several guides. Up and up they went, reaching the icy cold peaks. Sometimes the feet of the mules would slip and slide on the narrow passages. At other times the path was so steep and narrow, they had to walk and lead their mules. And once they had to go through a tunnel in total darkness, and the mule that Martha was riding stumbled near a cliff. But Martha, having arisen to fulfill ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wishes to spread the Bahá’í teachings, was protected in the stronghold of God’s love. Her guides knew the Andes Mountains well and avoided every danger. After several days, the group came down on the other side of the mountains, where Martha continued to travel from country to country and receive confirmations in her efforts to share the teachings.

E. Drama

By carrying out the following activities with the children, you can encourage them in their efforts to develop skills and abilities related to creative drama:

1. Begin by asking your students to stand in their imaginary squares. Once they are in position, have them each walk along the border of his or her own square, as they have done before.

2. Now have the children do the stretching exercise described in Lesson 1.2.
3. For this next exercise, the children will work outside their imaginary squares. Explain to them that they are to walk around randomly, as they did in the last lesson. This time, however, they should make broad sweeping motions with their arms and large flowing movements, high and low, with their bodies. They should move freely but be careful not to bump into one another. When you say “Freeze”, they should instantly stand still in whatever position they find themselves. Then ask one of them, “What are you doing?” The child should think about the position in which he or she is frozen and give an answer that corresponds to the position, for example, “I’m painting a fence,” or “I’m picking apples.” Repeat this exercise several times, making sure every child is given at least one opportunity to say what he or she is doing.

The above exercise, like the one in the preceding lesson, will have given the youngsters experience in moving around together in a large space. The next exercise is intended to build on some of the concepts presented in this lesson.

Listed here are several simple scenarios, each of which involves three children. Divide the children into groups of three. Have them enact the first scenario described and then say “Freeze”. Tell them to end the scene in a way they think would be pleasing to God. Repeat the activity with the other two scenarios.

- One child falls down while two others are passing by.
- Three friends are sharing some fruit and one of them drops his or her piece on the ground.
- Three siblings have each been given a task to clean up after dinner—to clear the table, to sweep the floor, and to wash the dishes. The third sibling is still washing the dishes when the other two finish their tasks.

F. Drawing and art

The drawing activities in the next three lessons will focus on the element of “shape” in art. In addition to copies of the four sheets marked for Lesson 2.1, you should have some blank pieces of white paper on hand for this part of the class.

1. Give each student a copy of Sheet 1 with the circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles. Ask the children to practice drawing the shapes on the sheet, first by tracing them along the dotted lines provided and then by drawing them in the blank space beneath.
2. Next, explain to the children that the shapes they have just drawn can be combined to create other shapes. Hand out copies of Sheet 2 with several combined shapes on the top of the page. You can then help your students to see how two triangles can form a *diamond*, how a square with two half circles can form an *oblong* shape, and how six triangles can form a *hexagon*. Encourage them to practice drawing a diamond, an oblong shape, and a hexagon, first by tracing them along the dotted lines provided and then by drawing them in the empty space on the page.

3. Once the students have completed their drawings, you can take the above activity further by explaining that, sometimes, shapes can be combined to resemble things we see in nature, like trees. Give each child a blank piece of paper and pass out copies of Sheet 3, either one to each student or a few to be shared. Point to one or two of the shapes that resemble trees in your region and ask the children which trees they remind them of. They can then practice drawing similar combined shapes on their blank pieces of paper.
4. Finally, remind the children of their earlier discussion about how God's love is like a fortress within which we are safe and secure. Tell them that, for the next activity, they will combine shapes in order to draw a fortress. Give each student a copy of Sheet 4, showing how this can be done. Ask each child to copy in the blank space on the page the three drawings shown, which progressively form a fortress.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 2.2

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

Following opening prayers, you should spend some time helping the children to memorize further the one you introduced to them in the preceding lesson.

Remember too that, in going through this lesson, you should make sure the children catch a glimpse of the importance of spiritual qualities—particularly contentment, courage, and faithfulness—in our efforts to obey the laws of God. You could also draw to their attention, when appropriate, the relevant verses they learned last year.

B. Memorizing quotations

You may present the quotation for memorization by putting the ideas below into your own words.

In His infinite love for us, God has given us laws and teachings. And it is out of our love for Him and our desire to attain His good pleasure that we obey the laws and teachings He has so graciously given to us. Obedience to God’s commandments draws us closer to Him and enables us to show forth faithfulness and contentment, steadfastness and courage, as well as many other spiritual qualities with which He wants us to be adorned. Love for God moves us to act in ways that are pleasing to Him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s example helps us to understand what it means to obey God’s commandments out of love. His love for God was so strong that it was the cause of everything He did every day. He arose each morning at dawn to pray and spent His time visiting the sick and needy, helping those around Him, and uplifting through His encouraging words and loving advice the spirits of the many guests He received at His home. He would often be awake past midnight, writing responses to the stream of letters that were sent to Him by people from all over the world. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “Nothing is too much trouble when one loves, and there is always time.” In our efforts to remember the importance of obeying God’s commandments out of our love for Him, let us memorize the following quotation of Bahá’u’lláh:

“The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: ‘Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.’”²²

Below are a few sentences that will help you to explain the meaning of some of the words in the above quotation which the children may find difficult. They are already familiar with the word “glory” from the quotation they memorized in Lesson 15 in first grade; however, you may wish to review it with the children here.

Omnipotent

1. God is omnipotent. He has power over all things.
2. Knowing that God is omnipotent, we seek the power of His Divine assistance when we pray.

Address

1. Once a year all of the students in the school gather to hear the principal speak. The principal addresses the students each year.
2. Koichi always speaks to his grandmother with love and humility. Koichi addresses his grandmother with respect.

Observe

1. When the traffic light turned red, Ethel brought to a stop the car she was driving. Ethel was careful to observe the traffic law.
2. Marisol was always quiet when she visited the library, where people are asked to remain silent or to speak in whispers. She always observed the rules of the library.

Commandments

1. Samuel says his prayers every day at morning and at night. Praying daily is one of the commandments of God. By praying Samuel is following God's commandment.
2. Teresa never tells lies. She obeys God's commandment to be truthful.

C. Songs

As always, sing a few songs with the children as you take them through the lesson.

D. Story

For this lesson, you can tell the children the following story, which provides a helpful illustration of joyful obedience:

Ḥájí Muḥammad lived during the time of Bahá'u'lláh, Who, as you know, revealed God's teachings for today. Ḥájí Muḥammad was honest in all his dealings as a businessman and was known for his trustworthiness. For a period of time, his work brought him to 'Akká. One day he was sitting in his office when 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered, bringing an urgent message from Bahá'u'lláh. Ḥájí Muḥammad was to leave immediately for the city of Jeddah in Arabia. He asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá whether he could have the bounty of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh before departing. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that there was no time as the ship was due to leave at any moment. Ḥájí Muḥammad closed the office at once and headed straight for the port to board the ship. His desire to obey was so exemplary that he had no other thought but to follow the command of Bahá'u'lláh.

As soon as Ḥájí Muḥammad boarded, the ship set sail. Only then did he realize that, because of the great rush, he had not thought to ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá the purpose of his trip to Arabia. Now it was too late! Still, he was not concerned. He was certain that, once he arrived in Jeddah, God would guide his steps.

The sea that day was unusually stormy, and the journey fraught with peril. Everyone was worried that the ship was going to sink—everyone, that is, except Hájí Muḥammad. He knew that he would be protected and the ship would arrive safely in Jeddah, for he had been entrusted by Bahá'u'lláh with a mission to carry out in that city. And the ship did indeed arrive at its destination.

After leaving the ship, Hájí Muḥammad heard two people talking in Persian among the crowds. Being Persian himself, he approached them and discovered that they, too, were Bahá'is and were on their way to 'Akká to visit Bahá'u'lláh. They had been unjustly imprisoned for their faith for ten years and had just been released. This was their first journey to the Holy Land, and they were in need of assistance. It then became clear to Hájí Muḥammad that the purpose of his mission in Jeddah was to help these two souls to find their way to 'Akká and attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, a responsibility which he carried out with great care and attention.

E. Drama

The activities that follow will help the children continue developing the skills and abilities of creative drama.

1. Ask your students to stand in their imaginary squares. You may then have them do the stretching exercise described in Lesson 1.2.
2. Now tell the children to stretch their arms out at shoulder length and rotate them slowly, making small circles. Gradually the circles should become bigger and bigger. As they do this exercise, their arms will feel heavier and heavier. Tell the children that when their arms feel very heavy, they should let them drop and shake them out.
3. For this next exercise, the children are to work outside of their imaginary squares. Explain to them that you are going to call out a shape. Without speaking to one another, they should position themselves, so that together they form that shape. To do this, they will need to watch one another carefully and pay close attention to one another's movements. It is suggested that you call out the following shapes: circle, triangle, square, straight line, crooked line.

The above exercise will have helped your students learn to pay attention to one another and coordinate their movements. It builds on the exercises in the preceding lessons in which they were moving around together in a large space. The next exercise is meant to reinforce in the minds of the children the theme of this lesson.

Tell the children that you will recount for them the journey made by the ship Hájí Muḥammad took from 'Akká to Jeddah. You should explain that, as you do so, they should act the story out, pretending to be passengers. Begin by asking the children to form a line and prepare to board the ship. Once they are all aboard, the ship sets sail under the bright sun on clear and still waters. As the shore gradually fades from sight, everyone sits down and settles in for the long journey across the sea. At first the sea is calm, but after a short time waves begin to lap against the side of the boat. The ship starts to rock in the wavy sea. Ask the children to look toward the horizon; they see dark clouds fast approaching and hear the distant roll of thunder. The passengers begin to feel afraid. As the waves become bigger and the darkness approaches, they huddle closer together. Have the children imagine that big drops of rain begin

to fall from the sky. Suddenly, thunder cracks overhead, and waves crash against the side of the ship. The rain pours down as it is tossed from side to side. Many of the passengers fear that the ship will sink into the sea. Just when they think all is lost, the storm seems to pass. The rain, the wind and the waves slowly begin to die down. Off in the distance the passengers see the shore of a distant land. The sun gradually appears from behind the clouds, and the sea turns calm once again.

Now retell the story and ask the children to reenact the drama, only this time pretending to be like Ḥájí Muḥammad on his journey. How would they be different from the other passengers on the ship? Ask them to show that Ḥájí Muḥammad felt assured and protected by God all through the journey because he knew that he was acting in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh, God's Manifestation on earth.

F. Drawing and art

In this lesson, the children will build on what they have learned about simple shapes to draw a more complex image. You should have enough copies of the designated drawing sheet for every child to have one.

1. First, remind the children of the shapes they drew in the last lesson—circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles—and of the combined shapes they drew using these basic shapes. You may wish to have copies of the sheets from Lesson 2.1 on hand to use as a reference.
2. Now remind the children of the story they heard in this lesson of Ḥájí Muḥammad's sea journey to Jeddah, which they also dramatized. Tell them that, for this activity, they will be drawing a ship similar to the one he might have traveled on. In their drawings, they will show what the ship looked like on calm waters and then what it looked like on rough seas.
3. Pass out to each child a copy of Sheet 1, which shows how to draw a ship step by step. In the bottom square on the left, which has a straight line representing calm waters, ask the children to draw the ship following the progression shown: first drawing the body of the ship, adding the masts, and then putting in the sails and the flags. They should then follow the same progression in drawing the ship in the last square, which has curved lines representing waves. Before they begin, ask them to describe how the ship will appear on rough seas with strong winds.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 2.3

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

Begin the class with opening prayers, and then help the children in their efforts to memorize the prayer introduced in Lesson 2.1. You will want to make sure they can recite it by heart in its entirety, since they will start to learn a new one in the next lesson. In conducting this final lesson of the set, you should continue to look for opportunities to introduce into your discussions ideas related to the spiritual qualities of contentment, courage, and faithfulness, so closely associated with the theme, and encourage the children to recite at appropriate times the corresponding verses they learned last year.

B. Memorizing quotations

You may put the following explanation into your own words to present the quotation for this lesson:

God, out of His love, has given us laws and teachings. We should not think of them as a set of rules; they are like lamps through which God illumines our path. The light that shines through them helps us distinguish right from wrong and guides us in the choices we make each day. In following the commandments of God, we grow spiritually and perform deeds that benefit others. So it is that we strive at all times to put into action His teachings. To pray daily is one of the commandments of God, and we observe it under all conditions, even, for example, if we are tired. We are told that we should not speak ill of others, that backbiting is not acceptable. So if people around us are gossiping, we do not take part in such conversations. To treat animals with kindness; to be courteous, friendly and hospitable; and to honor our parents—these are also commandments of God. We are exhorted to think each day about what we have done and consider what more we can do so that our actions increasingly come to reflect the teachings of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá dedicated His life to serving the Cause of God and to carrying out His commands. Patiently, He showed us the way. When asked by one of the friends how to put into practice the teachings of God and acquire spiritual qualities, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lovingly replied, “kam kam, rúz bih rúz”, which means “little by little, day by day”. He told us not to look at our weaknesses and shortcomings but encouraged us instead to turn towards God and rely on His mercy and assistance. To help us remember to make every effort to adhere to God’s teachings every day, let us memorize the following words of Bahá’u’lláh:

“Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures.”²³

Some sentences are provided below to assist you in explaining the meaning of words in the above quotation that the children may find difficult. They will be familiar with the words “commandments” from the preceding lesson and “mercy” from the quotation they memorized in Lesson 11 in the first grade; you may, however, wish to review the words with your students.

Assuredly

1. The two boys looked so similar that the teacher knew they must be brothers. “They are most assuredly brothers,” she thought to herself.
2. Olu’s friends were visiting him. He, with a great deal of care, had prepared for them a delicious meal. He assuredly cherishes his friends.

Loving providence

1. Sight, hearing, understanding, and even life itself are all gifts from God. They are the signs of His loving providence.
2. We know that, by following God’s commandments, we find true happiness and are protected from harm. We trust in God’s loving providence.

Creatures

1. Dolphins and whales cannot survive outside of water. They are creatures of the sea.
2. God has brought all things into being. We are all God’s creatures.

C. Songs

D. Story

In this lesson, you can tell the children the following story, which will reinforce in their minds the importance of observing God’s commandments at all times:

You remember the story of Hájí Muḥammad from our last lesson, how obedient he was to Bahá’u’lláh and what strength he drew from trust in God. But Hájí Muḥammad was not always so quick to obey. One of his pastimes was hunting, and you may be interested to know that he was an excellent marksman. His bullets never missed their targets. He could even hit a small bird in full flight while galloping on horseback. One day, with his rifle on his shoulder, he came upon a group of Bahá’ís who were on an outing with Bahá’u’lláh and decided to join them.

When Bahá’u’lláh saw that Hájí Muḥammad was going to use his rifle, He told him not to kill innocent birds. Hájí Muḥammad did not pay any attention to what Bahá’u’lláh said because his mind was on shooting, which he loved very much. So, he continued shooting at every bird he saw. But he was quite surprised to find that none of his bullets hit. He shot once, he shot twice, he shot many times—but did not bring down even one bird. He shot at big birds and at little birds, without any success.

The group was returning from the outing when a large, beautiful, white bird caught Hájí Muḥammad’s eye. It was so big that it could not fly quickly, and Hájí Muḥammad thought that surely it would be easy to hit this one. His first shot missed. Then he fired four more times, but he missed every time. In a panic the frightened bird flew even closer to him. Hájí Muḥammad thought that now he could not possibly miss. He fired two more shots, but the bird escaped.

Hájí Muḥammad was astonished, and he began to think about the whole incident. All of a sudden, he understood something very important. He realized that Bahá'u'lláh had given him a clear command, but in his preoccupation with his own wishes and desires, he had ignored Bahá'u'lláh. That day Hájí Muḥammad made a firm decision to obey the commandments of God at all times.

E. Drama

The following activities will strengthen the children's skills and abilities of drama:

1. As always, start by having the children stand in their imaginary squares and do the stretching exercise.
2. Now explain to your students that, for the next activity, they are going to communicate using only the movement of their bodies. To begin, ask them to say "Stop!" with their hands. You may then ask them to do the following:

SAY	USING
"Yes."	head
"I don't understand."	eyes
"I hear something."	ear
"I'm surprised."	jaw
"I smell fresh bread."	nose
"Come here!"	finger
"I'm running."	arms
"I bump into a wall."	shoulder
"I'm climbing stairs."	legs
"I'm tired."	whole body
"I'm relaxing."	whole body
"I'm looking for someone."	whole body

3. Divide the students into groups of five or six. Have the children in each group stand in a row, front to back, with their hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them. All the children should close their eyes except the child at the very end of each row. This child is the "driver" and the others are the "bus". When you say "Go!" all the "buses" should start moving forward. The "driver" steers the "bus" to the right or to the left by gently pushing the corresponding shoulder of the child in front of him or her, who does the same to the next child, and so on. To stop the "bus", the "driver" gently pulls on both shoulders.

The above exercise will have contributed to the ability of the youngsters to coordinate their movements and cooperate with one another. Now, in preparation for the next exercise, explain to the children that we know our parents want what is best for us and that God has commanded us to honor and obey them. There is a difference, tell them, between doing with

diligence something our parents have asked of us and doing it without proper care and effort. Divide the children into pairs and ask them to sit and listen quietly while you describe a scene each team will act out to illustrate this point:

Tell the children to imagine that they are living in the mountains, in a small place not so far from the local market. One day their mother asks them to go to the market to buy some vegetables and return home straight away. Soon after setting out, they encounter a herd of sheep blocking the road. Rather than waiting for the sheep to move, they gently steer their way through the herd. Next, they come to a stream, which they must cross by stepping from one stone to another. The stones are far apart, and they hold each other's hands to help keep their balance. As they continue walking, they meet some friends who ask them to join in a game of football. At first they think about stopping to play, but then they remember their promise to their mother to buy the vegetables and come home without delay. On their return from the market, they think about taking a different path, one that is more beautiful, with flowers to pick along the way. But it is much longer than the other path, so they decide to return on the shorter path and soon reach home with the vegetables requested by their mother.

F. Drawing and art

For this part of the class, you should have a sufficient number of copies of the two sheets provided for Lesson 2.3, together with two blank pieces of white paper for every student.

1. To begin, give each child a blank piece of paper. Then pass out copies of Sheet 1—either one to each student or a few to be shared—and ask the class to look at the various mountains shown, which are drawn using different combinations of shapes and lines. Encourage the children to copy the images on their blank pieces of paper.
2. The story in this lesson, like the last one, is about Ḥájí Muḥammad—this time about how he learns the importance of obeying Bahá'u'lláh's commands. Remind the children of the main points of the story, making sure to mention the “innocent birds” that Ḥájí Muḥammad was told not to shoot. Along with a blank piece of paper for each child, hand out copies of the second sheet for this lesson, which shows how lines and shapes can be drawn step by step to form a bird. Ask the children to draw the bird on their blank paper, following the progression shown.

G. Closing prayers

Set 3

Seeking Knowledge

LESSON 3.1

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

After opening the class with prayers, you can introduce in the usual way the one below, which the children will memorize over the next three lessons.

“O my God! O my God! Thou seest these children who are the twigs of the tree of life, the birds of the meads of salvation, the pearls of the ocean of Thy grace, the roses of the garden of Thy guidance.

“O God, our Lord! We sing Thy praise, bear witness to Thy sanctity and implore fervently the heaven of Thy mercy to make us lights of guidance, stars shining above the horizons of eternal glory amongst mankind, and to teach us a knowledge which proceedeth from Thee. Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!”²⁴

In teaching the three lessons of this set, remember to look for opportunities to help the children understand the importance of manifesting spiritual qualities—particularly humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice—in our efforts to seek knowledge. Your students will no doubt be eager to recite at appropriate times the verses they learned by heart in Grade 1 related to these four qualities:

“O Son of Man! Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.”²⁵

“O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart . . .”²⁶

“Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues.”²⁷

“Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.”²⁸

B. Memorizing quotations

The following ideas will help you formulate your introduction to the quotation for memorization in this lesson:

We turn to God in prayer every day. Out of our love for Him, we strive to obey His commandments and to reflect in all our actions qualities such as loving-kindness, justice, humility, and generosity. As our love for God increases, so does our desire to know Him. But what does it mean to gain knowledge of God? We know God through those Special Beings that He sends to humanity from time to time Who bring us His laws and teachings. By listening to the words of the Manifestation of God for today, by studying His laws and teachings and applying them to our lives, we draw closer to God. Of course, we also have to learn more and more about God’s creation and do our best to study the universe and understand its workings. And as we do so, we see that every created thing speaks to us of God’s greatness and glory.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that, when we look at the world, we see the signs of God’s perfections everywhere. As we reflect on His words and try to understand their meaning, we are able to discern the signs of God all around us. The sun shines and gives light,

warmth, and life to the world, reminding us of the love of God, without which we would perish. The rain falls on the earth just as the bounties of God are continuously showered upon our souls. A mountain rises towards the heavens, calling to mind His majesty and grandeur. To help us remember the importance of acquiring knowledge, especially knowledge of God, let us memorize the following quotation of Bahá'u'lláh:

“The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.”²⁹

Purpose

1. The room was very dark, so Nina lit a candle. The purpose of a candle is to give light.
2. The teacher gave the students some exercises to help them improve their mathematical skills. The purpose of the exercises was to strengthen the students' ability to add and subtract.

Attain

1. Ming's family had to take a train for three days and then a bus for two more in order to reach their ancestral village. Only after several days of travel by train and by bus did they attain their destination.
2. The farmers decided that a fence was needed to stop their cattle from going onto the road. They worked together in building the fence and, through diligence and cooperation, attained their goal.

Presence

1. Whenever the king enters the room, his subjects bow down before him. His subjects bow in his presence.
2. Emil's parents asked him to take his little sister out of the room, because they did not want to carry on their discussion in her presence.

C. Songs

D. Story

It is suggested that you tell the children the story below, which will illustrate for them the importance of acquiring knowledge not only through study of God's creation but also through His Manifestation.

You know that many years ago, when the Báb appeared with a new message from God for the people of Persia, it caused a great commotion throughout the country. News quickly spread of His momentous Declaration that He was the Manifestation of God for Whom they had so long waited. As the number of His followers increased and agitation grew, the king of Persia decided that he should send someone with great learning to investigate the situation. He chose to send a young scholar who came to be known by the name Vahíd, and today we will hear the story of his meeting with the Báb.

Vahid was well respected throughout the land for his keen mind and vast knowledge. He occupied such a high position among the learned men of Persia that, at every meeting, no matter who was in attendance, he was always the chief speaker. No one dared to question his views or wisdom. All reverently observed silence before him.

Now, Vahid set out from the capital of Persia for Shiráz, where the Báb was residing, determined to refute His arguments. As soon as he arrived, he requested an interview. For about two hours, Vahid asked the Báb question after question about the most difficult subjects, subjects which only the wisest and most knowledgeable, those endowed with uncommon understanding, could possibly answer. The Báb listened patiently to each question, then provided a brief but clear answer for each. Vahid was filled with wonder and admiration at the replies that the Báb gave and felt greatly humbled. He asked if he could have the pleasure of meeting with the Báb again.

The second time he met the Báb, Vahid was even more astonished. You see, before the meeting, he had prepared a whole new set of questions to ask the Báb. But when he arrived, he found that every question had left his mind. Still, without being asked, the Báb answered every single question that Vahid had planned to present to Him. Yet, again, Vahid requested that he be granted another interview with the Báb.

By the time the third meeting arrived, Vahid had only one question remaining, but he found he was too nervous to ask it. Of course, the Báb knew what was in Vahid's heart and provided Him with the answer he sought. Now Vahid was filled with certainty. His heart had been illumined by the knowledge he had gained. He would later explain that, during his meetings with the Báb, he felt as "lowly as the dust beneath His feet".

Vahid was utterly convinced of the Báb's Divine station and immediately sent a written report to the king's court. He then left Shiráz at the instructions of the Báb. From that day forward, he dedicated his energies to the promotion of His Cause, which, as you know, was to prepare the people for another Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One of All Ages.

E. Drama

The following activities are suggested to help the children continue developing the skills and abilities of creative drama:

1. Begin by having the children stand in their imaginary squares and do the usual stretching exercise. You may then have them do the arm circles described in Lesson 2.2.
2. Next ask your students to stand in a circle. Choose one child to be the "investigator" and tell him or her to leave the area where the class is being held. Now choose another child to be the "initiator". Explain to the children that this child will lead the group in a series of simple movements. For example, he or she may do several circles with the left arm, several with the right arm, then bend down and touch the ground several times, and so on. The rest of the children should try to follow the movements so quickly and so closely that the "investigator" is unable to discover who the "initiator" is. They will remember playing a game similar to this activity in Lesson 23 of Grade 1.

Have the children begin, and then ask the “investigator” to come and stand in the middle of the circle. Can he or she discover the “initiator”? Once the child has guessed correctly, repeat the exercise, choosing a new child to be the “investigator” and another to be the “initiator”. If time allows, the exercise should be repeated several times so that every child can be the “investigator” or the “initiator” at least once.

You can now move on to the activities related to the theme of the lesson—the importance of seeking knowledge, particularly knowledge of God.

Begin by reminding the children that, in all created things, we see the signs of God. Then tell them that you will ask them to act out, each in turn, different things we see in the world. Whisper in each child’s ear, one at a time, some element of nature: the rain, a cloud, a mountain, a flower, a river, the ocean, the wind, and so forth. The rest of the children should try to guess what their classmate is acting out.

F. Drawing and art

In this third set of lessons, the students will further develop their artistic skills, while learning about “texture”, one of the fundamental elements of art. For the activities in this lesson, each child will need two or three blank pieces of paper and, perhaps, a copy of the sheet provided at the end of the unit.

1. To begin, explain to the children that, at a basic level, texture refers to how something feels. To help them understand this idea, have them look around the environment in which the class is held and identify items and surfaces with different textures—a brick wall, a wooden tabletop, a tiled floor, a woven basket, a fabric cushion, clothing, and so forth. You could ask them questions like, “How do the bricks feel?” and “How does the fabric feel?”

Once they have taken note of some interesting textures, tell them that it is possible to make a smooth piece of paper look as though it has texture, using just a pencil. Give each child a blank sheet of paper and pencil. Ask them to choose one of the textures they identified and place their paper on top of it. Now tell them to rub their pencils back and forth over the surface of the paper, gently and with even strokes. Make sure they do not use the very tip of their pencils but angle them on their sides. The paper will begin to take on the appearance of the texture of the item beneath it. After they have finished, ask them to rub their fingers over the textured surfaces and then over their paper and describe how they feel and how they look. They should recognize that, though the paper gives the appearance of some texture, it is actually smooth to the touch.

2. Tell the children that, for the next activity, you are all going to walk around together outdoors and find things in the natural environment that have interesting textures, such as leaves, tree bark, pebbles, and flowers. You may wish to remind them that, as discussed earlier in the lesson, we can see signs of God’s perfection all around us in nature. Ask them to find a few items that they can bring back to class with them, including one or two leaves. When they have settled down again, give each child a fresh sheet of blank paper. Ask them to place the leaves they collected, with the veined side facing up, beneath the sheet of paper. Now tell them to rub their pencils back and forth as they did earlier. An image of a leaf will soon emerge. They can then exchange

leaves with one another and repeat this activity. To create a pleasing effect, they can overlap the images of the leaves partially.

3. Finally, you can help the children apply what they have been practicing to make an image of nature that gives the appearance of different textures. This may be an opportunity to remind them of the importance of gaining knowledge by studying the natural world, which speaks to us of God's greatness and glory. There are two ways to carry out this final activity. Depending on your students, you may wish to provide each of them with another blank piece of paper and encourage them to draw a simple scene from nature, exercising the abilities to use lines and shapes that they have developed over the previous lessons. Alternatively, you can give each child a copy of Sheet 1, which has a mountain scene already drawn. In either case, refer them to the rubbings they made earlier. Ask them to choose a different texture for each part of their drawing and then hold their sheets against the corresponding objects to rub in the texture. They can use items in their immediate surroundings and those they collected while outdoors. Drawing on the power of their imagination, they can create a beautifully patterned image.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 3.2

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

Begin the class with prayers recited by you and a few students. Afterwards, you can review with the children the prayer introduced in the last lesson, helping them to learn more of it by heart. Remember as you progress through this lesson to find opportunities to mention some of the spiritual qualities we manifest in seeking knowledge—especially humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice—and to bring to your students’ attention the corresponding verses they learned last year.

B. Memorizing quotations

You can use the following explanation to help you present the quotation the children will memorize in this lesson:

Knowledge is essential for human progress. In order to build a better world, we must gain knowledge of the sciences and the arts. By applying what we learn, we are able, for example, to improve the quality of the food we grow, to make advances in medicine that help us live healthier lives, to discover ways to communicate with people in far-off places, and to create things that beautify the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that God has given us eyes to look at the world around us and see what we can do to contribute to the progress of all humanity. He has given us ears to hear, that we might draw on the knowledge of those who have worked hard to discover the secrets of His vast creation. He has bestowed upon us reason and intellect, which distinguish us from animals, so that we may use these faculties to make this world a better place. We should therefore study the sciences and the arts. At the same time, we should endeavor to acquire spiritual knowledge that comes from the teachings of the Manifestations of God. These teachings inspire us to use our knowledge for the benefit of others and to work for peace and unity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá encourages us to strive diligently until all humanity is gathered safely in the stronghold of knowledge. To help us remember how acquiring knowledge enables us to contribute to the betterment of the world, let us memorize the following quotation:

“Exert every effort to acquire the various branches of knowledge and true understanding. Strain every nerve to achieve both material and spiritual accomplishments.”³⁰

Exert every effort

1. Collis was tired from tending to the crops but worked hard to finish the day’s work. He exerted every effort to finish the work before the end of the day.
2. The teacher spent many hours working with students to make sure they knew their lessons well. The teacher exerted every effort to help her students.

Understanding

1. Amelia read the lesson twice. However, only after her sister explained the lesson to her did she gain the necessary understanding.
2. Arnold's mother always spoke to him about the importance of unity, but his understanding grew as he made friends with children of many different backgrounds and experienced unity firsthand.

Strain every nerve

1. To climb to the top of the mountain required all of Fanny's strength. She had to strain every nerve to reach the top.
2. The jar was closed very tightly, and though Dewi strained every nerve, she was unable to open it.

Accomplishments

1. The old man never talked about his past, even though he had done much during his life. He was a humble man and never spoke about his accomplishments.
2. The discovery of fire was one of humanity's earliest accomplishments.

C. Songs

D. Story

Now ask the children to sit quietly while you tell them the story of Susan Moody, a valiant doctor who was called upon by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to journey from her homeland of the United States to Iran in order to help the women of that country.

Susan Moody lived in Chicago in the United States in the early 1900s, more than one hundred years ago. At that time, it was rare for women to be doctors, but, at the age of 52, Susan was inspired to study medicine. She soon completed medical school and started to work as a doctor. Around the same time, she was introduced to the Bahá'í Faith and became an active member of the Bahá'í community, teaching children's classes, like the one we are having today, and hosting visitors and gatherings in her home. Susan became so ablaze with the fire of divine love that she prayed to God to enable her to consecrate herself entirely to Him and act in accordance with His Will.

Now, in Iran, there was a team of doctors who were planning to establish a hospital in the capital city, Tíhrán. Perhaps you know that, because of the religious traditions there, many women considered it improper for them to show their faces to a male doctor, and female doctors in the country were very few. So this team of doctors made an appeal for a female doctor from the United States to join them, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged Susan Moody to go. Not surprisingly, her family and friends objected to the idea of her leaving her medical practice in the United States to help people in a far-off land, where she might have to deal with unfamiliar diseases and difficult problems. But Susan was ready to respond to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call. Now she realized why she had

so strongly felt the desire to study medicine several years earlier. Almost sixty years old, she set off at once.

Of course, in those days, it took a long time to travel from one part of the world to another, and Iran was very far away from the United States. On her way to Iran, Dr. Moody was able to stay for a few days in the Holy Land, where she had the privilege of spending time in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He told her that she would need patience once she arrived in her new home but assured her that He would often pray for her and would always be with her. She then started out on the final part of her journey, sailing by boat across the Caspian Sea and arriving in a city in Northeastern Iran. From there she traveled by horse and carriage across mountains to the capital, Tīhrán, stopping along the way to meet with the Bahá’í friends and to treat people who were ill. Already Susan began to see how pressing was the need for a female doctor, such as herself, for many women came to her for assistance.

When Dr. Moody finally arrived in Tīhrán, she immediately began caring for the sick and soon became fluent in the Persian language. She established a medical practice in her home, in addition to working at the hospital. She was compassionate, kind, and tenderhearted, and everyone loved her very dearly. A local newspaper praised “her good qualities and kind attributes” and went on to say:

Every day from morning till noon she is in her office . . . receiving her patients for consultation, examination and treatment, excepting Friday and Sunday afternoons, when she goes to the Hospital Sehat. . . . We give the utmost thanks and gratitude to such a noble woman, to such a respected person, whose presence here is a great privilege to the country of Persia.

Not long after establishing a medical practice, Dr. Moody saw a need to help others learn about health issues and began to provide instruction to women in nursing and childbirth. Eventually, she also joined hands with others to set up a formal school called the Tarbiyat School for Girls. The school offered education to numerous young women, many of whom went on to become teachers themselves, making it possible to establish other schools for girls throughout the country. The Tarbiyat School for Girls became highly respected and was attended by young ladies from all backgrounds. Dr. Susan Moody died in Iran at the age of 83, after having spent some twenty years of her life applying the knowledge she gained to better her new homeland and helping others, especially women, to have the opportunity to do the same.

E. Drama

You can lead the children in the following activities to help them continue developing skills and abilities needed for creative drama:

1. It is suggested that you begin, as always, by having the students stand in their imaginary squares and do the stretching exercise as warm-up.
2. Next have the children sit in a circle, yourself among them. Pick up a small item, such as a twig or a pen or pencil, and say, “I could use this, pretending it is a comb.” Then pretend to comb your hair with it. Make sure that it is clear that you are only pretending and that you do not actually run the object through your hair. Now, pass the item to one

of the children sitting next to you and ask the youngster what he or she could use it for. Following your example, the child should reply and demonstrate how else the item could be used. He or she might say, for instance, “I could use this, pretending it is a harmonica,” or “I could use this, pretending it is a fishing pole.” The item should then be passed to the next child in a similar manner.

Once each of the students has had a chance to use the item in this way, you can move on to activities related to the theme of the lesson, which will help reinforce the idea that knowledge is central to the advancement of civilization and the betterment of the world.

Explain to the children that they are going to act out different characters from the story they heard about Susan Moody. Begin by reminding them of the story and how she went to Iran to help the women who would otherwise not have received medical attention. Ask the children what qualities Susan Moody had to show in order to be of service to the many women in Iran. Emphasize the spirit of service that animated her being. You can then assign each character in the story to one child, making sure to note that no one should ever, of course, assume the Figure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in our reenactments. Tell them that they will each describe Susan Moody from the point of view of a different character. If necessary, more than one child can act out each character, or you may wish to come up with other characters with whom Susan Moody may have come into contact. The characters may include:

- A member of Susan Moody’s family who did not want her to go to Iran but who understood why she decided to move there.
- A fellow male doctor working in Iran who knew how much women needed help and who was glad Susan Moody was there to care for them.
- A woman who became a patient of Susan Moody.
- A young girl who attended Tarbíyat School for Girls and later became a doctor.

F. Drawing and art

To begin the artistic component of this lesson, remind the students of what they have learned about texture. You could mention that, in the previous lesson, they created images on paper that gave the appearance of texture. Now, you should tell them, they will create pieces of art that have real texture. In addition to copies of the designated drawing sheet, several sheets of blank white paper, and pencils, you will need to have scissors, glue, and colored paper on hand for this part of the class.

1. Pass out to each child two pieces of blank white paper and have a few pairs of scissors available for the class to share. You will need to caution the children to use the scissors with care. Tell the students that they can cut out any shape—a square, a circle, a rectangle—from one of the sheets. Later, they will need to cut several more shapes from this sheet of paper, so the shapes should not be too big. They should then glue the shape onto the second sheet. Once they have done this, ask them whether they are able see the shapes they have cut out. They will find this fairly difficult. Next tell them to cut out the same shape from the first sheet of paper. This time, however, they should crumple up the shape into a ball and then flatten it out again before gluing it to the second sheet. Now ask them what differences they see between the two shapes they

have glued on the second piece of paper. You can explain that the second shape has “real texture”, which can be felt, while also making the shape easier to see.

2. To build on the understanding of “real texture” the children gained in the above activity, have them cut out several more shapes from the first piece of paper, give each shape a different texture, and glue them in a pleasing arrangement to the second sheet. They could create different textures in their cutout shapes in the following ways: by carefully poking holes in them with a pencil or scissor, by rolling and twisting them, by folding them like a fan or an accordion, or by cutting fringes into them. You may need to explain to the youngsters that textures generally have a lot of repetition. Poking one hole in the center of a shape, for example, would not create texture; they should poke holes evenly all over it.
3. For the final art activity in this lesson, remind the children of the wonderful service rendered by Susan Moody, who applied her knowledge of medicine to assist others. You can then pass out to each child a copy of the drawing sheet for this lesson, with the image of a doctor’s bag, and one sheet of colored paper. Explain to the class that a doctor’s bag is used to store medical instruments. Ask the children to create different textures using pieces of their colored paper, with the methods they practiced in the previous activity, and to glue them onto the different parts of the bag. When they have finished, the students might enjoy seeing the bags their classmates have created.

G. Closing prayers

LESSON 3.3

A. Reciting prayers and sacred verses

After opening prayers have been recited, the children should finish memorizing the prayer presented in Lesson 3.1. As you have with the previous two lessons, try to incorporate into your discussions with the children, whenever possible, ideas related to humility, purity, truthfulness, and justice and encourage them to recite as appropriate the quotations they memorized in Grade 1 related to these qualities.

B. Memorizing quotations

You can present the quotation for this lesson by putting the following explanation into your own words:

To acquire knowledge, we spend our lives striving to learn about the world around us and searching after truth. Our love for learning grows as we study the sciences and the arts, draw insight from the teachings of God, put into action the knowledge we gain, and feel the joys of true understanding. We turn to our parents, elders, and teachers with questions about things that puzzle us. Searching after truth requires us to be attentive—to listen, to observe, to think deeply. We strive, and we persevere. Our understanding of certain ideas, especially profound ones, will never be complete; but it will grow as we exert effort to study, to put into practice what we learn, and to reflect on our actions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that truth is one, no matter where we may find it. For example, light is good, from whatever lamp it may shine. A rose is beautiful, in whatever garden it may grow. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that, in our search after truth, we must let go of prejudice and superstition. We must keep our minds open at all times, looking for answers. He always encouraged questions from the many people who came to visit Him, and He responded to them with great courtesy, love, patience, and wisdom. Through His answers, people were able to further their knowledge and understanding about physical and spiritual reality and to see how they could contribute to the betterment of society. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that we can continue to learn throughout our lives. To help us remember to make every effort to search after truth and acquire knowledge, let us memorize the following words of Bahá’u’lláh:

“He must search after the truth to the utmost of his ability and exertion, that God may guide him in the paths of His favor and the ways of His mercy.”³¹

Utmost

1. Li Yong pushed with all his strength but could not move the cart up the road. Li Yong made his utmost effort to move the cart.
2. Stella tries her hardest to assist her little sister with her homework, no matter how much effort it takes. Stella tries her utmost to help her sister.

Ability

1. Carmen is learning to do additions and subtractions at school. By carrying out exercises every day, Carmen is developing the ability to add and subtract.
2. Naim's job is to design buildings. As part of his job he must draw the buildings he wishes to create. The ability to draw is important to Naim's work.

Exertion

1. Nabil wanted to help his mother to carry a bucket of water from the well to their home, even though it was very heavy. So, with great exertion, Nabil lifted up the bucket and carried it home.
2. The boys needed to meet their friends up the river, so they began to swim upstream. Swimming upstream, against the flow of the river, requires great exertion.

C. Songs

D. Story

You could tell the children the following story of Ṭáhirih to help illustrate for them the attributes of those who search after truth:

There are many stories of those who have sought the truth and acquired knowledge in order to grow closer to God and better understand the universe He has created. This is the story of a brave and knowledgeable woman, to whom Bahá'u'lláh gave the name Ṭáhirih, meaning "The Pure One".

Ṭáhirih was born in Persia in the early 1800s, more than two hundred years ago. From a young age, she had a thirst for knowledge; she loved to study from books and was eager to learn as much as she could. She would listen to her parents and family as they discussed spiritual and religious matters, and her father, who was a famous clergyman in the country, would give her lessons, which she followed with great ease. At that time, it was rare for women to be educated, but Ṭáhirih's desire for knowledge was so keen that her father eventually found a teacher for her who guided her studies of the arts and the sciences. As Ṭáhirih progressed, her father even arranged for her to listen to his own religious classes from behind a curtain, as customs would not permit her to mix with the male students. Such was the degree of her accomplishments that her father was heard to remark that, had she been a boy, she would have succeeded him.

Of course, for everything she had learned, Ṭáhirih still had many questions and was eager to learn more. One day, while visiting a relative, she noticed some books in his library which interested her. They were written by Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim, two notable scholars of religion who foretold the coming of the Báb. Ṭáhirih's relative was hesitant to lend her the books, which he feared were not in line with her father's views. But Ṭáhirih was persistent and eventually persuaded her relative to give her the books to take home.

She read the writings of these scholars with great care and attention and found in them many gems of wisdom. She tried to share their writings with her father, but he refused to listen to their words. Still, Ṭáhirih's heart was attracted to the beauty of their ideas, and she began to correspond with Siyyid Kázim, asking him the many questions that her studies had raised in her mind. She sensed that she was being led to a new spiritual truth and determined that she must go to the city of Karbilá to study with Siyyid Kázim. As a woman, she would not be permitted to travel alone, so she convinced her father to allow her to travel to Karbilá with her sister, and they set out on the long journey. When they eventually arrived, Ṭáhirih discovered that Siyyid Kázim had passed away just a few days earlier. Imagine her disappointment! She had traveled so far and had hoped to learn so much from him. Siyyid Kázim's family could see how disappointed she was and how sincere was her desire to learn. So they invited her to stay for a while and made available to her the writings of Siyyid Kázim that had not been published. What joy she must have felt to be able to study his words of wisdom and gain new insights. She was even able to share her understanding of profound matters with some of Siyyid Kázim's students, sitting behind a curtain, just as she had done in her father's classes.

Ṭáhirih did not return home for several years. In the city of Karbilá her search for truth would, by the grace of God, eventually yield its most precious fruit. For in that city she would be blessed to recognize the truth of the Divine message which had been brought to the people of Persia by the person of the Báb. How she was guided to recognize the Báb is a story that gives us a glimpse of her purity of heart. One night, after having spent the evening in prayer, she laid down to rest and had an extraordinary dream. She saw a youthful figure, wearing a black cloak and green turban, descend from the heavens, suspended in the air before her. He was reciting verses and praying with his hands upraised. At that moment, she awoke and wrote down in her notebook one of the verses that she had memorized. Later, when she received a copy of the Writings of the Báb, she came upon the very verse she had heard in her dream. Instantly she bowed down in thanks, for she knew in her heart that His message was truth.

You will learn more about Ṭáhirih in later classes. But you should know that, after declaring her belief in the Báb, Ṭáhirih went on to become one of the most outstanding heroines of the Bahá'í Faith and a champion of the cause for women. Her courage and strength were indomitable, and her breadth of learning vast. She dedicated the rest of her life to gaining knowledge, composing poems and articles that reflected her deep understanding of the teachings of God, and leading many a searching soul to the truth they sought. In her poems, Ṭáhirih often wrote of the joy of recognizing the truth. Let us listen to one called "Arise", in which she compares the coming of God's Manifestation to the dawning of a new day, when people awake from sleep, and the arrival of spring, when fresh life appears.

*O slumbering one, the beloved has arrived, arise!
Brush off the dust of sleep and self, arise!*

*Behold, the good will has arrived,
Come not before him with tears, arise!*

*The mender of concerns has come to you,
O heavy hearted one, arise!*

*O one afflicted by separation,
Behold the good tidings of the beloved's union, arise!*

*O you, withered by autumn,
Now, Spring has come, arise!*

*Behold, the New Year brings a fresh life,
O withered corpse of yesteryear, up from your tomb, arise!*

E. Drama

To help your students continue developing the skills and abilities to participate in creative drama, you may carry out the following activities with them:

1. To begin, have the children do the usual stretching exercise in their imaginary squares.
2. For this next exercise, the children will remain in their imaginary squares. Ask them to create a shape with their bodies, using their heads, arms, and legs. This is shape number 1. Tell them to hold that shape for a few seconds.

Next have them move into a second shape. This is shape number 2. Again have them hold the shape for a few seconds. Now count—1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2—as the children move from shape to shape. Do this three or four times. Call “Freeze” when the children are in shape number 2.

Now ask the students to find a completely new shape. This is shape number 3. Have them hold it for a few seconds, and then have them go back to shape number 1. Now count—1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3—as the children move from shape to shape. Do this three or four times and call “Freeze” when the children are in shape number 3.

Finally, have the children create a fourth shape and ask them to hold it for a few seconds. Then ask them to go back to shape number 1 and count—1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4—as the children move from shape to shape. Do this four or five times. Try to establish a rhythm as you count.

For the next activity, you can have the children act out parts of a story, which will help to consolidate in their minds, if only in a rudimentary way, what it means to search after the truth. Begin by asking the children to demonstrate each of the following actions, without stepping outside of their imaginary squares: walking, running, climbing, jumping, stomping, pushing, and looking or gazing. Next explain to the children that you will tell them a story about a group of youngsters, much like themselves, living in the village of Karu Karu. They will need to listen attentively while you speak. Whenever you refer to one of the actions mentioned earlier—for example, walking—they should follow suit, pretending to be the youngster in the story. To assist them, you may wish to carry out the relevant action yourself in each specific instance.

The village of Karu Karu was next to a beautiful river. All of the people in the village used the water from the river to cook, clean, and grow their crops. On very hot days the children from the local school would *walk* down to the river to swim in the cool water. One hot summer's day after their school lessons were over, the children *ran* down to the river. But when they arrived, to their surprise, they saw that there was just a trickle of water coming down the mountain, where once an abundance of water had flowed. They

knew that, if the water was drying up down river, there must be problems upriver. With such little water available, the whole village would be in trouble. How would the farmers grow their crops? How would everyone cook their food? If only they knew what the problem was they could try to find a solution. They wondered whether perhaps the source of the water had dried up. In consultation with their teacher and their parents, they decided that, the next day, they would set out on a journey with their teacher to *walk* to the top of the mountain to try and discover the problem and see what they could do.

The next morning at dawn the children set out with their teacher and *walked* until they reached the foot of the mountain. Looking up at the mountain some commented, “The top of the mountain is very far; how can we ever make it all the way up?” The teacher explained, “We will have to go slowly and be patient with each other and with ourselves”. Taking each other’s hands, they hesitantly began to *walk* up the mountain. They *climbed* and *climbed* and the higher they went, the harder it became. But they learned to draw on their strength. Sometimes their feet would slip but they would help one another to keep going. They *walked* and *walked* and it seemed like the journey would never end. When they reached a muddy path, some *stomped* through it while others *ran* across as quickly and carefully as they could. After *walking* for some time, they suddenly came upon a tree fallen on the ground. At first each of the children individually tried different things to move the tree but nothing happened. Then, putting all their efforts together, and with all their strength, they *pushed* until the tree rolled out of the way.

The further up they went, the steeper the mountain became. They had to use their hands and legs as they *climbed* up the steep path leading to the very top. When one of them wanted to give up, the others would remind him or her that they had to keep going to help the village. Finally, they reached the top of the mountain and, in their excitement, they *ran* to the source of the river. But the water was flowing normally and there seemed to be nothing wrong. Realizing that the problem was not at the source, the children *walked* to another part of the mountain where they could *look* down at the river, and as they stared into the distance they suddenly saw that there was a blockage in the river, which was causing it to flow away from the village. At last, after their long journey, they had found the problem! The children started *jumping* for joy, for they finally knew what to do to help bring water back to the village.

F. Drawing and art

In this lesson, the children will learn about patterns and how they relate to texture. You will need to bring to class blank white paper, blank colored paper, and copies of the designated sheets, as well as several pairs of scissors, some rulers, and pencils. Before you begin the first activity, tell the children that patterns are created when lines and shapes are repeated. Sometimes, you should mention, we can see patterns in textures.

1. Explain to the students that, in this activity, they will learn how to create a very simple weaving using paper.
 - a. First, divide the class into pairs and give each pair a piece of white paper and a piece of colored paper.

- b. Now they will need to create their looms. You can give them copies of Sheet 1 to help them see how to do this. Explain to the children that they should fold the piece of white paper lengthwise, so that the long edges meet. One child in each pair should hold the paper with the folded edge at the bottom, nearest to him or her, and then cut slits into the paper from the folded edge to about $1\frac{1}{4}$ cm from the top. The cuts should be approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ cm apart. Make sure the students understand that they should not cut all the way through the paper. It may be helpful for you to demonstrate the first few cuts. Once they have finished, have the pairs unfold the paper. This paper will act as their loom.
 - c. Each pair should then cut the colored paper lengthwise into strips that are approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ cm wide. If needed, they could use a ruler and draw parallel lines lengthwise that they can cut along.
 - d. Next show the children how to take one strip of paper and weave it into the loom: run the colored strip on top of the first white strip of the loom, underneath the next, on top of the next, and so on. When they have woven in their first colored strip, they can add the next one. This time, however, they should start by going under the first strip on the loom and then alternate as before. The pairs should continue in this way, taking care to not leave large gaps between the colored strips they are weaving into the loom.
2. The children will now move on to an activity related to the story they heard in this lesson. First, remind them of the poem of Ṭáhirih, in which she has written:

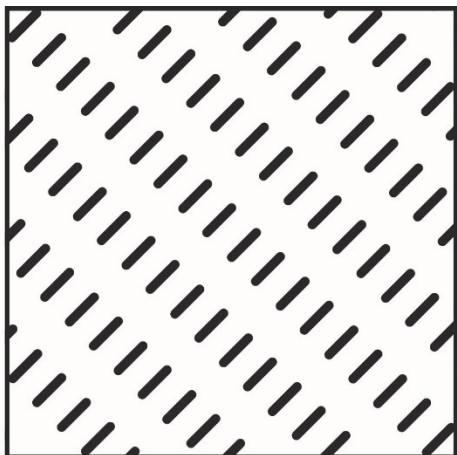
*O you, withered by autumn,
Now, Spring has come, arise!
Behold, the New Year brings a fresh life . . .*

Building on what they learned in the previous activity, the children can be assisted in creating a piece of art using Sheets 2 and 3—one with a drawing of a tree in autumn and the other with a tree with blossoms in spring. They can remain in pairs or work individually. First ask them to color in the drawing sheets. To assist them, you could ask the class questions such as, “What do things in nature look like in autumn, as winter approaches?” and “What do things in nature look like in the spring?” They can then use Sheet 2 to make a loom, cutting it as they did the blank white paper before. Next they can draw parallel lines on the back of Sheet 3, as they did with the piece of colored paper, and cut it into strips. They can now weave the strips of the blossoming tree in and out of the loom. As they weave, you can remind them of how the coming of a new Manifestation of God is like a divine springtime.

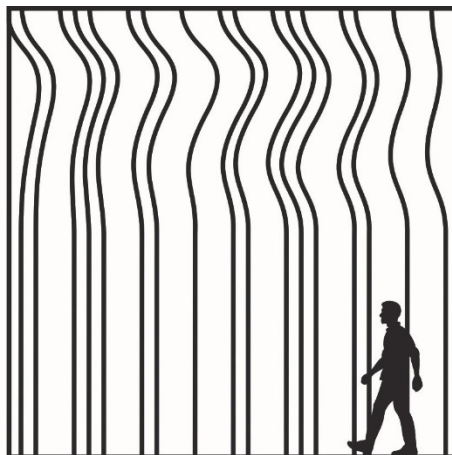
G. Closing prayers

Sets 1–3

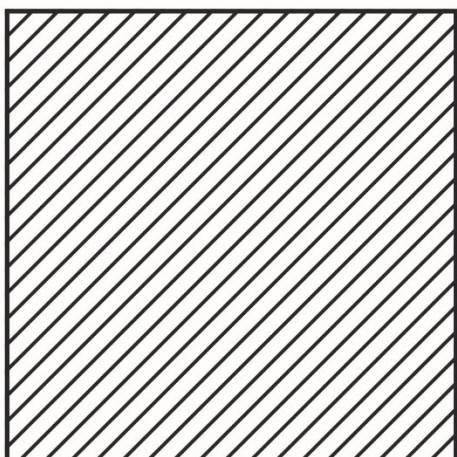
Drawing Sheets



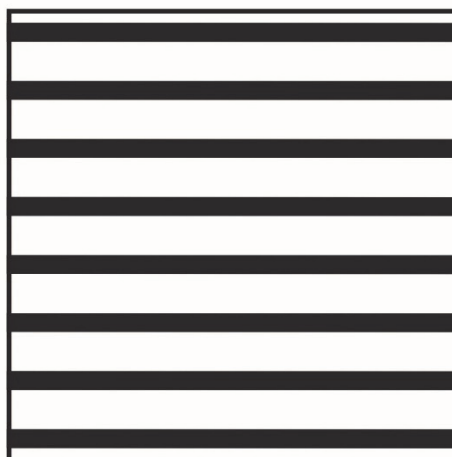
Short lines



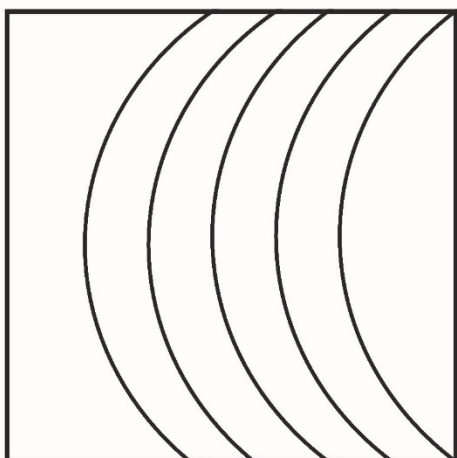
Long lines



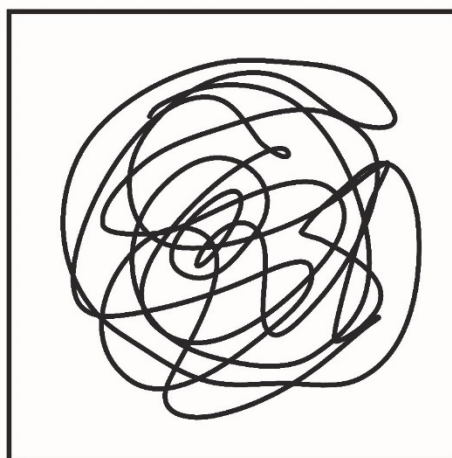
Thin lines



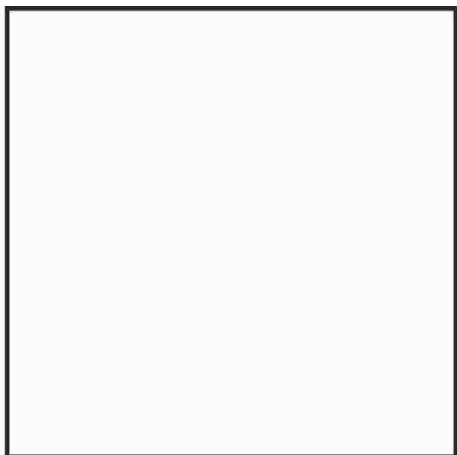
Thick lines



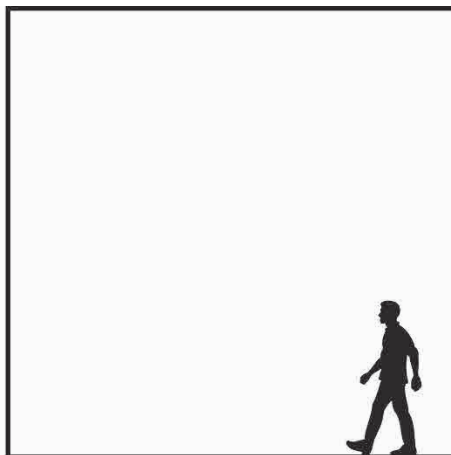
Curved lines



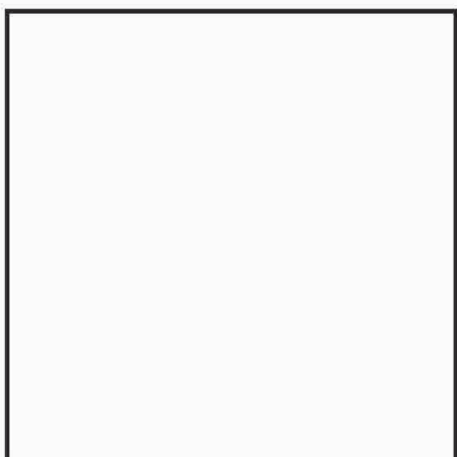
Scribble



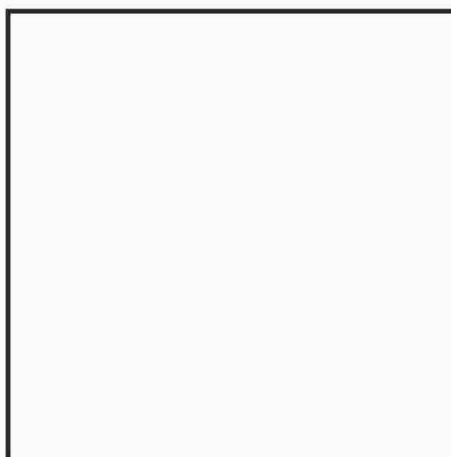
Short lines



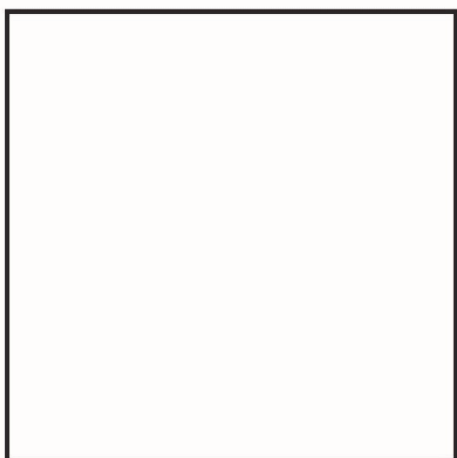
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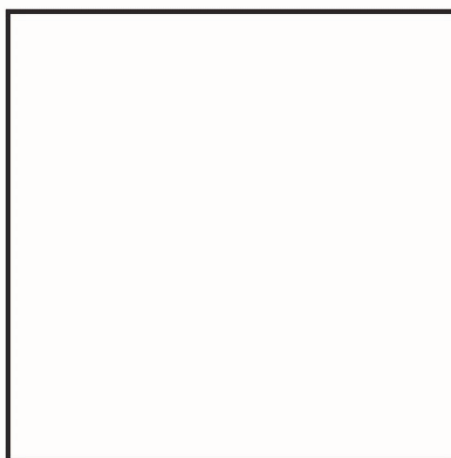
Thin lines



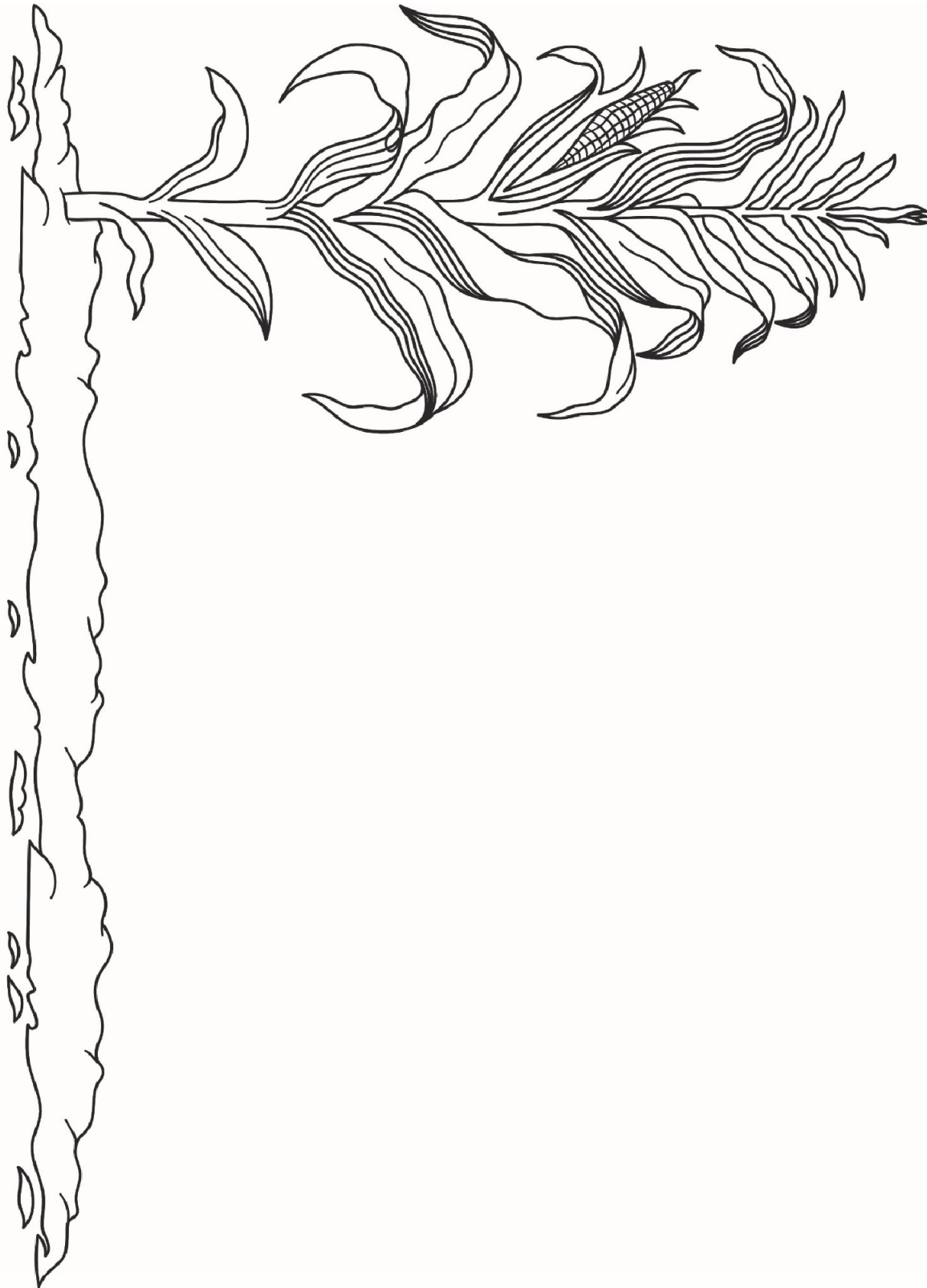
Thick lines

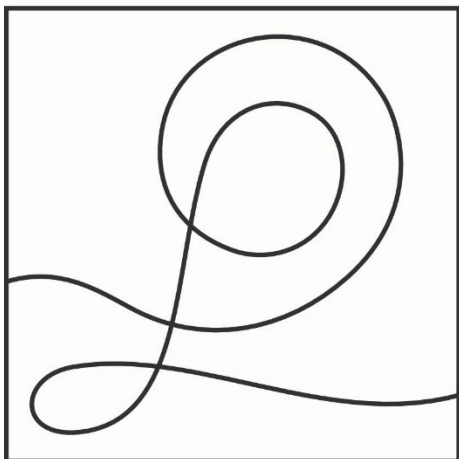


Curved lines

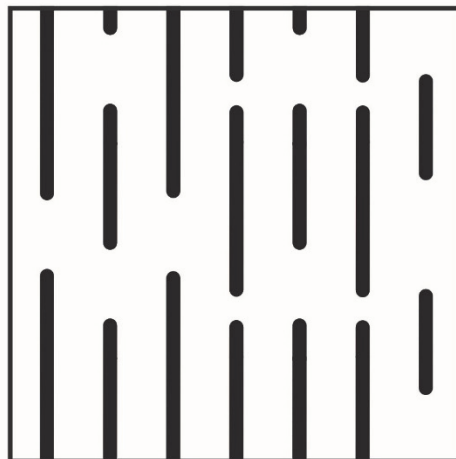


Scribble

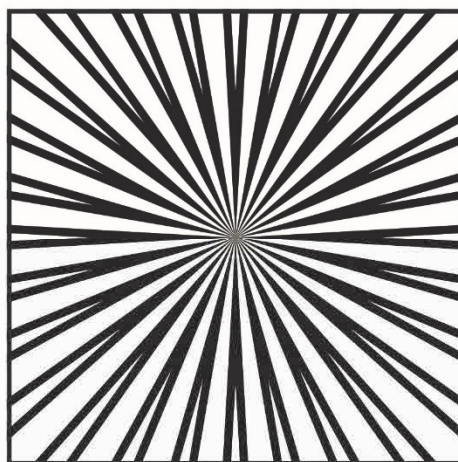




Continuous line



Broken lines



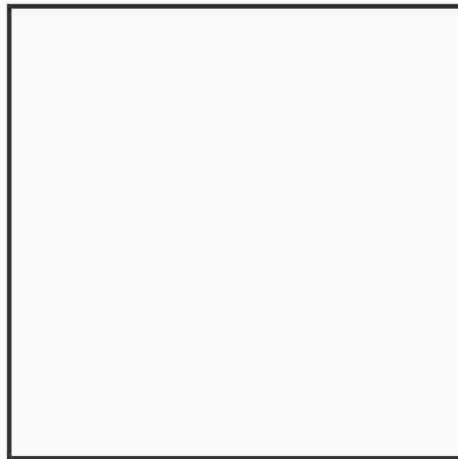
Radiating lines



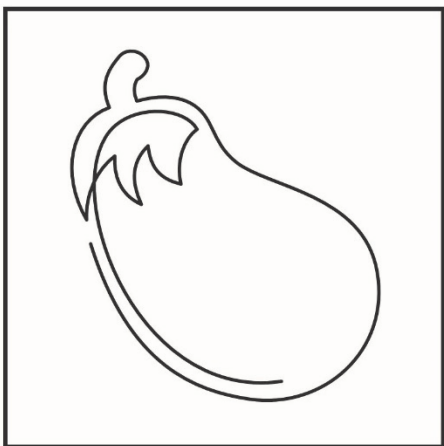
Continuous line



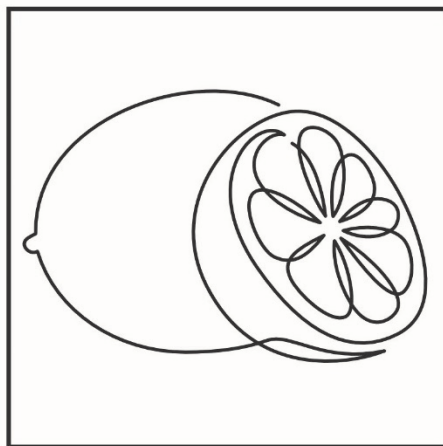
Broken lines



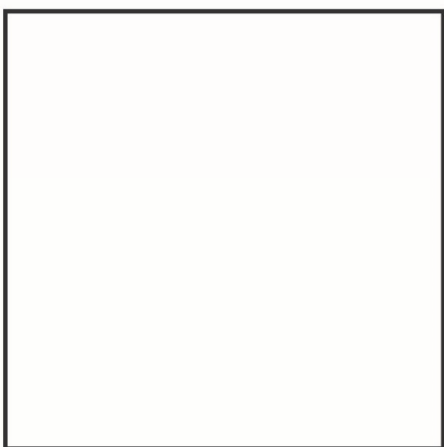
Radiating lines

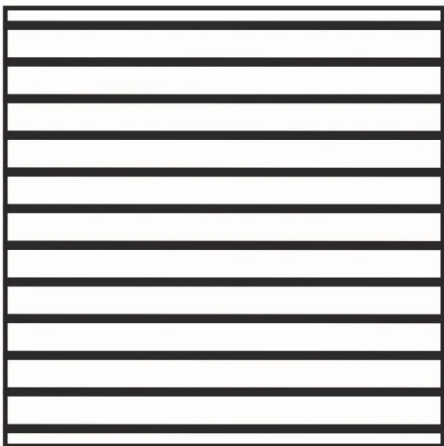


Eggplant

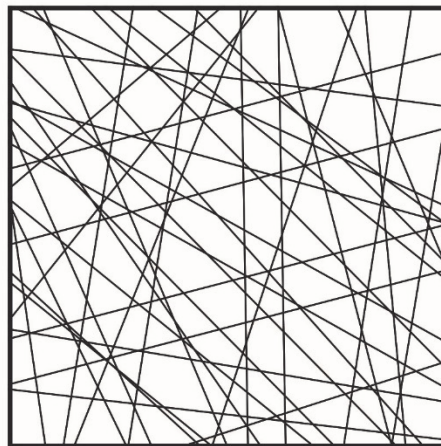


Lemon





Straight & parallel lines



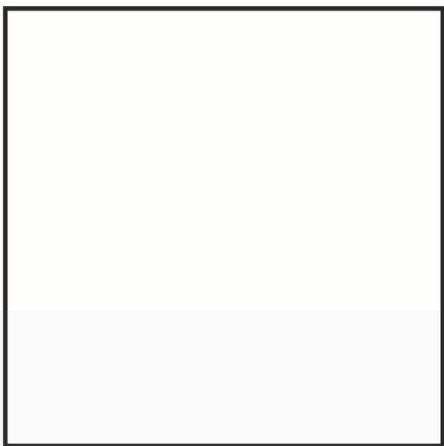
Straight & crisscross
lines



Angular lines



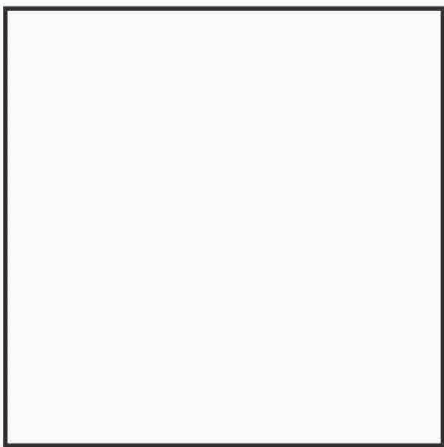
Wavy lines



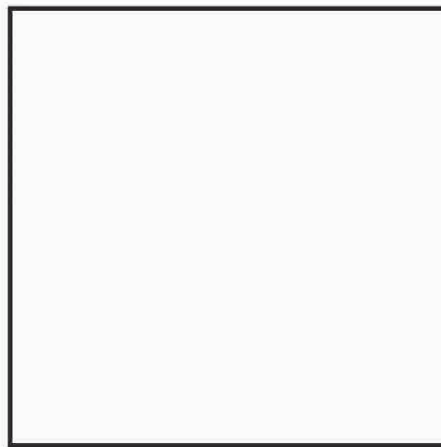
Straight & parallel lines



Straight & crisscross
lines



Angular lines

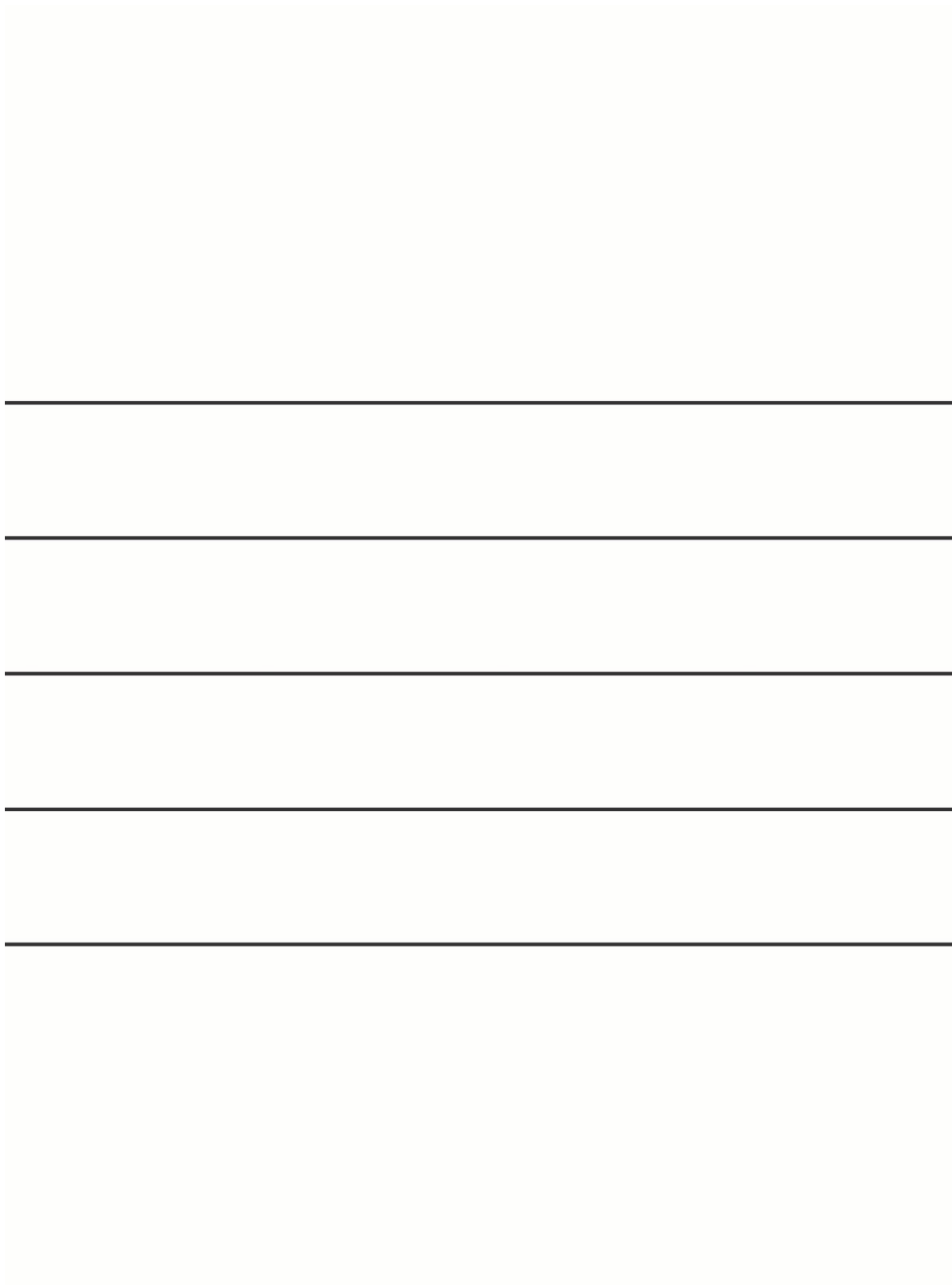


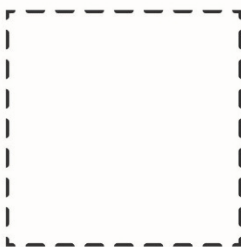
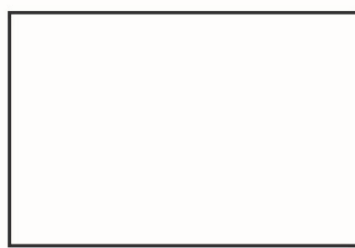
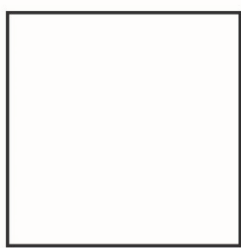
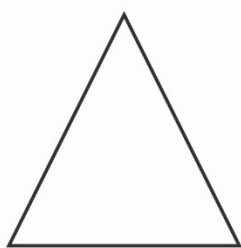
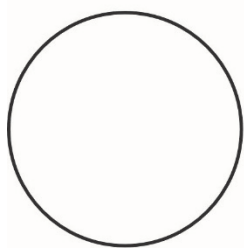
Wavy lines

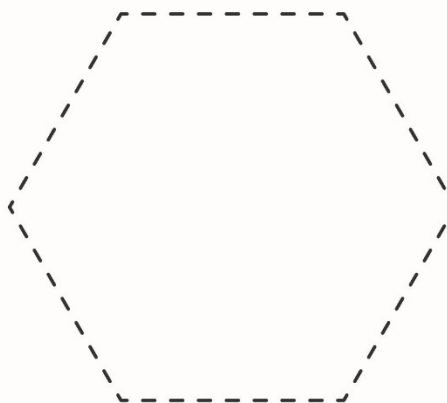
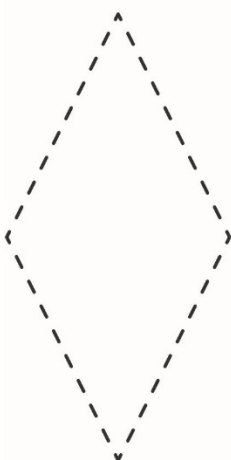
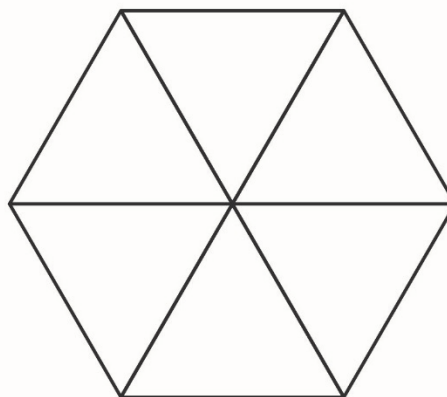
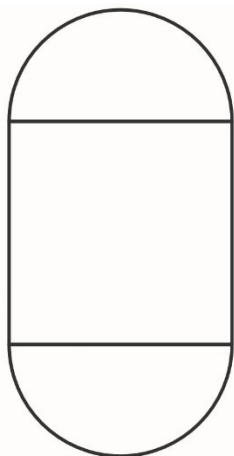
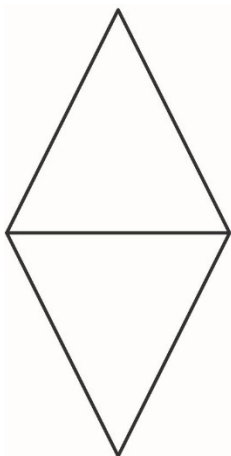
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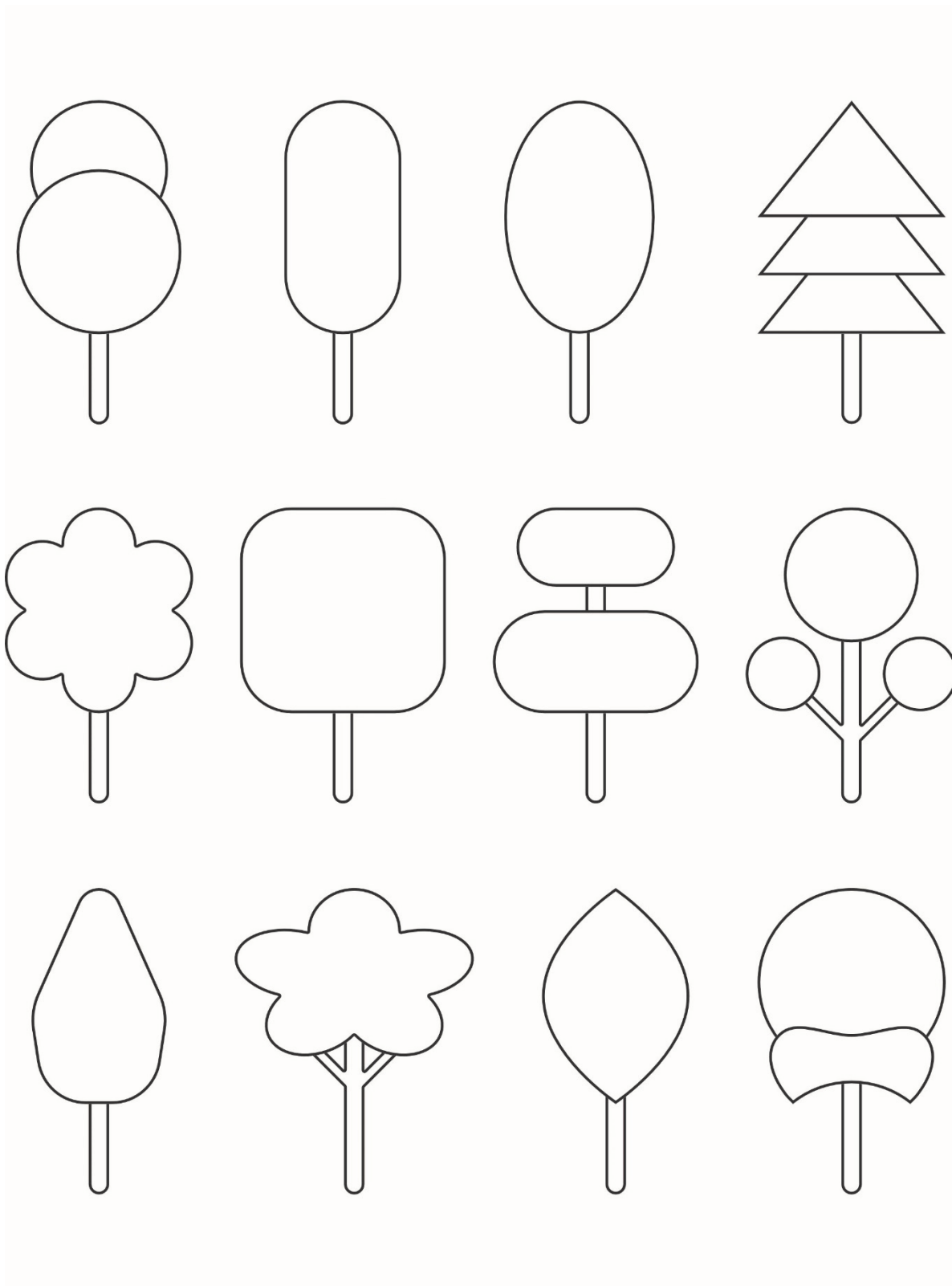
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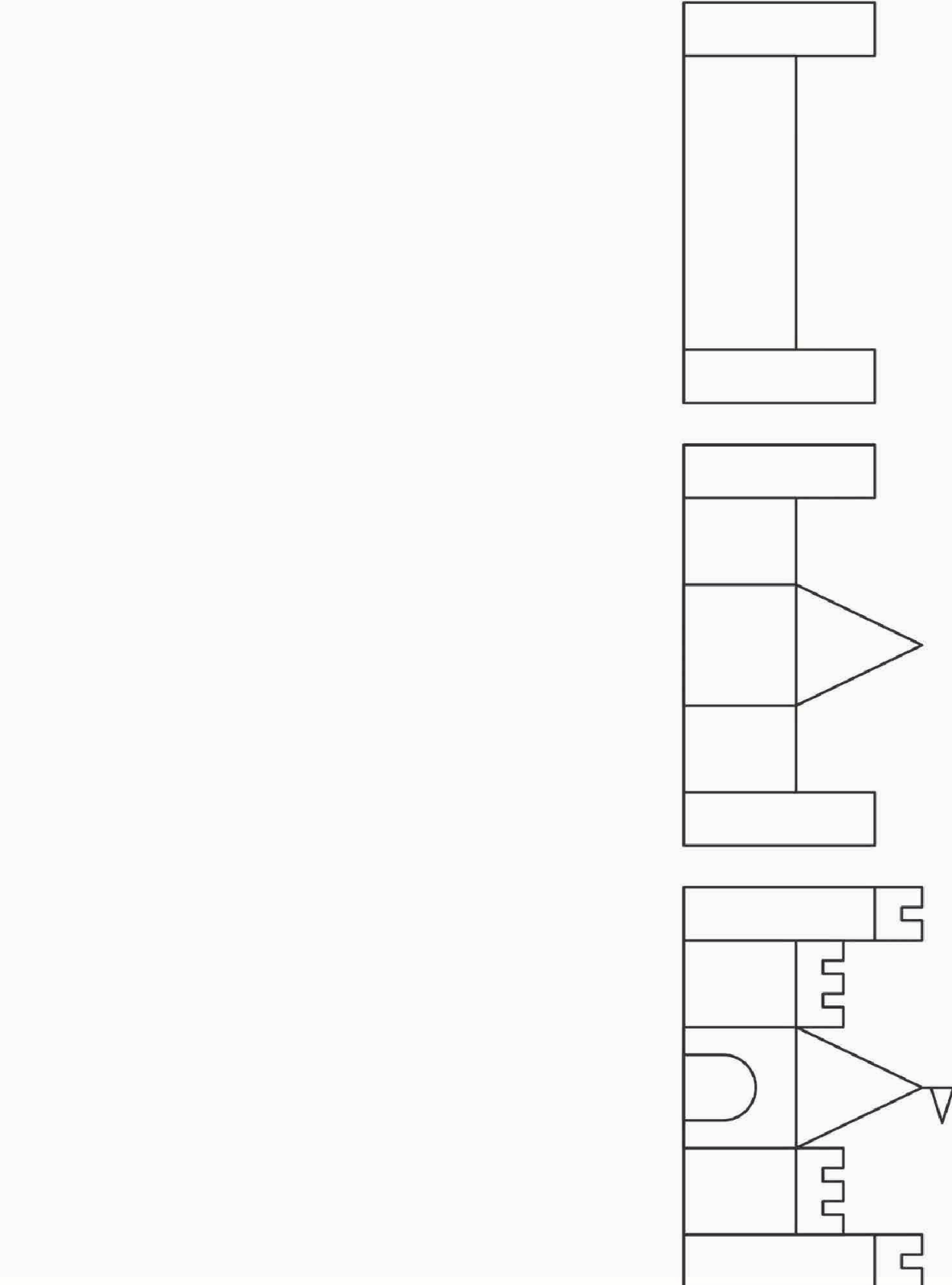
He is God!
O God, my God!
Bestow upon me
a pure heart,
like unto a pearl.

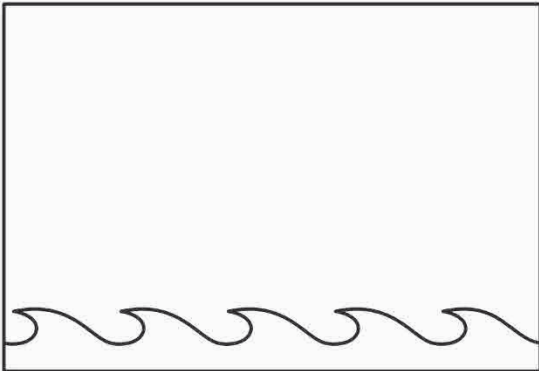
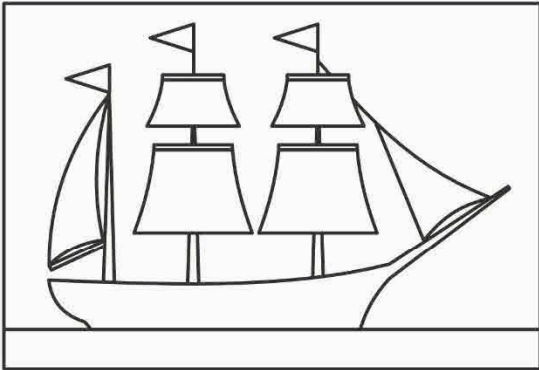
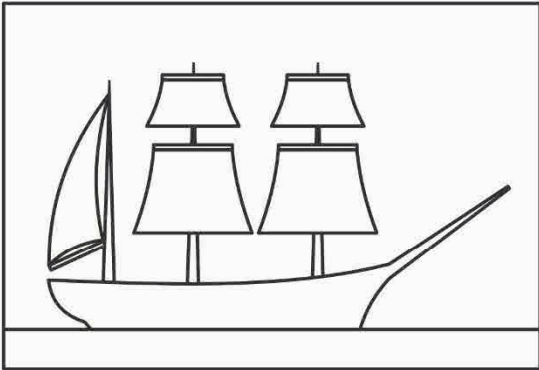
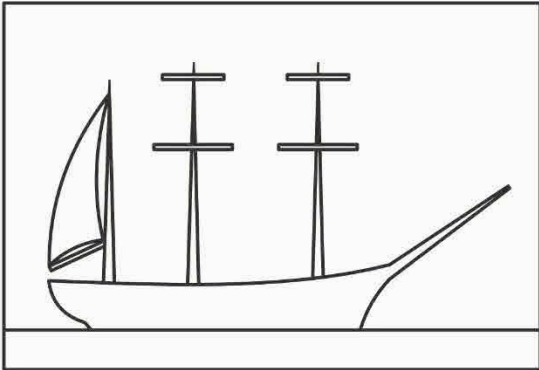
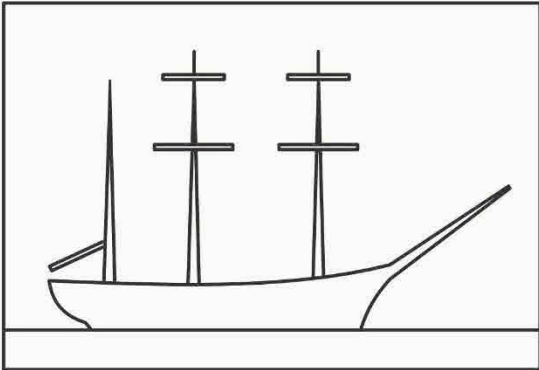
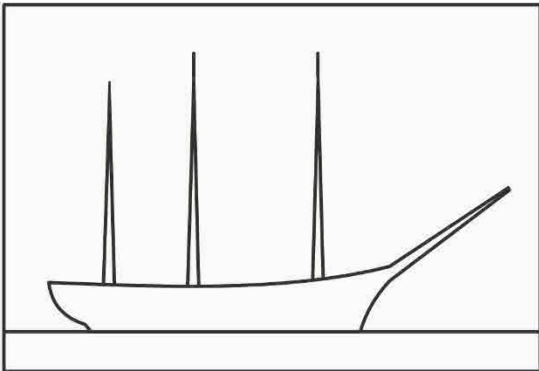
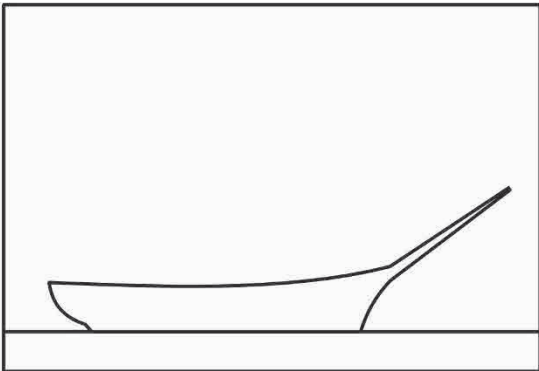


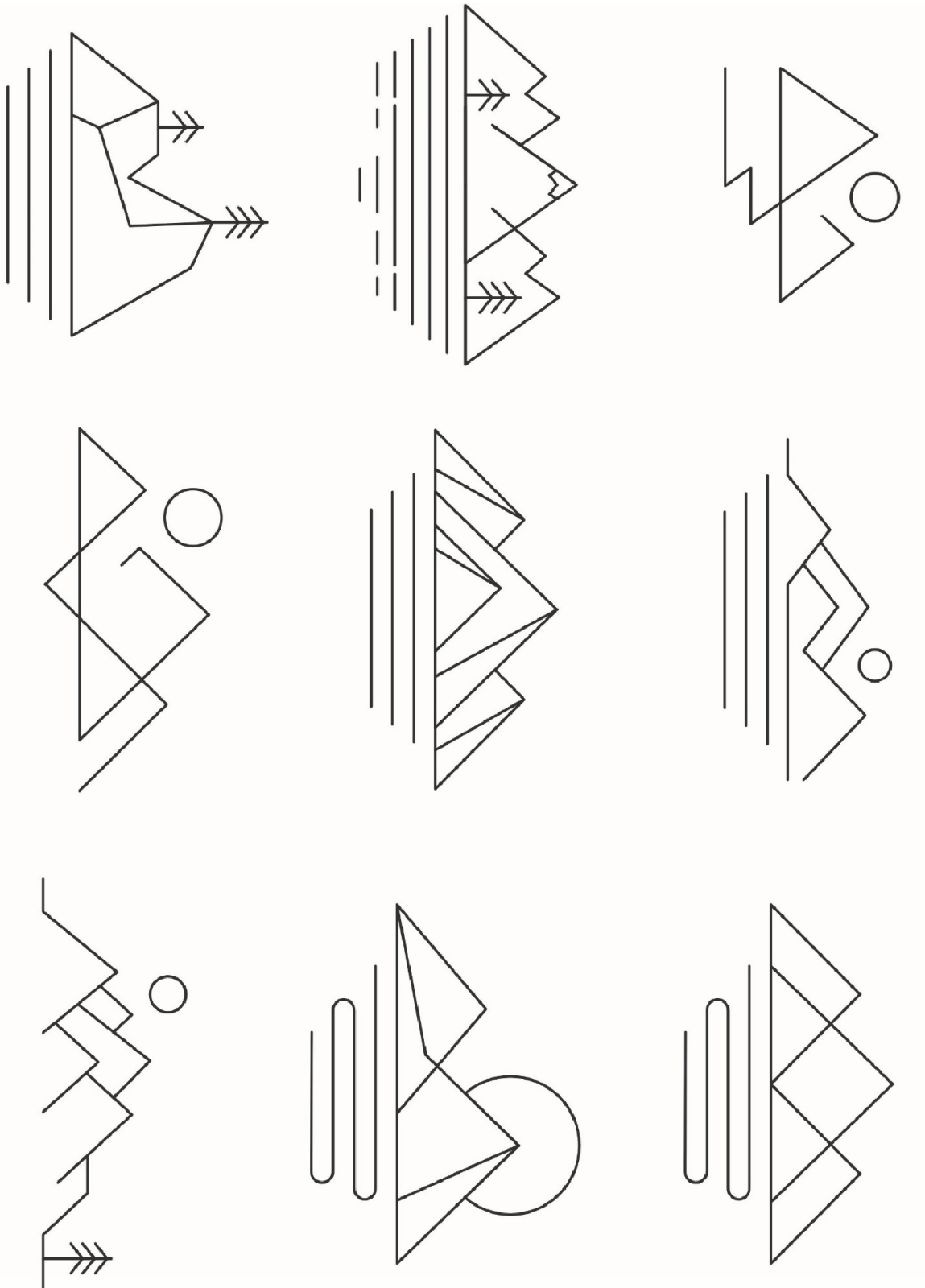


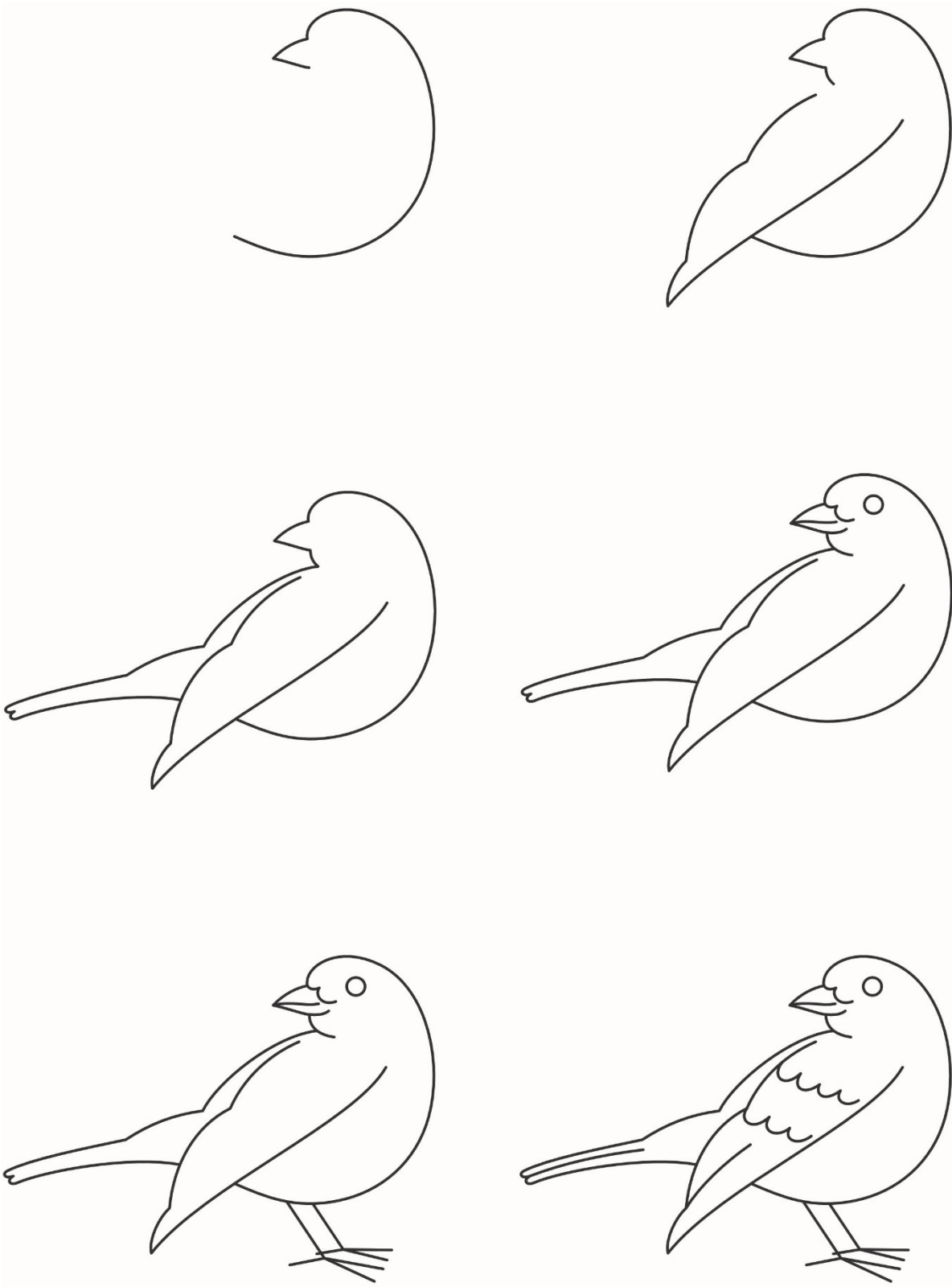


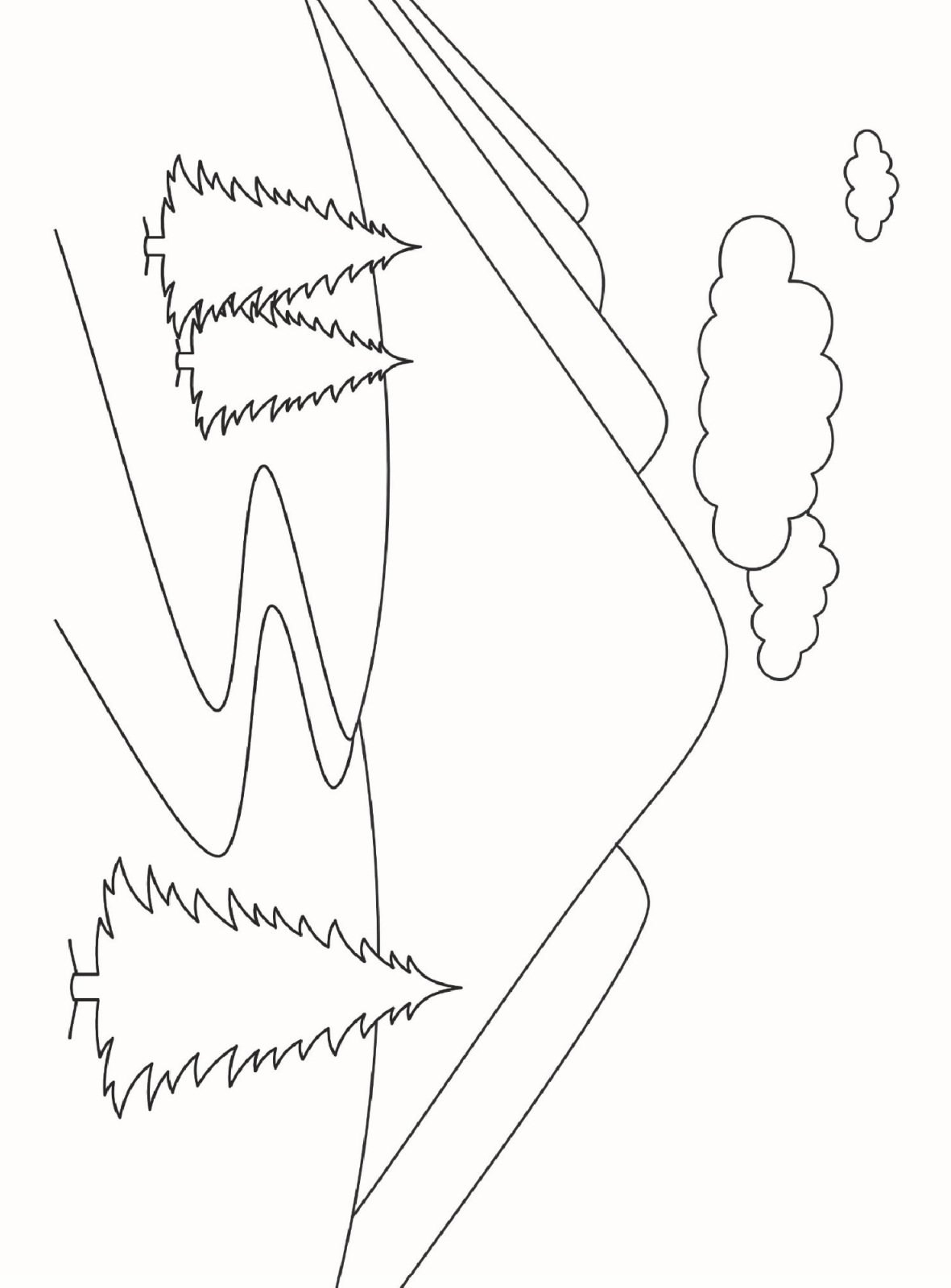


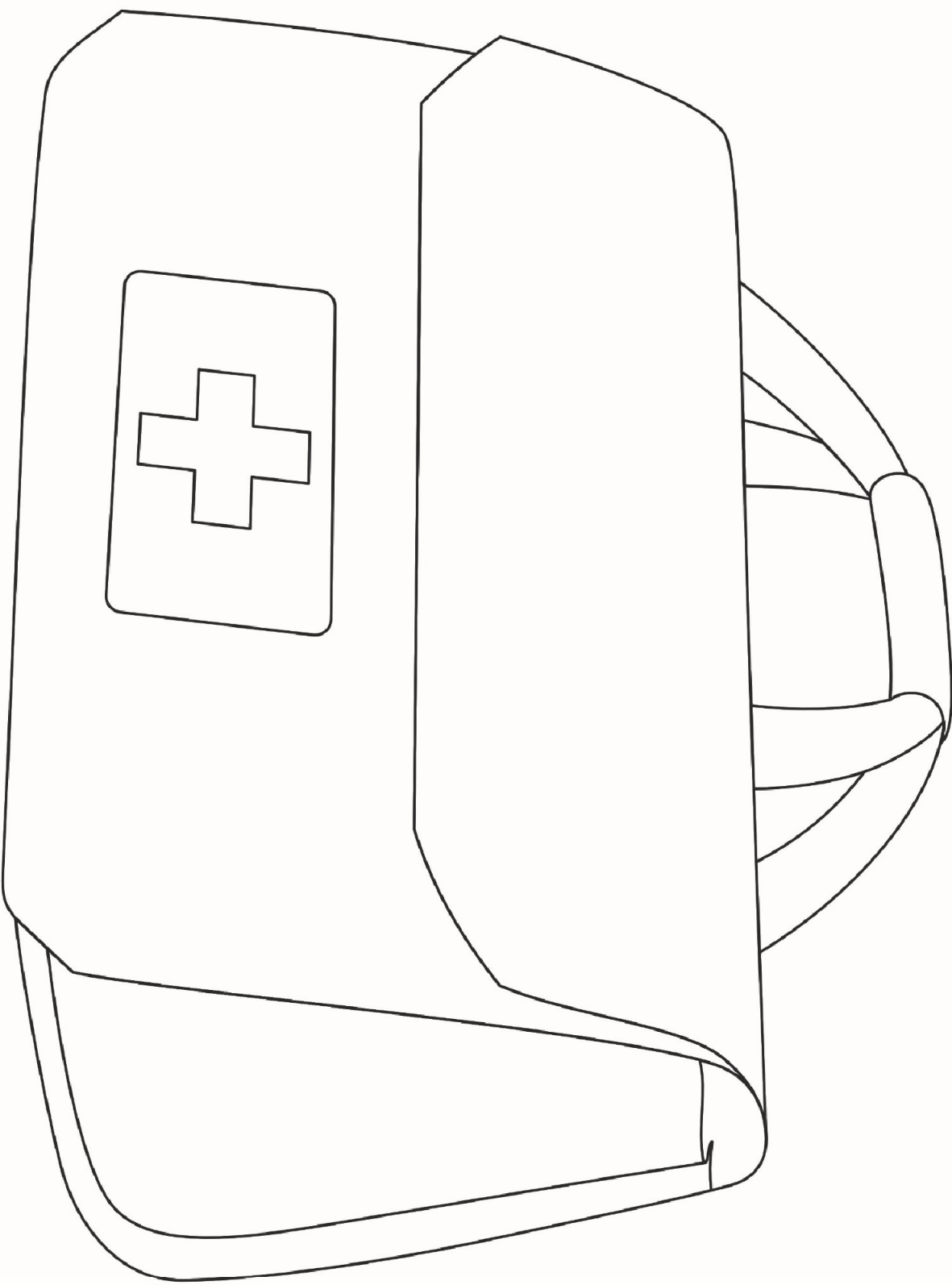


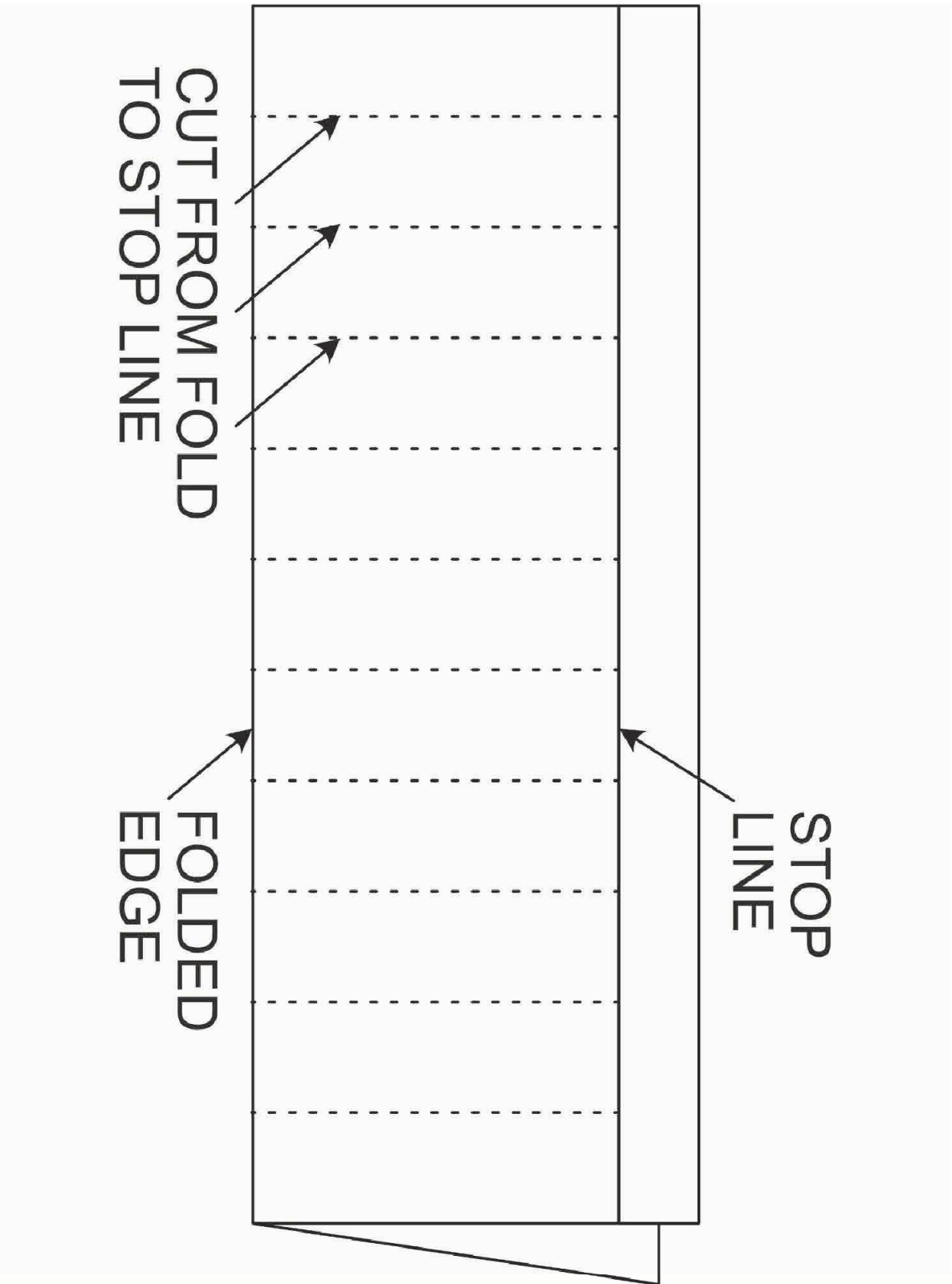


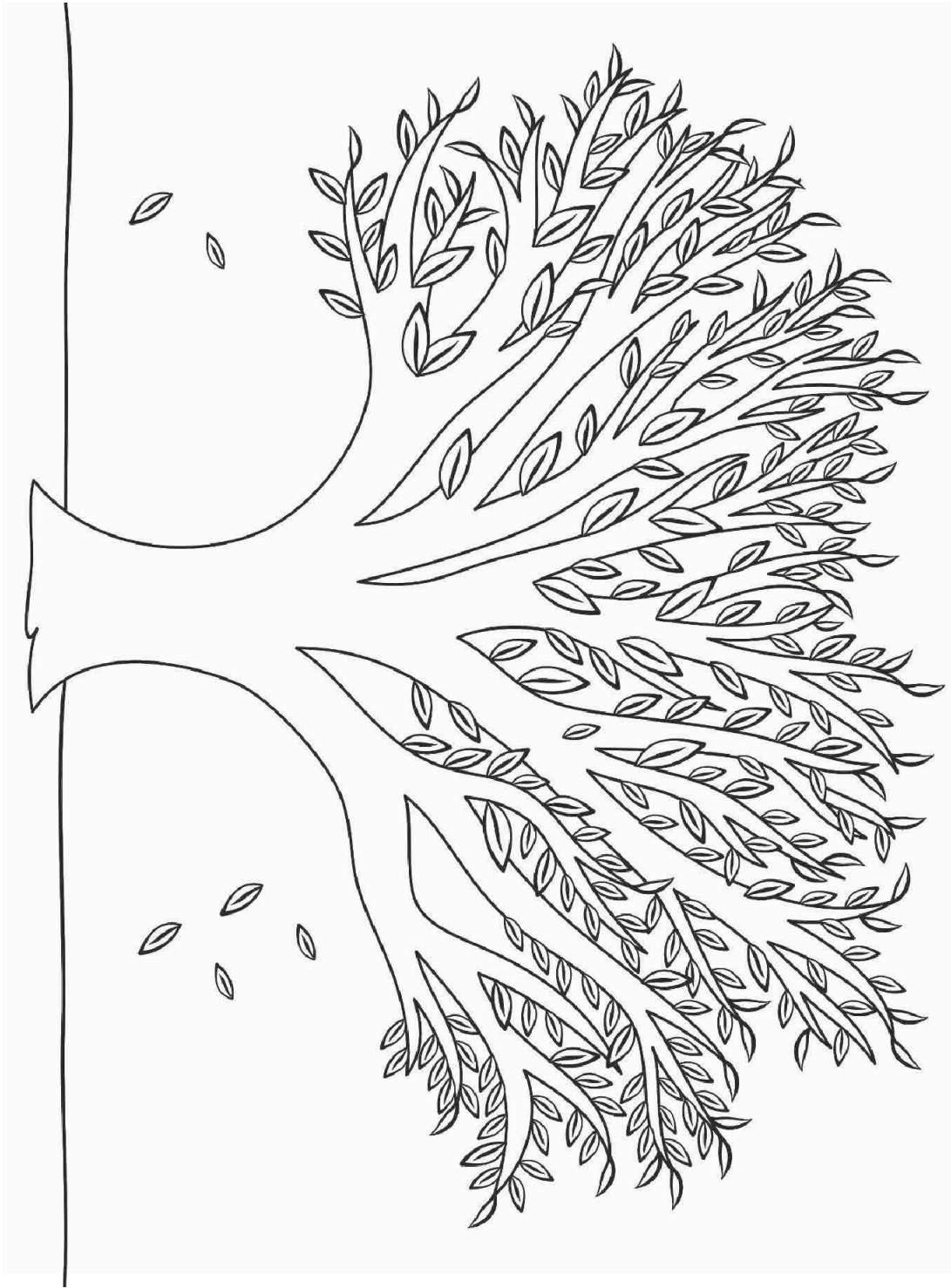


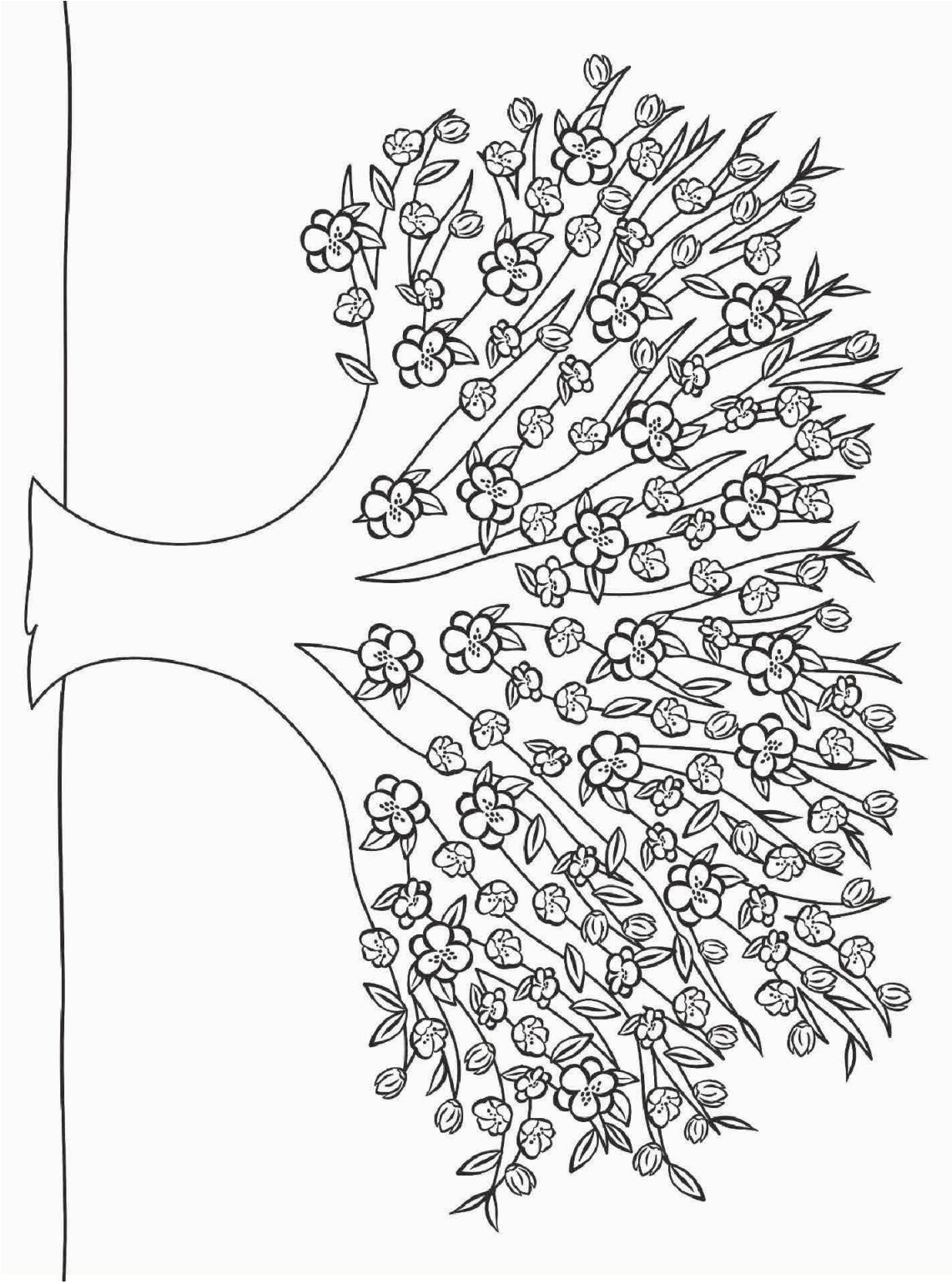












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