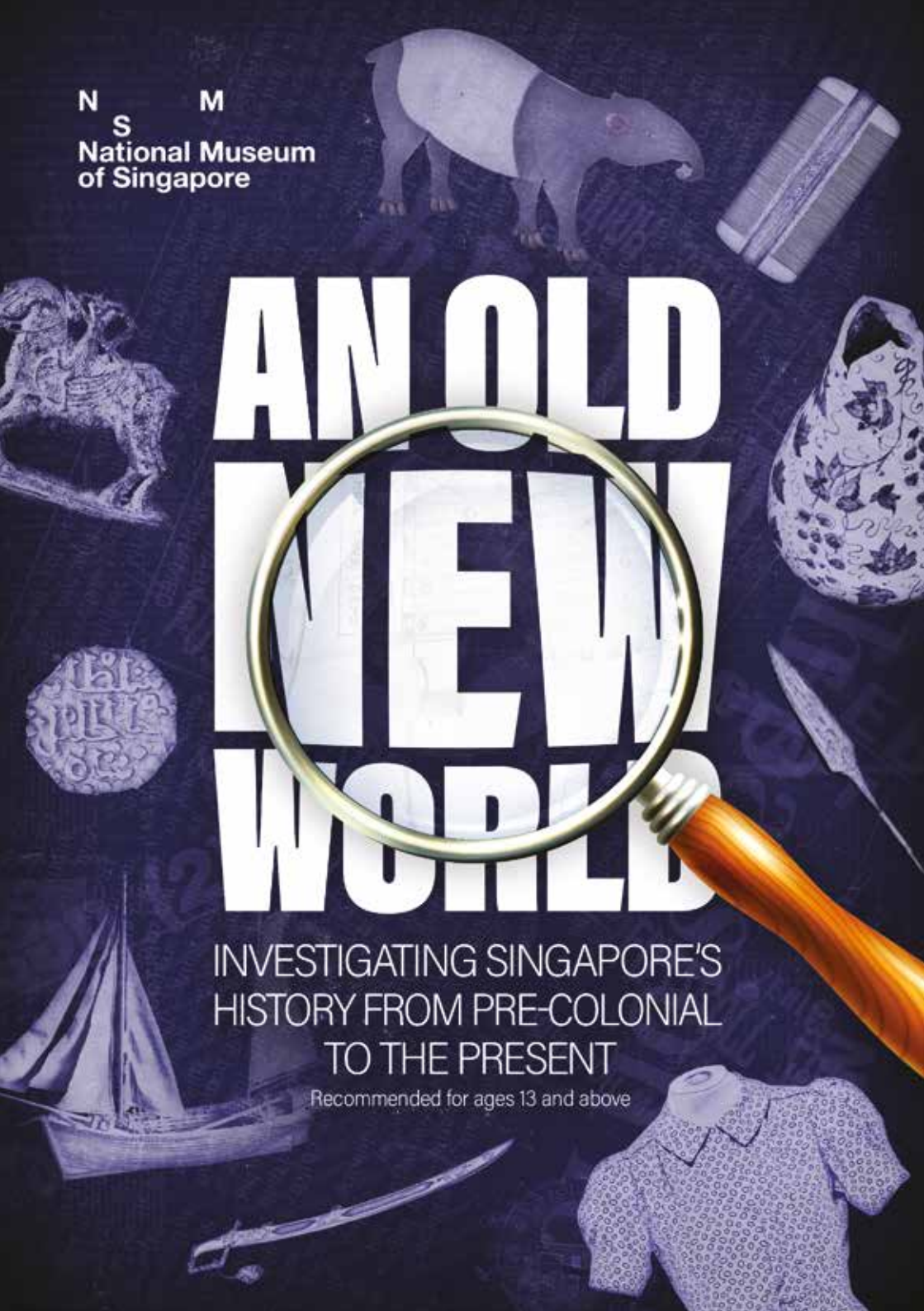


N S M
National Museum
of Singapore

AN OLD NEW WORLD

INVESTIGATING SINGAPORE'S
HISTORY FROM PRE-COLONIAL
TO THE PRESENT

Recommended for ages 13 and above



Dear Investigator,

Welcome to the National Museum of Singapore!

You have been selected to be part of a special taskforce to uncover the historical figures and moments that have shaped Singapore. Your journey will take you through the new exhibition, *An Old New World: From the East Indies to the Founding of Singapore, 1600s–1819*, as well as the museum's permanent galleries.

- *An Old New World*, launched to commemorate Singapore's Bicentennial, situates Singapore in the wider regional networks that spanned present-day Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. As you explore this exhibition and the Singapore History Gallery, consider this question: **"Was Singapore a sleepy fishing village before 1819?"**
- Uncover Singapore's transformation to the modern city-state it is today and reflect: **"What are some significant moments in Singapore's 700-year history, and what relevance do these moments have for us today?"**



A few quick tips to remember as you explore the galleries:



Examine the objects in the museum carefully

- Touch the objects only if the signs indicate that it is permissible to do so.



Enjoy food and beverages outside the galleries

- It is important to keep the galleries free of food and moisture, as food may attract insects that can cause irreparable harm to artefacts and moisture could cause certain materials to deteriorate.



Take photographs without flash

- Flash from cameras damages sensitive materials like paper and textiles. It also greatly shortens their lifespan.

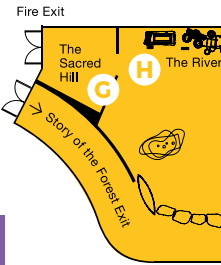
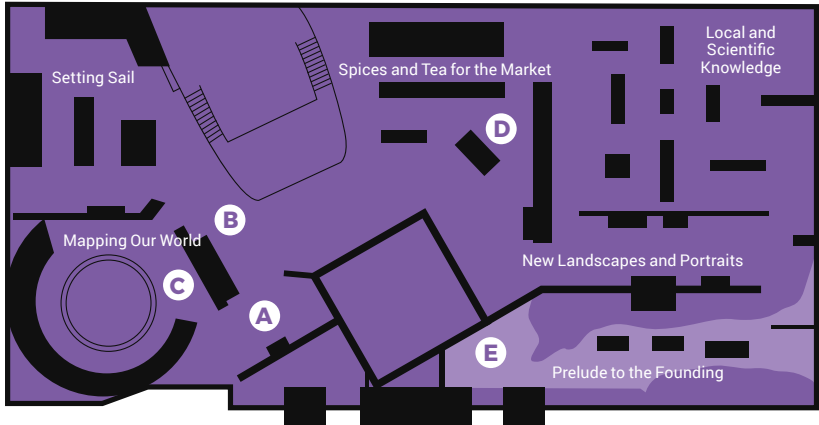
Most importantly, start your journey with a curious mind! All the best!

**Warm regards,
Lead Investigator**

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Basement:
*An Old New World: From the East Indies to the
Founding of Singapore 1600s–1819* Exhibition

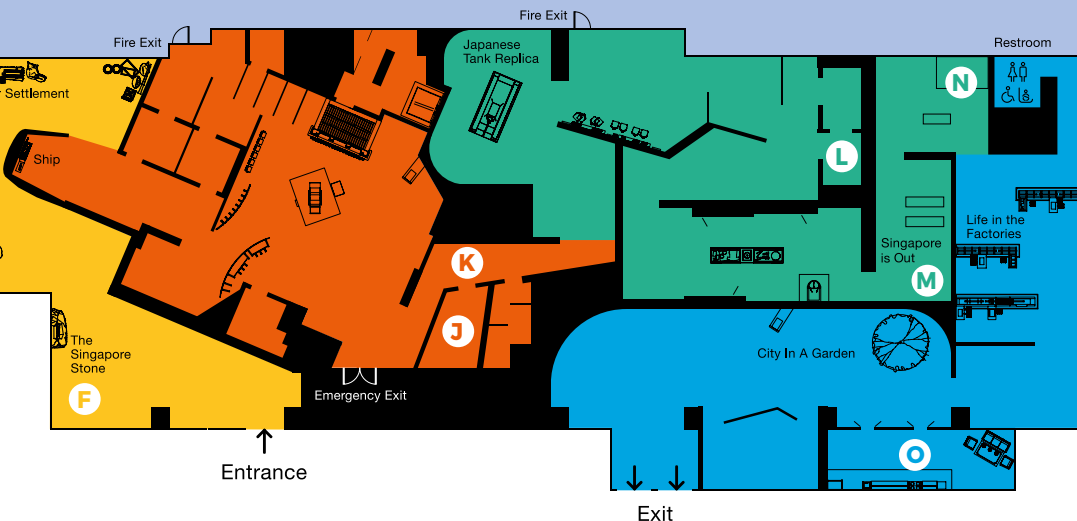


- A** Lives of the Orang Laut
- B** The Malays of Maritime Southeast Asia
- C** A Battle in Singapore's Waters
- D** The Currency of Trade
- E** New Chart of the Straits of Malacca

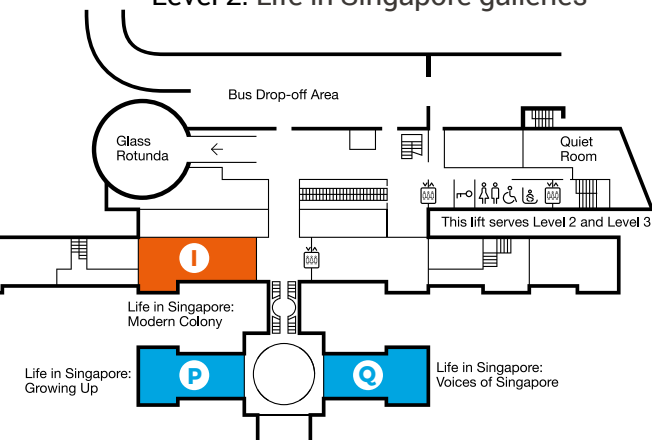
Finding your way around

Use the navigational maps on these pages to help you locate the different galleries. There are many artefacts to look at, scents to smell, videos to watch and stories to read in each location.

Level 1: Singapore History Gallery



Level 2: Life in Singapore galleries



- F** Chinese Porcelain
- G** Headless Horseman
- H** Hornbill Casque
- I** Under the Stairs: Amahs in Colonial Singapore
- J** The Chettiaris of Market Street
- K** Eunus Abdullah
- L** Elizabeth Choy
- M** Singapore is Out
- N** A Nation in the Making
- O** HDB Flats
- P** Participant's Medal from 1952 Summer Olympics
- Q** Old National Stadium Seats



**Was Singapore a
sleepy fishing village
before 1819?**

A

Lives of the Orang Laut

For centuries, the Orang Laut have lived along the sea, mangrove swamps and coastal areas around Singapore, peninsular Malaysia and the Riau islands. They were a powerful naval force that defended local Malay ports. In 1594, Flemish trader Jacques de Coutre wrote that the Orang Laut threw their spears “so hard that they can even penetrate an iron breastplate and any shield no matter how sturdy they are”.



This spear was collected in 1992 by an anthropologist working on the Orang Suku Laut peoples of the Riau Archipelago. The Orang Laut living in the waters off and around Singapore also used spears to catch fish and fight their enemies. Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (1992-01257)

01

What were the roles of the Orang Laut in Singapore?

02

Discuss with your fellow investigators:

Why do we know so little about the Orang Laut in Singapore's history?
Think about how historians collect historical evidence.

B The Malays of Maritime Southeast Asia



Model of Malay coastal vessel, on loan from Asian Civilisations Museum (1992-00543)

The *perahu* ("boat") is a fairly shallow coastal vessel used by the Malays and Bugis to sail across the islands of Southeast Asia. In the pre-colonial and colonial eras, Malay seafarers sailed to Singapore to meet with Arab and Chinese traders to trade in local regional goods, like hornbill casques and lakawood.

01 Look closely at this vessel.

- a. What features does this ship have?
- b. Look at the other ships in this section. Besides the Malay seafarers, who else were sailing across Southeast Asia?

02 Discuss with your fellow investigators:

What does the presence of these *perahus* tell you about the waterways surrounding Singapore?

C A Battle in Singapore's Waters

On 10 October 1603, Dutch and Portuguese ships fought a battle off the coast of Singapore, where Changi Airport is located today. The Sultan of Johor, Raja Bongsu, witnessed this showdown from his ships near present-day Tanah Merah.

Dutch ships

The Dutch struck first. They fired at the Portuguese flagship *Todos os Santos* ("All Saints") and damaged it badly. The Portuguese then transferred to smaller ships and sailed downstream.

Mouth of the Singapore River



Pedra Branca,
Singapore's
easternmost point

Bintan

Portuguese ships

The battle ended when remnants of the Portuguese armada escaped towards Pedra Branca and the South China Sea.

Compass

Although the Portuguese had control over the ports of Malacca and Johor Lama, the Dutch defeated them in this battle and gained control of the Straits of Singapore. This battle marked a power shift in European dominance of the East Indies from the Portuguese to the Dutch.

01

Discuss with your fellow investigators:

Why do you think the Straits of Singapore was so important to the Dutch and Portuguese?

Self-Exploration

Mapping our World

Take a look at the globes and other artefacts in Zone 1, "Mapping Our World". From the 17th to 19th centuries, European seafarers used globes and sea charts to sail to the East Indies. What can artefacts like these globes tell you about how they understood the world?



Pair of terrestrial and celestial globes, 1800/1799, J & W Cary, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2018-00066, 2018-00067)

Weapons of War

The Europeans had their guns and cannons, while the locals had swords and blowpipes with poisoned darts. Look for the weapons used in their battles!



Above
Makassar Soldier Who Blow Poisoned Darts Out of Trunks, Collection of National Museum of Singapore (xxxx-01033)



Left
Klewang, 1773, on loan from the Museum Bronbeek

Right
Dutch East India Company cannon on roller horse, 1764, on loan from the Amsterdam Museum



D The Currency of Trade

In the 17th century, Singapore was home to a settlement, a trading port and a *Shahbandar* ("Harbour Master") who served the Johor sultanate. The *Shahbandar* dealt with foreign ships and traders, and was the leader of the Orang Laut within and around the Straits of Singapore.



Gold kupang coin issued by Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah III of Johor, 17th century, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (N-3716)

Gold coins such as this were likely to have been circulated within and around Singapore via trade.

01

Look closely at the other coins in this section and match them to the correct names!



Netherlands East Indies one rupee



Spanish Dollar



British East India Company 1/48 rupee coin

02

Discuss with your fellow investigators:

What can these coins tell us about trade in the Malay Archipelago?



Self-Exploration

The Spice Trail

Did you know that the spices we now eat in our daily lives were valuable commodities in the East Indies? Smell the spices in the scent boxes in Zone 3, “Spices and Tea for the Market”, and learn why they were so valuable to the Europeans.



Silver Dutch East India Company ingot, 1739, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2018-00412)

Spices and Tea for the Market

The Dutch East India Company used silver ingots to buy spices and textiles from the East Indies. Such ingots are now very rare as most of them would have been melted down by locals to make silver jewellery and local currency. Can you guess how heavy this ingot might be?

E

New Chart of the Straits of Malacca

Raffles sailed on the *Indiana* southwards from Penang along the Straits of Malacca, and eventually arrived at Singapore in 1819.

This chart depicts the Straits of Malacca, Johor and other areas along the Malayan coast, as well as Singapore. The inset map on the right shows more details of the Straits of Singapore.



Laurie and Whittle's New Chart of the Straits of Malacca, 1802,
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2017-00521)

01

Look at the other maps and charts in this section. Why do you think the British produced maps of the region?

02

Why did Raffles choose Singapore as a base to set up a port in 1819?

A collage of historical and cultural artifacts including a rhinoceros, a book, a lion, a stone carving, a spear, a boat, a shirt, and a sword.

**What are some
defining moments in
Singapore's history?**

**How did Singapore
transform into a
modern city-state over
the last 700 years?**

PRE-COLONIAL SINGAPORE

F Chinese Porcelain

These porcelain sherds date back to the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties in China. In the 14th and 15th centuries, porcelain wares were popularly traded by the Chinese around the waters off Singapore.



Blue and white Chunping porcelain vase, 14th century, Collection of the Archaeology Unit, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

01 Can you identify the two plants that are depicted on the vase?

and

02 Scholars have proposed that sherds found at Singapore's waterways may have been tossed off by passing ships. What can you infer about Singapore's connections to the wider world from the 14th to 16th centuries?

G

Headless Horseman

This unique Javanese-style figurine was found on the banks of the Singapore River. It symbolises Singapore's complex relationship with the East Javanese kingdom of Majapahit in the 14th century.



Figurine – a rider on a horse – excavated from Empress Place site, c. 14th century, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2002-00431)

01

Unscramble the words to complete the sentences and find out more about this unique artefact!

- a. The modelling of the man and the horse is two-dimensional and it resembles puppets in (A W Y N G A) *kulit* (shadow-play performances).
- b. The rider is wearing elaborate jewellery. Even the harness for the horse is very detailed. All these seem to suggest that the rider is someone from the (Y T I L I B O N).
- c. In the statue, the man is seen holding a staff which could either be a spear or a (A L F G).

02

Look at the artefacts in this section. Pick two artefacts that showcase Singapore's rich history and connections with the wider Southeast Asian region. Explain why you chose those two artefacts.

Artefact**Explanation****a****b**

03

Discuss with your fellow investigators:

What can you infer about Singapore's cultural connections to the wider Southeast Asia region in the 14th century?

H Hornbill Casque

In the 14th and 15th centuries, Temasek was a bustling market and port where merchants from China, India and Java came together to trade their goods. The hornbill casque was one of many local items, including lakawood, tin and gold, that the locals traded in exchange for goods like Chinese porcelain.



Hornbill Casque, Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum



A Wrinkled Hornbill at the Jurong Bird Park, 1970s, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2008-04841)

01 What was Singapore known as during the 14th and 15th centuries? Circle the correct answers.

Temasek

Longyamen

Singapore

Danmaxi

Wakanda

Banzu

02 Hornbill casques were valued for the ivory they contained, which was used to make a variety of goods, such as:

R ☐ N ☐ S

PO ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ PLUGS

03 Discuss with your fellow investigators:
What does the trade of hornbill casques and the discovery of items made from hornbill casques tell us about 14th- and 15th-century Singapore?

COLONIAL YEARS

I Under the Stairs: Amahs in Colonial Singapore

The amahs, many of whom were single and unmarried women, were employed to look after children. They were known for their independence and their tight-knit “sisterhood”.



01 Where did most amahs originate from?

02 Why did the amahs come to Singapore to find work?
Circle the correct answers.

Collapse of the
silk industry

Overpopulation

War

Floods

Famine

To find their family
members

03 Discuss with your fellow investigators:
Why do you think the “sisterhood” was important to the amahs?



The Chettiars of Market Street



The Chettiars were a small but powerful community in colonial Singapore. They loaned money to people from all races and walks of life: Chinese, Eurasians, Indians and Malays. Their workplace was known as the *kittangi*, which means “warehouse” in Tamil.

Find the artefact featured below and examine it closely.

01

This is a promissory note, which details the money borrowed from the Chettiars by a borrower. What is the ethnicity of the borrower? How much money did he borrow?



Promissory Note, 1923,
Collection of the National Museum of
Singapore (2006-00713)

02

How did the Chettiars contribute to colonial Singapore’s development?

K

Eunos Abdullah



Eunos Abdullah championed education for the Malay community. He was the co-founder and the first president of the Singapore Malay Union, which sought to represent the Malay community.

Listen to the audio clip to find out more.

01

How do you feel after listening to the audio clip?

02

What was Eunos Abdullah fighting for?

03

Why did he fight so passionately for this cause?

JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

L Elizabeth Choy

Elizabeth Choy wore this set of clothing for close to 200 days in captivity during the Japanese Occupation in Singapore. This gold necklace was gifted to her by Lady Daisy Thomas in gratitude for her help to prisoners-of-war, including Lady Thomas, during the war.



Elizabeth Choy's clothing, 1940s, Gift of Elizabeth Choy (1992-00211)



Gold necklace, late 19th/early 20th century, Gift of Bridget Choy Wai Fong (2014-00308)



Portrait of Elizabeth Choy, June 1953, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (1992-00221)

- 01** Discuss with your fellow investigators:
What do you think drove Elizabeth Choy and her husband to help the prisoners-of-war?

- 02** How would you describe Elizabeth Choy as a person?

Food for thought

How would you respond if you were to go through the same experience as Elizabeth Choy? What would you do to help yourself survive 200 days of torture?

M Singapore is Out



9 August marks Singapore's independence. On this day in 1965, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew announced Singapore's separation from Malaysia in a televised press conference. View snippets of this announcement in the gallery.

01

On 16 September 1963, Malaysia was born. Which territories did Malaysia consist of? Circle the correct territories below.

Singapore**Federation of
Malaya****Sabah****Sarawak****Brunei****Hong Kong****Batam****Bintan**

02

Watch the segment, titled “Note to Singaporeans”, from the 05:15 mark, and fill in the missing words.

“I would like finally, if I may, just to speak not to you but really to the of Singapore. I have been so busy in the last few days, I haven’t had the time to compose my thoughts in writing to tell you what it is all about and why what has happened has happened.

There is nothing to be worried about it. Many things will go on as usual. But be firm, be calm. We are going to have a nation in Singapore. We will set the . This is not a Malay nation; this is not a Chinese nation; this is not an Indian nation. Everybody will have his place: .

And finally, let us really – I cannot call myself a Malaysian now – we unite, regardless of race, language, religion, culture.”

03

Discuss with your fellow investigators:

Do you agree with Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s vision? Why?

N

A Nation in the Making



The armchair on display belonged to S. Rajaratnam, Singapore's Minister of Culture from 1959 to 1965, who wrote the National Pledge. The red box belonged to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, and it contained his important work documents pertaining to Singapore. Mr Rajaratnam and Mr Lee, and our other founding leaders of Singapore, worked hard to create a national identity to unite all Singaporeans.

01

Pick two artefacts in this section that show how our founding leaders tried to encourage the people of Singapore to start thinking of themselves as Singaporeans. Explain why you chose those two artefacts.

Artefact

Explanation

a

b

THE POST-INDEPENDENCE YEARS

0 HDB Flats



By the 1980s, 67% of Singaporeans had moved from their shop houses and kampongs (villages) into their first HDB flat. The HDB estates had amenities such as shops, schools, hawker centres and light industries within the neighbourhood.

01

Fill in the missing letters.

(Clue: This agency is responsible for public housing in Singapore)

O U I N N E E L O M E
B D

02

Think about the place where you live. Do you see any similarities and differences between the HDB flats of the past and your current home? These can be physical or non-physical things.

Past	SIMILARITIES	Present
a		a
b		b

Past	DIFFERENCES	Present
a		a
b		b



Participant's Medal from 1952 Summer Olympics



© Singapore Sports Council

Tang Pui Wah received this medal at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki for her participation in the 80-metre hurdles and 100-metre sprint events. At the age of 19, she was a top sportswoman in local inter-school games, and the first woman to represent Singapore at the Olympic Games.



Participant's medal belonging to Tang Pui Wah from the Summer Olympics in Helsinki, 1952, Gift of Tang Pui Wah (2015-00031)

In an interview, Tang said, "I wanted to discover the limits of my abilities... When we arrived at Helsinki, the first thing to do was to raise our country's flag. I felt very honoured to be able to represent my country. This kind of feeling is priceless, so I was very excited to be there."

01

What motivated Tang Pui Wah to represent Singapore in sporting events like the 1952 Olympics games?

Self-Exploration



Education in the 1950s – 1960s

From 1957 onwards, schools began teaching the four vernacular languages of English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Meanwhile, more emphasis was given to sports education to cultivate a fit and healthy population.

Take a look at the artefacts in the Growing Up gallery. How similar or different are your own schooling experiences from education in the 1950s and 1960s?

“In my class, the students were from different ethnic backgrounds. Among my classmates, there were Indians and Malays; slowly, I came in touch with their culture.”

– Mrs Wee Teck Yam, who attended Bartley Secondary School in 1955

Q Old National Stadium Seats



The National Stadium (opened in 1973) hosted many sporting events such as the Southeast Asian games and football matches, with much fanfare and excitement. It also witnessed 18 National Day Parades that took place on its grounds from 1976 to 2006.



Postcard of National Day Parade at the National Stadium, 1970s–1980s, Collection of the National Museum of Singapore (2008-04190)

01

Read the following statements about the old National Stadium and circle either True or False.

- a. The old National Stadium had a seating capacity of 55,000.

True / False

- b. The spontaneous cheer that can be heard at every football match is known as the Kallang Roar.

True / False

02

As you sit in these old National Stadium seats, recall the last time you watched the National Day Parade in person. How did you feel sitting in the crowd with your fellow Singaporeans, watching the performances and singing the songs?

Tick the words that describe your feeling. You may tick more than one feeling.

Comfortable

☐

Rough

☐

Nostalgic

☐

Happy

☐

Sad

☐

Proud

☐

03

How does a place such as the National Stadium, or events like sports or the National Day Parade bring people together, in the past and today?

REFLECTION

Now that you have completed your journey, what are some of the lessons you will take away from your museum experience?

A

What are three new things that you have learnt about Singapore's history?

01

02

03

B

Give two reasons why you think it is important to study and understand Singapore's history.

01

02

C

What does being Singaporean mean to you?

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