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S
National Museum
of Singapore

Explore!

A Building
Tour for Families

Recommended
for 7 year olds
and above





Introduction

Welcome to the National Museum of Singapore – Singapore's oldest museum! This building opened in 1887 and was named after Sir Stamford Raffles. That's right! It was known as the Raffles Library and Museum.

Portrait of Sir Stamford Raffles, 1817

This portrait of Sir Stamford Raffles can be found in the museum's Singapore History Gallery on the first floor.

Collection of National Museum of Singapore



The museum was known for its collection of important plants and animals of Southeast Asia. Your parents or even grandparents may remember the 7.3-metre-long Indian fin whale skeleton that was displayed in this building until the 1970s!

The gigantic whale skeleton at the Raffles Museum, 1930s

Collection of National Museum of Singapore

The National Museum of Singapore was **preserved** as a **National Monument** on Valentine's Day (14 February) in 1992!

A National Monument is a building or structure that has been preserved because of its importance to Singapore. It is protected by the law, and cannot be torn down or changed in any major way.

This means that the NMS building will be here **forever!**



The Parts That Make The Whole

Your clothes are designed with different parts. Sleeves cover our arms to protect them from the sun and cold. Buttons help us get in and out of our clothes.

Think of a building in parts: like the sleeves and buttons on our clothes, these parts are both useful and decorative. The decorations come in a variety of designs such as faces, plants or animals.

Label the parts of the National Museum of Singapore building using the helping words below:



A

Entrance:

The way to enter a building.

B

Window:

The “eyes” of a building that allow light and air in.

C

Arch:

A curved structure such as a window or a door.

D

Roof:

The top of a building, which protects it.

E

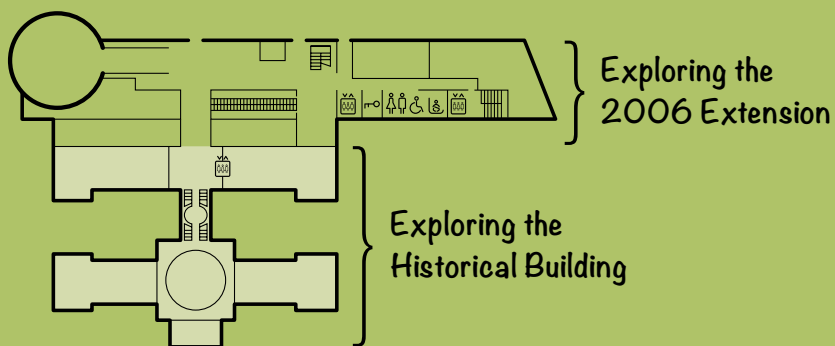
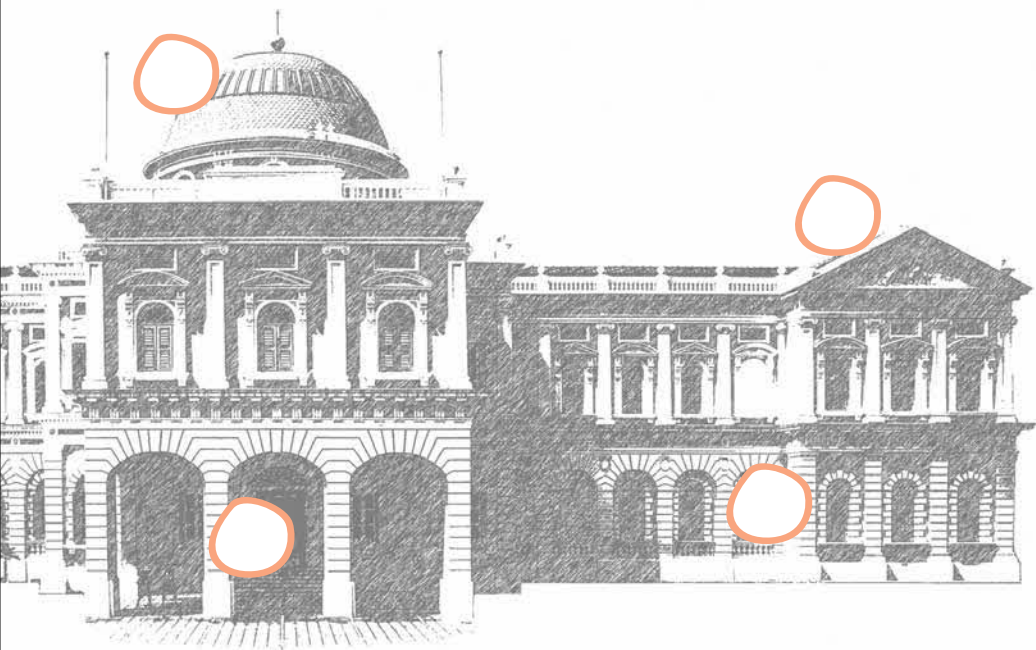
Dome:

The structure at the top of the building which looks like half of a ball.

F

Pediment:

A triangular structure near the roof. It is usually filled with sculptures.



Use this map to help you in your exploration

Exploring the Historical Building

Begin your exploration in the oldest part of the building, which was completed in 1887. It was designed with features that belong to the **neoclassical style**, a grand design that can be found in Europe.

The British Museum is an example of a neoclassical building.

Image by Ham – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0



As you walk around the building, look out for parts of the building that make up the neoclassical style: the pediment, dome, arch and columns!

Location: Outside



The museum's dome is Singapore's **oldest surviving dome**! In the photograph below, draw the pattern that you see on the dome.

Name an animal that has this pattern on its body:



Answer: Fish





There are a few pediments around the building. Take a closer look: some of the pediments have **Queen Victoria's Coat of Arms**. The coat of arms reminds us that the building was completed when Queen Victoria was the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1837–1901).

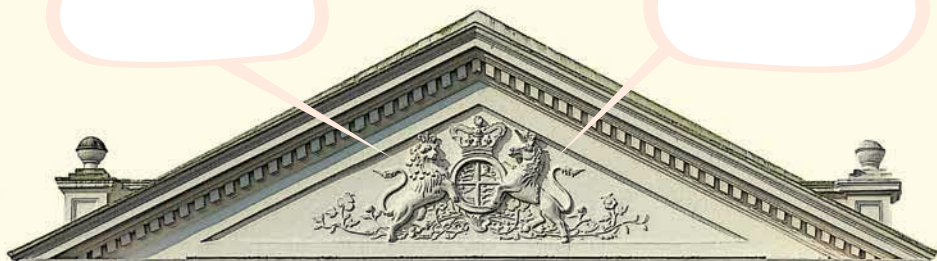
Queen Victoria, 1882

*Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth II 2017*

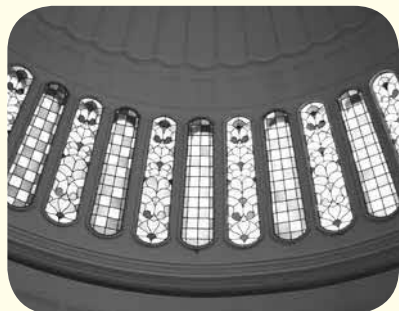
A coat of arms is a shield that represents a person, family or a country.



Queen Victoria's Coat of Arms features two animals – the **lion**, which represents England, and the **unicorn**, which represents Scotland. Can you identify the animals in this photograph?



Location: Rotunda



The rotunda is the first area you will visit when you enter the museum. It is a circular space that is covered with a dome. Look up and count the number of **coloured glass panels** on the ceiling. How many of them are there?



Answer: 50

The glass panels are decorated with patterns and colours. Circle the colours that you see on these glass panels.

RED

BLUE

PURPLE

ORANGE

BLACK

GREEN

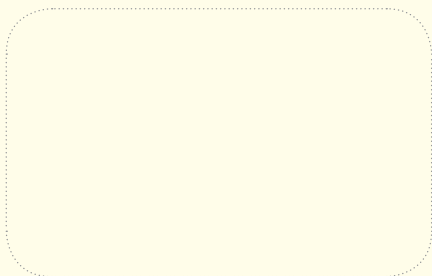
Location: Second floor



Eight giant columns can be seen in the rotunda. The topmost part of the column is called the **capital**, which is usually decorated with patterns of leaves and flowers.



Draw the patterns that you see on the capital in the space beside!



A column is a pillar which supports the roof. It can also decorate a space.



There is an iron spiral staircase that leads to the roof. It is near the Growing Up gallery. Find the staircase and circle the correct design!



Exploring the 2006 Extension

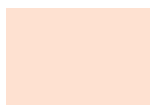
From 2003 to 2006, a new section was built behind the old museum building to provide additional exhibition and activity spaces for the museum's growing needs.

Location: Glass passage

The **glass passage** leads you from the old museum building to the new wing. It was named after the glass roof that you see above you!



Circle the shape of the glass panels:



Did you know?

This new glass roof has been designed to support its own weight!

Yes!

This glass roof also allows us to take a closer look at the dome of the old building!



From the glass passage, you can also spot some interesting lights that hang from the ceiling. These are called **chandeliers**. How many of them are there?



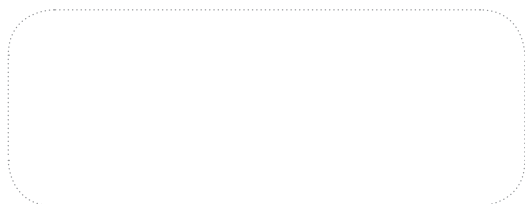
Answer: 8



There are **14,000** crystals on these chandeliers which make up an artwork called *Wings of a Rich Manoeuvre* by homegrown artist Suzann Victor.



In the box below, draw the part of the chandelier that looks like a pair of wings!



These chandeliers will swing several times a day. See if you can catch the chandeliers “in action” with your family. Do the swinging chandeliers remind you of a dragon or a bird in flight?



The new wing of the museum includes this feature called the **glass rotunda**, which resembles the rotunda in the old building! The glass rotunda has a spiral walkway that leads to the Singapore History Gallery on the first floor.



Make a guess! How high do you think the glass rotunda is?

- ☐ 6 metres
- ☐ 16 metres
- ☐ 160 metres

Answer: 16 metres

Go on an exploration trail and visit
Story of the Forest in the Glass
Rotunda. Watch animals and plants from the
William Farquhar Collection of Natural
History Drawings come alive!



An architect is someone who designs buildings. Imagine that you are an architect for the museum. If you were asked to design a new museum building to join the 1887 building, what would it look like?



The Raffles Library and Museum building in the 1890s
Collection of National Museum of Singapore

After the Exploration

Which part of the museum building is your favourite, and why?



Did you spot the pineapple motifs on the 1887 building?

What do you think the pineapple represents?

One word to describe your museum visit:

We hope that you
have enjoyed your exploration of
the National Museum of Singapore.

Do share your experience at the museum
with your family and friends.

See you again soon!

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