

Introduction to Sai Baba and Universal Brotherhood Lesson Plan

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Unit: Theme Unity and Inclusivity in Shirdi Sai Baba's Teachings

Lesson Number: 1 of 1

Time: 50 mins

Age and Proficiency Level: Middle School

Stage 1. Objectives: What will students know and be able to do at the end of this lesson?

KNOW:

- Basic biographical facts about Shirdi Sai Baba
- Historical and cultural context of his life
- Sai Baba's significance in promoting unity among different faiths and communities

DO:

- Identify key facts about Sai Baba's life
- Share an example of unity from the historical context
- Reflect on the idea of unity in their own school or community

Stage 2. Performance Assessment: How will you know that students can do that and in which communication mode?

Interpersonal: Students discuss with a partner what they learned about Sai Baba's background and share reflections on unity.

Presentational: Students contribute a short written or oral response about why Sai Baba is remembered as a symbol of unity.

Interpretive: Students demonstrate understanding by responding to comprehension questions based on the historical context.

Stage 3: Learning Scenarios: What instructional activities will be used? (Use as many as necessary to achieve your learning targets.)

Materials needed for this lesson:

- Printed or projected timeline handout
- Visuals/slides of Sai Baba, his devotees, and historical background
- Exit ticket slips
- Markers and chart paper for timeline activity

Opening/Activity 1: *Quick Write:* "What does unity mean to you?" followed by a brief class discussion.

Activity Title: "What does unity mean to you?"

Time: 10 minutes

Objective: To activate students' prior knowledge and personal perspectives on the concept of *unity*, setting the stage for deeper engagement with Sai Baba's teachings.

Materials Needed:

- Student notebooks or writing paper
- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers or whiteboard pens
- (Optional) Sentence starters on the board:
 - "To me, unity means..."
 - "I feel most united with others when..."

Teacher Instructions:

1. Introduce the Activity (1-2 minutes):

Say:

“Today we’re starting to explore the idea of *unity*. Before we learn about what Sai Baba taught, I want to know what *you* think this word means. Let’s take a few minutes to write down your thoughts.”

You may ask students:

“Have you ever heard the word ‘unity’ before? Where? What does it remind you of?”

2. Writing Prompt (4 minutes):

- Write the prompt on the board:

“What does unity mean to you?”

- Encourage students to write freely for about 3–4 minutes.
- Remind them: “There are no right or wrong answers. Just write what comes to mind—even if it’s just one sentence or a short paragraph.”

3. (Optional support: Provide sentence starters for students who need help getting started.)

4. Class Discussion (4 minutes):

- After writing time ends, invite 2–3 students to share what they wrote.
- Record a few keywords or phrases on the board (e.g., “working together,” “belonging,” “different people,” “team”).
- Ask:

“Did anyone use similar words or examples?”

“Why do you think unity might be important in a community or school?”

5. Transition (1 minute):

Say: “Thanks for sharing! We’ll keep thinking about unity throughout this lesson—and you’ll see how Sai Baba’s life gives us powerful examples of what unity looks like in action.”

Activity 2: *Mini Lecture + Visual Slideshow:* Overview of Shirdi Sai Baba’s life, including his birthplace, time period, and key followers (Hindus and Muslims).

Activity Title: *Introduction to the Life of Shirdi Sai Baba*

Time: 10–12 minutes

Objective: To introduce students to the historical and cultural background of Shirdi Sai Baba, focusing on his inclusive teachings and how he brought together followers of different faiths.

Materials Needed:

- A prepared slideshow with simple visuals (photos/illustrations of Shirdi Sai Baba, a map of India showing Shirdi, images of Hindu and Muslim symbols, his devotees)
 - Projector or screen
 - Notes for the teacher (you can print or keep in hand)
 - Student handout (optional): blank note-taking template with prompts like “3 facts I learned,” “1 question I have”
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Teacher Instructions:

1. Set the Context (1 minute):

Say:

- “Now that we’ve thought about what unity means to us, let’s learn about a real person who dedicated his life to unity and inclusivity—Shirdi Sai Baba.”
- “He lived in India during a time when people of different religions—especially Hindus and Muslims—often didn’t trust each other. But Sai Baba helped people see beyond these divisions.”

2. Present the Slideshow and Mini Lecture (8–10 minutes):

Slide 1: Who Was Shirdi Sai Baba?

- Born in the 1830s (exact birthdate unknown)
- Spent most of his life in a small town called Shirdi in Maharashtra, India
- A wandering holy man (or *fakir*) who lived simply and spoke about love, charity, and inner devotion

Say:

“Sai Baba didn’t call himself Hindu or Muslim—he believed all paths to God were valid. That’s why people from different faiths were drawn to him.”

Slide 2: His Teachings

- He taught “*Sabka Malik Ek*” — “God is one for all”
- Emphasized helping others, especially the poor and sick
- Encouraged people to see beyond caste, religion, or wealth

Slide 3: His Followers

- Welcomed Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, men and women
- Used symbols and language from both religions in his teachings
- Refused to let people treat others as less-than

Slide 4: His Legacy

- After his death in 1918, his teachings spread widely
- Today, people from all religions visit his shrine in Shirdi
- He's remembered as a symbol of universal brotherhood and peace

3. Check for Understanding (1–2 minutes):

Ask students:

- “What do you remember most about Sai Baba’s life or teachings?”
- “Why do you think people from different religions followed him?”

You can have them turn and talk to a partner briefly, or share answers aloud.

Optional Extension: Distribute a simple handout for students to write:

- 3 facts they learned
 - 1 question they still have
- You can collect these as a quick formative assessment or review them together.

Activity 3: *Timeline Activity:* In pairs, students place major events in Sai Baba’s life on a simple timeline.

Activity Title: *Mapping Key Events in Sai Baba’s Life*

Time: 10–12 minutes

Objective: To help students sequence important events in Sai Baba’s life and understand how his actions reflected his values of unity and inclusivity over time.

Materials Needed:

- Pre-printed timeline strips/cards (each with one major event from Sai Baba's life)
 - Blank timeline worksheet OR a long strip of chart paper per group
 - Glue sticks or tape (if using physical materials)
 - Markers or colored pencils
 - (Optional) Timeline anchor image: a horizontal timeline with 3–5 labeled points as scaffolding
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Teacher Instructions:

1. Introduction to the Activity (1 minute):

Say:

- “Now that we’ve learned about Sai Baba’s life, let’s put key moments in order. This will help us see how his life reflected his teachings over time.”
- “You’ll work with a partner (or small group) to build a timeline using major events.”

2. Grouping & Materials Distribution (1 minute):

- Divide students into pairs or small groups (2–3 students each).
- Hand out:
 - One set of event cards per group (mixed up)
 - One blank timeline worksheet or chart strip
 - Glue/tape and markers

3. Group Work: Build the Timeline (6–8 minutes):

- Instruct students to read each event card and discuss the most logical sequence.
- Once they’ve agreed, they should glue/tape the events onto their timeline in order.
- Encourage them to add simple illustrations or keywords next to each event.

Sample Events for Timeline Cards:

1. Sai Baba arrives in Shirdi (mid-1800s)
2. Begins healing the sick and helping the poor
3. Attracts Hindu and Muslim followers
4. Shares the message: “Sabka Malik Ek” (“One God for All”)

5. Builds the mosque (“Dwarkamai”) as a space for all
6. Passes away in 1918, leaving behind a message of unity

4. Share & Discuss (2–3 minutes):

Ask a few groups to hold up or display their timelines.

Guide a short class discussion with prompts like:

- “What did you notice about how his actions matched his message?”
- “Why do you think people kept coming to him over the years?”
- “How did his choices challenge divisions between communities?”

Optional Extension or Support:

- For students who need extra support, provide pre-sequenced events but have them illustrate or add reflections.
- For advanced learners, invite them to add a modern event showing how his legacy continues today (e.g., “Shrine in Shirdi visited by all faiths”).

Activity 4: *Pair & Share:* Discuss one aspect of Sai Baba’s life that surprised them or made them think differently about inclusion.

Activity Title: *What Surprised You About Sai Baba?*

Time: 8–10 minutes

Objective: To encourage personal reflection and peer-to-peer communication about Sai Baba’s inclusive practices and how they challenge or inspire students’ thinking about unity.

Materials Needed:

- None required, though you may provide:
 - A prompt slide on screen or whiteboard
 - Reflection sentence starters (optional)
 - Students' notes or timeline worksheets from earlier activities

Teacher Instructions:

1. Set the Purpose (1 minute): Say:

“Now that we’ve explored Sai Baba’s life and created a timeline, let’s take a few minutes to reflect. What stood out to you? Was anything surprising, confusing, or inspiring?”

“You’ll talk with a partner about one thing that caught your attention—and why.”

2. Display or Read the Prompt (1 minute): Prompt:

“What is one thing you learned about Sai Baba that surprised you or made you think differently about unity or inclusion?”

You can also write or project sentence starters for support:

- “I was surprised that Sai Baba...”
- “It made me think when he...”
- “I didn’t expect that...”
- “This reminds me of...”

3. Student Pair Discussions (4–5 minutes):

- Ask students to turn to a partner (or form small groups of 3 if needed).
- Encourage them to each share their thoughts.
- Remind them to listen respectfully and respond if they hear something interesting.

Optional Step: Circulate during the discussions and listen in. If a student shares a powerful insight, ask if they would be comfortable sharing with the class later.

4. Whole-Class Share-Out (2–3 minutes):

Invite 2–3 students to share what they or their partner said.

You might say:

“Who heard something from your partner that made *you* think differently?”

“Can someone share a surprising moment from Sai Baba’s life that your partner brought up?”

Optional Extension: Ask students to write a brief reflection in their notebook to keep track of their personal learning.

Prompt: “How did this discussion help you think differently about inclusion?”

Closing/Activity 5: *Exit Ticket:* One sentence answering: “How did Sai Baba promote unity in a divided society?”

Activity Title: *How Did Sai Baba Promote Unity?*

Time: 5 minutes

Objective: To reinforce the day’s learning by prompting students to reflect on Sai Baba’s inclusive teachings and how they applied them to the concept of unity.

Materials Needed:

- Small slips of paper, sticky notes, or index cards (1 per student)
- Pens or pencils
- (Optional) A collection basket, envelope, or box to gather responses

Teacher Instructions:

1. Introduce the Exit Ticket (1 minute):

Say:

“Before we finish today’s lesson, I’d like you to answer one final question on a slip of paper. This is your exit ticket—you’ll hand it in as you leave.”

Write or display the question:

“How did Sai Baba promote unity in a divided society?”

2. Provide Instructions (1 minute):

Say:

“Try to be specific. You can mention an action, a teaching, or even a story you heard today. You don’t have to write a long paragraph—2–3 thoughtful sentences is great.”

Offer sentence starters if needed:

- “Sai Baba promoted unity by...”
- “One example of Sai Baba creating unity was when...”
- “I think Sai Baba’s message of unity matters today because...”

3. Writing Time (2–3 minutes):

- Allow students a few quiet minutes to reflect and write.
- Encourage them to do their own thinking—this is a personal reflection, not a quiz.

4. Collection & Closure (1 minute):

- Collect the exit tickets as students leave or before transitioning to the next lesson.
- Thank them for their work and say:
“Your reflections help me see what stood out to you today. Next time, we’ll learn more about what Sai Baba taught through his words and actions.”

Optional Modifications:

- For younger or less confident writers, allow them to draw a picture with a label or caption.
- For classes with more time, have students share their exit ticket with a partner before submitting.
- Use the responses to guide a short review or warm-up at the beginning of the next class.