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S  
National Museum  
of Singapore

# WITNESS TO WAR

REMEMBERING 1942

23 September 2017 – 25 March 2018

## *A YOUNG JOURNALIST'S NOTEBOOK*

*Recommended for  
Ages 7 to 12*

This notebook belongs to

## From the desk of Chief Editor of *The Singapore Times*

Dear Young Journalist,

Welcome to the National Museum of Singapore! It has been 75 years since Singapore fell to the Japanese army in 1942. The museum has launched a new exhibition, *Witness to War: Remembering 1942*, to tell the stories of people who lived through the fall of Singapore. There are also two other war-related exhibitions in the Museum.

Let's go on a learning journey to discover and share these wartime stories with the readers of *The Singapore Times*!

Use this notebook to gather information for your news article, and I look forward to seeing what you've learnt. All the best!

### Parent's/Teacher's note:

This booklet has been developed as a family activity guide for young audiences aged 7 to 12. Parents/teachers are encouraged to guide children and students through the activities together. Questions, such as "If war were to come to Singapore, would you stay or evacuate from your home?", are raised to facilitate group discussions about important topics.



Chief Editor

Getting Around

SURVIVING SYONAN GALLERY

Level 2

- 1 FROM SINGAPORE TO SYONAN-TO
- 2 THE FOOD SITUATION IN SINGAPORE
- 3 HOW A FAMILY COPED DURING THE OCCUPATION



SINGAPORE HISTORY GALLERY

Level 1

- 1 JAPANESE HA-GO TANK
- 2 ELIZABETH CHOY'S STORY

Entrance

Exit

WITNESS TO WAR: REMEMBERING 1942

Basement

Zone 1

- 2 THE PACIFIC WAR

- 1 THE 25-POUNDER GUN

Zone 2

- 4 A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

- 3 WITNESSES TO WAR

prelude

Entrance

Exit

Zone 3

- 5 WRITE A LETTER

# Museum Etiquette



Let's look out for the trail markers and find out more about important historical objects in the galleries.



Listen to the sounds in the galleries. What do you hear? How do you feel?



Take as many photographs as you would like, young reporters! Let's remember to not use flash photography in the galleries.



Keep your voices low as you share news and stories with each other. Walk, don't run - let's be considerate to other visitors.

Most importantly, let's explore with a curious mind and have fun together!

This special international exhibition was launched to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. It features first-hand accounts from ordinary men and women who lived through the war.

Many of them were young people, just like yourself, 75 years ago! There are also many artefacts and items from overseas museums in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and more.

Enter the gallery to find out more.

Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15 February 1942. It was described as the "worst disaster" by then-British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Singapore's fall was among Britain's worst military defeats.

1

## THE 25-POUNDER GUN



The 25-pounder gun was a standard weapon used by British and Allied troops during World War Two.

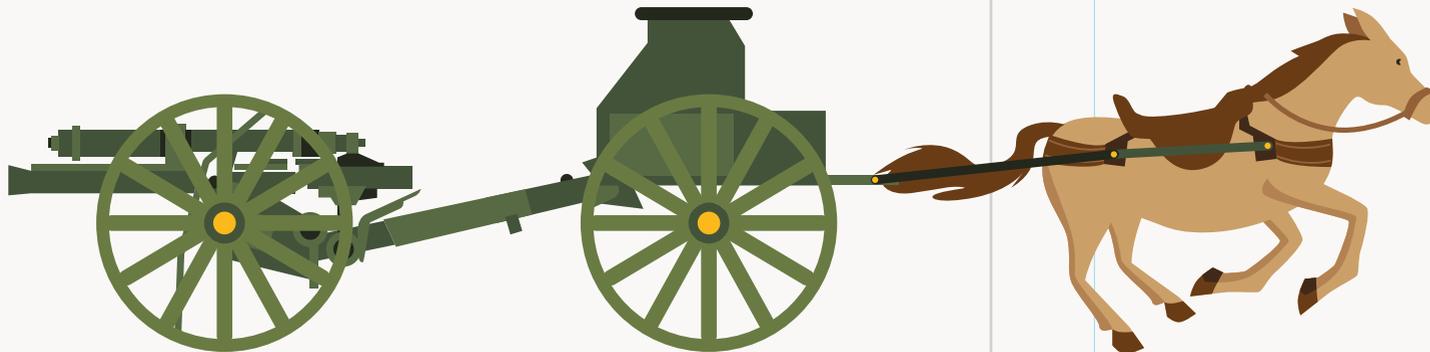
25-pounder field gun, brass shell casings and ammunition box with shell holder  
c1941-1945  
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

Parent's/Teacher's note:

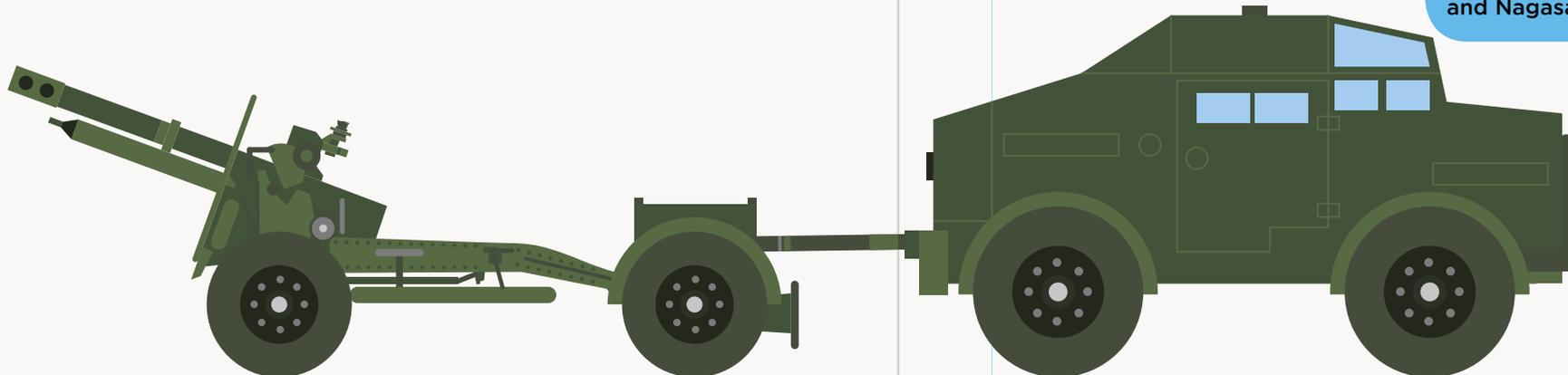
This display involves a light and sound show, with the use of strobe lighting. Please skip this activity if you, or your children, are sensitive to light.

# Spot the difference

Compare the two pictures below: can you spot the main differences?



The 18-pounder gun, which was used in World War One.



The 25-pounder gun, which was used in World War Two, was an improvement over the 18-pounder gun.

What do you think were the improvements made to the 25-pounder gun that made it a better weapon than the 18-pounder gun?

Answer:

- The 25-pounder gun had a longer barrel and hence had a longer firing range;
- The 25-pounder gun was more mobile as it could be moved by military tractors.

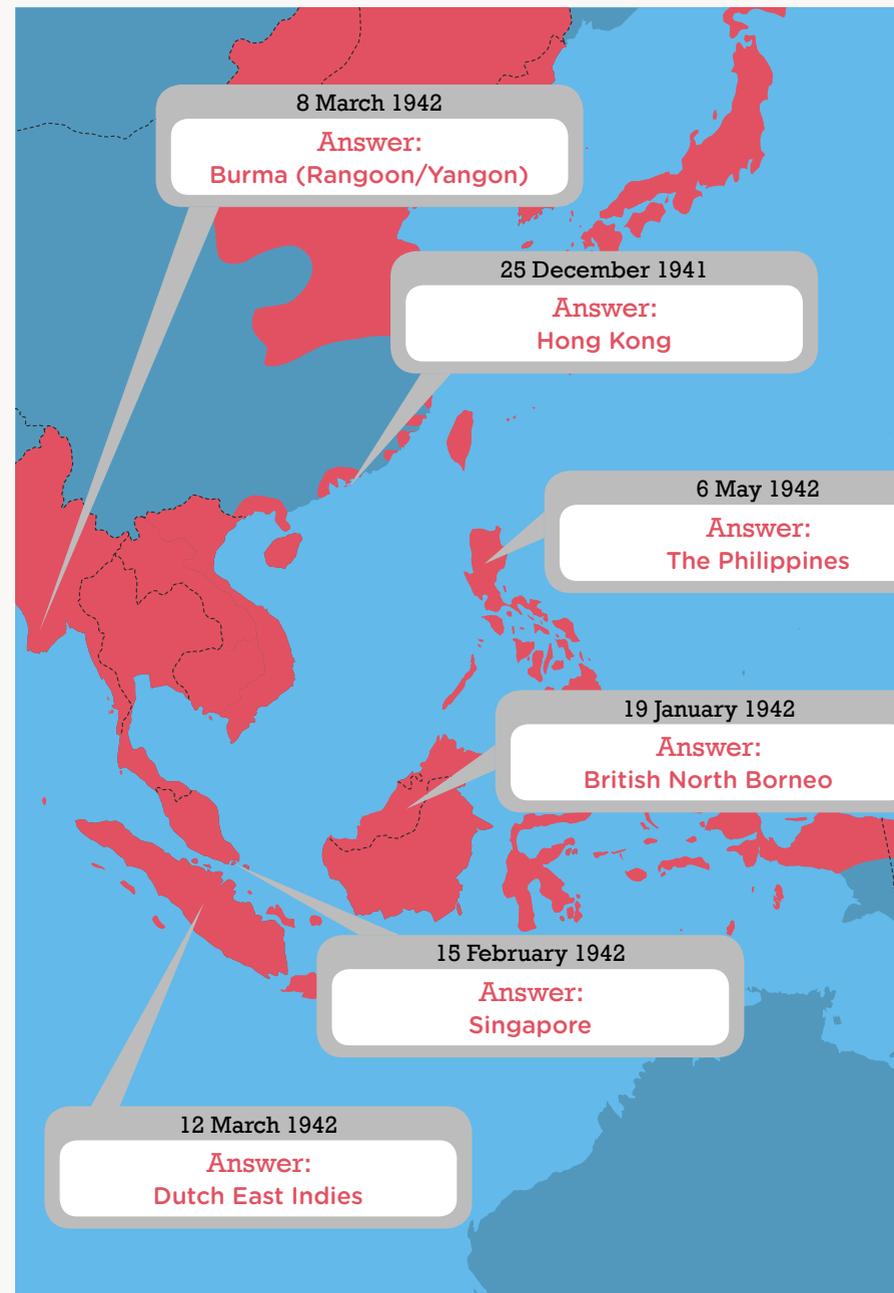
Parent's/Teacher's note:  
Parents/Teachers may wish to use this activity to prompt young audiences to think about the evolution of military technology in World War Two. In World War Two, both the Axis and Allied powers worked to create more advanced weapons, the most significant of which were the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945.

## 2 THE PACIFIC WAR

On 7 December 1941, war broke out across the Pacific Region, with Japanese military attacks on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Philippines and Malaya.

The map below shows the various places that the Japanese forces attacked. Fill in the names of the colonies that fell to the Japanese army.

Colony	Date of Fall
Hong Kong	25 December 1941
British North Borneo	19 January 1942
Singapore	15 February 1942
Burma (Rangoon/Yangon)	8 March 1942
Dutch East Indies	12 March 1942
The Philippines	6 May 1942



**3 WITNESSES TO WAR: STORIES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE**

The curators of this exhibition interviewed war survivors, veterans, and their families. There are 11 stories here. Explore the four pods -

**Destruction**  
**Displacement**  
**Love & Loss**  
**Fortitude**

- and see if you can find the two stories below!



**Ubin Pakcik**  
(Mr Ahmad Bin Kassim)

Mr Ahmad Bin Kassim (Ubin Pakcik) grew up in a quiet village kampong before the war struck. When the Japanese arrived at his home, he escaped, with his family, through the jungle.

Ahmad bin Kassim, 2017,  
National Museum of Singapore



How old was Ubin Pakcik in 1942?

**Answer: 7 Years Old**

Where did Ubin Pakcik and his family escape to after Japanese soldiers arrived at his kampong?

**Answer: Pulau Ubin**

**Major-General Lim Bo Seng**

Major-General Lim Bo Seng is one of Singapore's war heroes. Born in 1909 in China, he arrived in Singapore at the age of 16. He was one of Force 136's leading members. He was captured by Japanese forces, tortured, and passed away in Batu Gajah Prison in Malaya in 1944. For his courage and leadership, he became a hero to the nation.



Top image: Major-General Lim Bo Seng c1940s  
The Lim Leong Geok Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore  
19980002917-0085

His personal diary, containing entries from February to April 1942, is displayed at the museum for the first time. Take a look at it!

Below image:  
Madam Leow Oon Geok & Dr Lim Whye Geok  
Lim Bo Seng's Children  
2017  
National Museum of Singapore

What was the title of the book that Lim Bo Seng bought for his children?

**Answer:**  
**Child's Book of Famous Composers**

Which story was your favourite? Why?

Ask your parents, grandparents or teachers if they, too, have stories about World War Two to share with you!

**Parent's/Teacher's note:**  
Parents/Teachers may wish to use this opportunity to encourage young audiences to communicate with their own grandparents about the war. Learning about history first-hand from those who experienced it is the best way to bring the past alive. This could also be a great opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren to bond!



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Force 136 was a special operations force formed by the British to resist the Japanese in Malaya during World War Two.



### A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

A family activity space

What was it like in Singapore during the war for young people like yourself? Step in to find out.



The first Japanese bombs hit Singapore in the early morning of 8 December 1941.

Take a look at the photograph on the wall.

Look for clues that tell you that Singapore was in danger:

Answer:

- 1) Smoke
- 2) Buildings on fire

### TAKE SHELTER

Different types of air-raid shelters were built before the war. These shelters protected people from explosions and bombs. Some of them were built by children and their families.

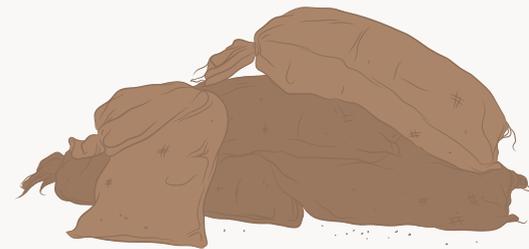
This is an example of an air-raid shelter that was made out of a table.



National Museum of Singapore  
2017

How would you feel if you had to hide under this shelter? Crawl underneath to find out.

*There are things to discover underneath the table! Press the radio to hear what an air-raid siren sounded like.*



*Think of the cushion in your bicycle helmets!*

Sandbags were also used to build air-raid shelters. How do sandbags make an air-raid shelter better?

Answer:

They help to absorb the shock from bombings.

### DID YOU KNOW?

When the air-raid siren was sounded, people had to

- (a) Switch all the lights off
- (b) Close all the windows
- (c) Hide in the nearest air-raid shelter

When the all-clear signal was sounded, people could then come out of their shelters.

## AIR-RAID SHELTER

In addition to air-raid shelters made out of tables, here are two other types of shelters that people built.



These were two types of air-raid shelters that people built.

This air-raid shelter was built using bricks, for people living in Tiong Bahru.

Air-Raid Shelter, Tiong Bahru, Singapore  
1940  
Reproduction  
National Archives of Singapore, M Masson  
Collection  
20150000001-0014

People also dug into the ground, near their houses, to create trench shelters to hide in. This photograph, taken in Brisbane, Australia, shows school children hiding in a trench shelter during an air-raid drill in 1942.



Brisbane Daylight Air-Raid Drill  
1942  
Reproduction  
Argus Newspaper Collection of  
Photographs, State Library of  
Victoria  
H99.201/4079

*Turn to the last page  
to make your  
own air-raid shelter*

## WARTIME KITCHEN

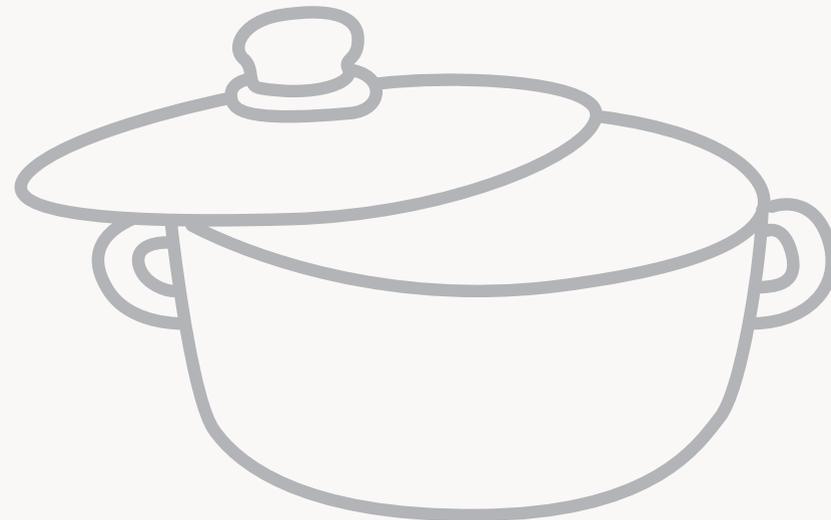
It was difficult to find food during the war.

Before the war reached Singapore, people were encouraged to grow vegetables in their home gardens. This was because the British foresaw that the war would disrupt transportation of food to Singapore.

People also had to be resourceful and creative, and use whatever ingredients they could find to make dishes during the war!

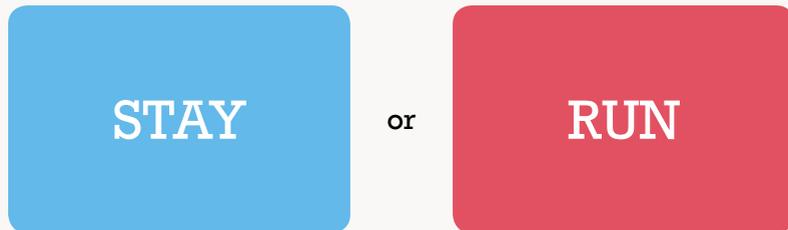
Lift the lids of the pots and pans to find out more.

What were some of the dishes people cooked during the war?  
Draw them below!



Parent's/Teacher's note:

Food for Thought, the restaurant on Level 1 of the National Museum, is serving some re-invented wartime recipes on a special menu. Bring your children and students there to taste some of these dishes!



It was no longer safe for families to stay in their homes, as more air raids happened and destroyed houses.

Many families packed up quickly and moved to another place to stay for their safety.

If war were to come to Singapore today, would you stay in your home, or run to another place for safety? Would you run to another country? Why or why not? Share your decision with your parents and teachers.

Tell us about your decision using the box on the wall!

**Parent's/Teacher's note:**

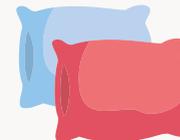
Parents/Teachers may wish to use this as an opportunity to ask young audiences about the thought process behind their decision.

# My Checklist

Pick 5 items that you would pack in your emergency bag if you had to leave your house. Why did you pick them? Ask your parents what they would pick!



Family photo



Pillow



My diary



Clothes



Blanket



Food



Toys

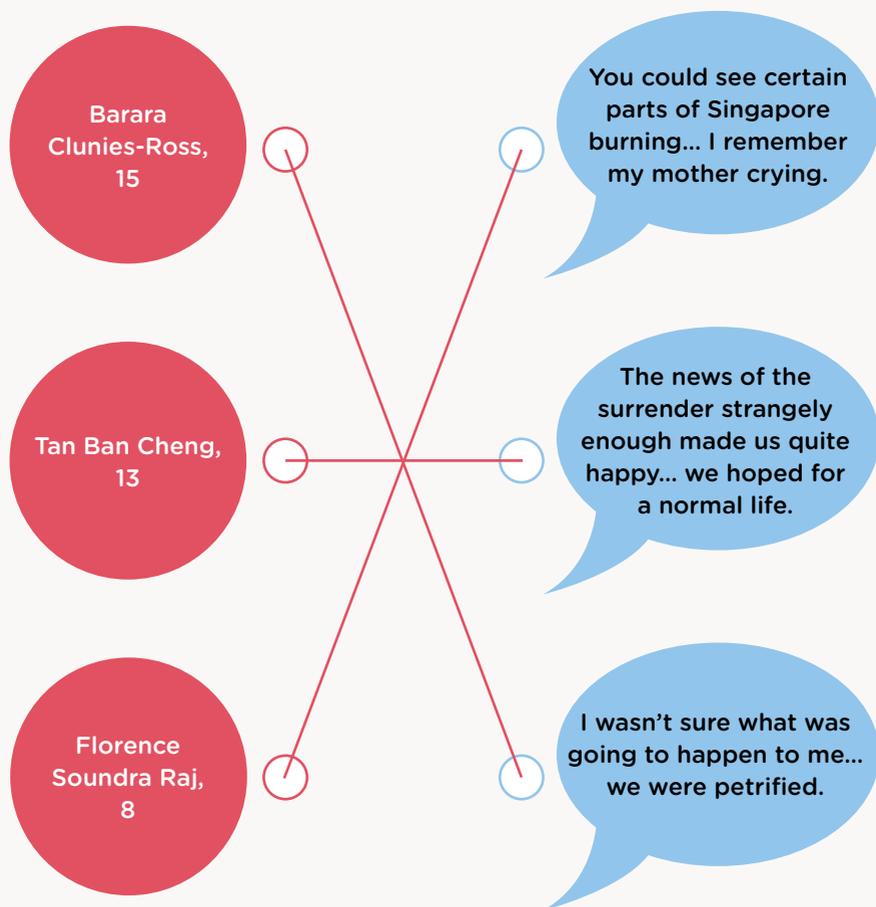


### THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

The fighting stretched on till 15 February 1942.

Children could not go to school because it was no longer safe. Some of their homes were destroyed and they had to run to another house.

How did children feel about the war? Match the quote to the person who said it.

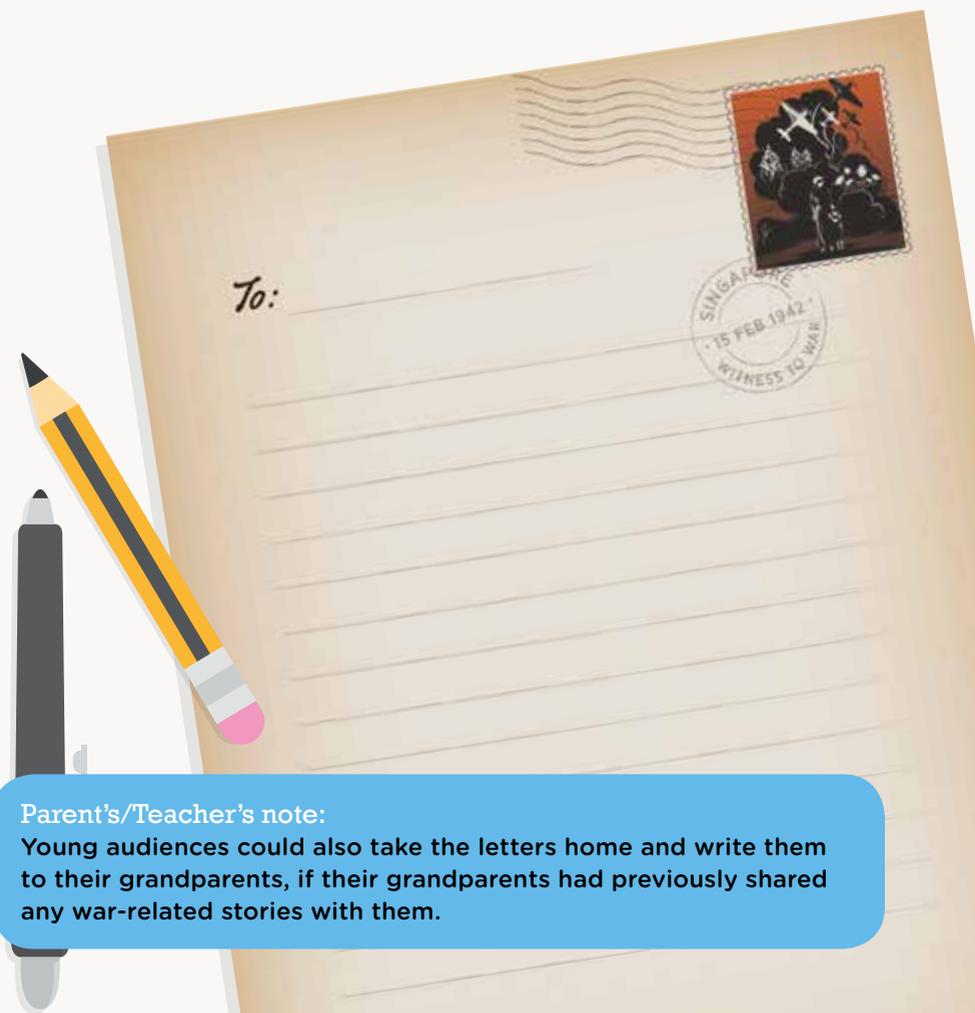


### 5 WRITE A LETTER

Find this letter in the “Looking Ahead” zone in the exhibition gallery.

Write a letter to a war survivor or their families, telling them how you felt after reading their stories!

Drop it into the letter box, and the National Museum will deliver your letters to these seniors or their families.



Parent's/Teacher's note:

Young audiences could also take the letters home and write them to their grandparents, if their grandparents had previously shared any war-related stories with them.

Welcome to the Singapore History Gallery.

After the British surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, Singapore was placed under military occupation and renamed Syonan-To, which means “Light of the South” in Japanese.

Step inside to discover the military weaponry used by Japanese troops, and hear the story of Elizabeth Choy, one of Singapore’s war heroes.

## 1 THE JAPANESE HA-GO TANK

The Type 95 Ha-Go was the most common Japanese tank used in World War Two.

This exhibit in the Singapore History Gallery was one of four that were constructed for Tom Hanks’ and Steven Spielberg’s television mini-series, *The Pacific* (2010).

When was this tank introduced?

**Answer: 1935**

What is the brand of its diesel engine?

**Answer: Mitsubishi**

A Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go light tank halted by Australian anti-tank fire in Malaya. Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial 011298



## 2 ELIZABETH CHOY’S STORY

Elizabeth Choy, together with her husband, helped internees in Miyako (Woodbridge) Hospital pass items and messages to prisoners-of-war in Changi. The husband and wife pair were arrested by the Japanese *Kempeitai* (secret police), and held at the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) building at Orchard Road for 200 days.

Read more about her story in the exhibition.

“It was a nightmare. I cannot believe it happened. It was 200 days of starvation, torture, without a comb, toothbrush... What saved me were my prayers and faith in God.”  
- Elizabeth Choy

Source: “Choy’s Remarkable Life on Show”, *The Straits Times*, 1 November 1997, p. 3.



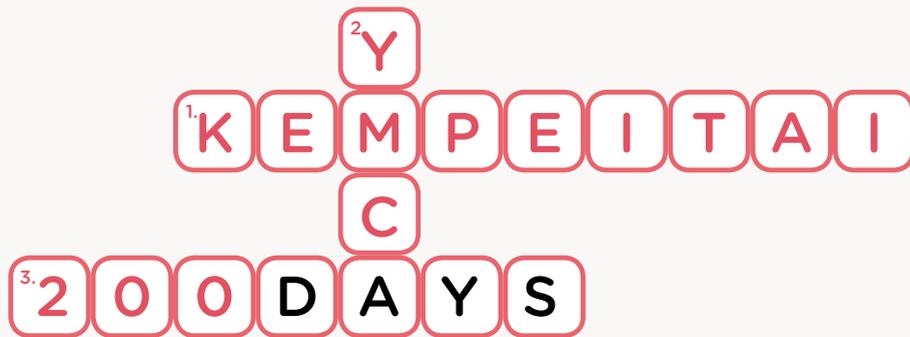
Elizabeth Choy, June 1953  
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board 1992-02-17

Parent’s/Teacher’s note:

Parents/Teachers could use the example of Elizabeth Choy’s ordeal to ask students what lessons they could learn from her courage and resilience.

# Crossword puzzle

Fill in the crossword puzzle below:



1. The Japanese secret police
2. The building where Elizabeth Choy was held
3. The number of days she was held for

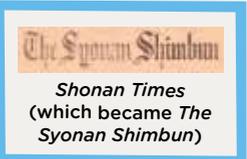
This exhibition gallery shows how the people of Singapore coped with daily life during the Japanese Occupation: a period where food was scarce and people faced many difficulties.

## 1 FROM SINGAPORE TO SYONAN-TO

How did Singapore change with its fall?

Singapore before the Japanese Occupation

Singapore during the Japanese Occupation

Identity:		
Flag:		
Anthem:		
Papers:		
Date:		
Currency:		

# Learning Japanese

## NIPPON-GO

Students returned to schools in April 1942 and they found that they had to learn a new language - Nippon-Go ("Japanese language" in Japanese).

Use the cubes to match the Chinese characters to the new Japanese words that students had to learn:

Answer:

アシタ

a shi ta

meaning:  
tomorrow



センタク

sen ta ku

meaning:  
to wash clothes



Parent's/Teacher's note:

Parents/Teachers could ask young audiences about how they would feel if they had to learn a new language in school.

## 2

## THE FOOD SITUATION IN SINGAPORE



Painting of food rationing during the Japanese Occupation  
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board  
2000-01479

*The National Museum of Singapore, despite all reasonable efforts, has been unable to trace/identify the copyright owners of this image. It invites the rightful owners to make contact.*

What is shown in this painting?

food rationing

In the image above, figure out who is distributing the rice, and who is collecting it!

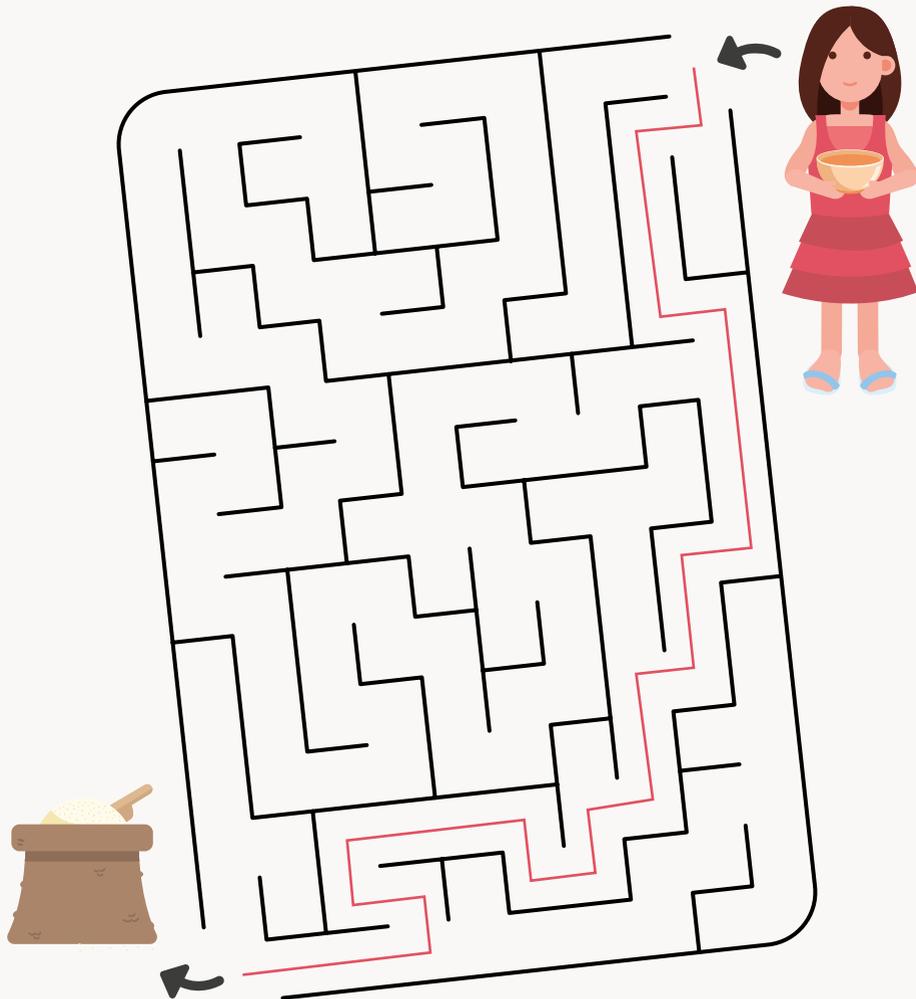
If food rationing were to happen today, what do you think the people of Singapore can do to help each other?

Parent's/Teacher's note:

This is an open-ended question.

# Find your way

Complete the maze below to help this child find her way to the rice ration.



## 3 HOW A FAMILY COPED DURING THE OCCUPATION

Look for this family photograph under the section “War is Bad for Your Health”, and gather information on the main character.

In the photograph below, label what each family member worked as during the occupation:



Family portrait, late 1940s  
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board  
2002-00865

Name: Wu Sijing

Real name

Ng Soo Lui

Born / Country of Birth

1934 / Singapore

Father's Occupation

Chinese physician

- 1 Sijing worked in:  
a tobacco shop, shredding tobacco leaves  
And on the streets, peddling red bean soup and coconut cake
- 2 Sijing's younger sister worked in:  
a tobacco shop, shredding tobacco leaves
- 3 Sijing's elder brother worked in:  
a machinery factory

## SURVIVING SYONAN

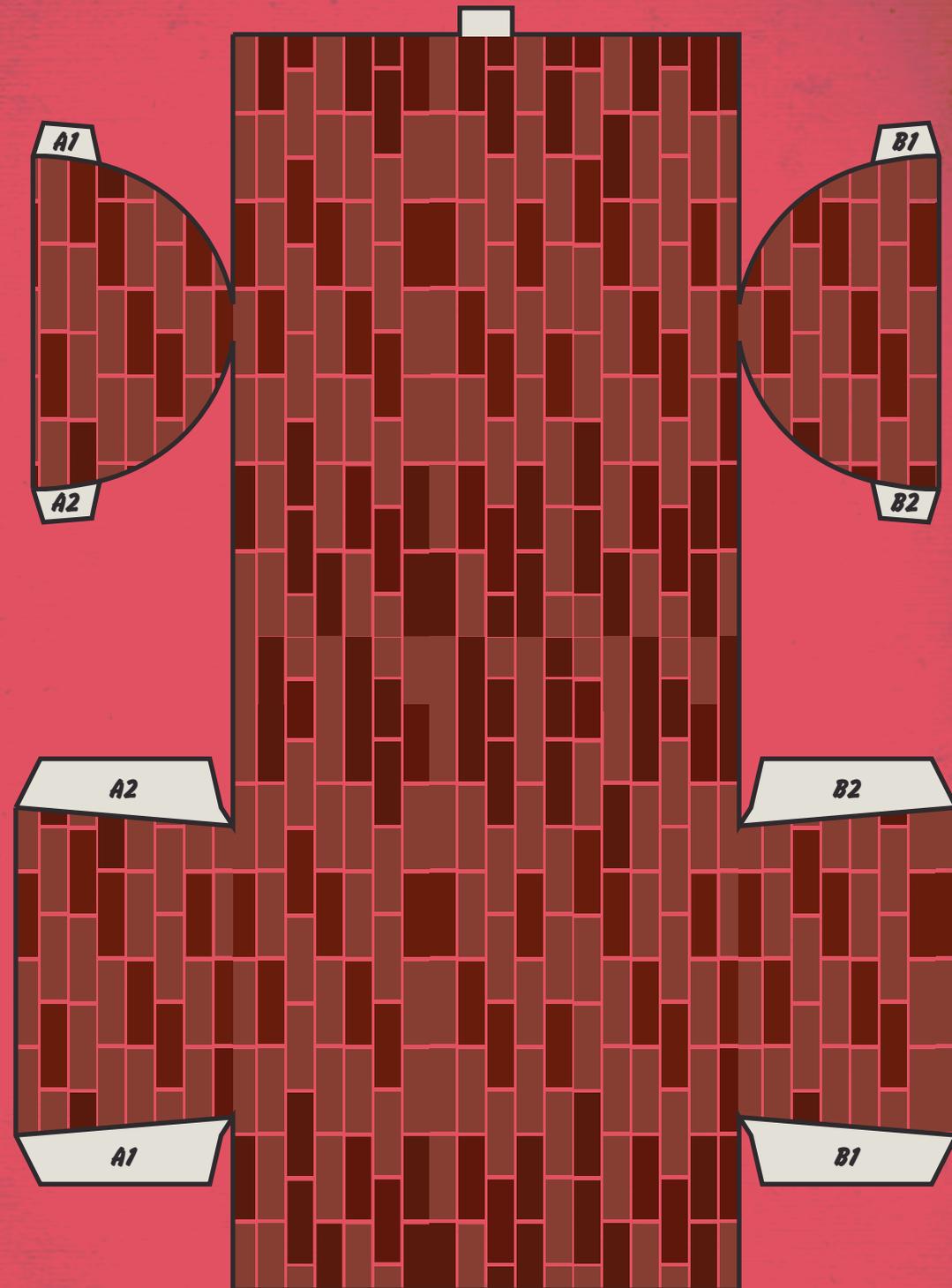
Location: Singapore History Gallery, Level 1

Sijing and her siblings worked to supplement their family's income, even though they were children. What are two lessons which you can learn from Sijing and her siblings?

### Parent's/Teacher's note:

These are open-ended questions. Parents could suggest answers like "a can-do spirit", or "resilience". Parents could also perhaps start conversations with their children, about the ways in which they could help their family through difficult times.

*You have reached the end of  
the Young Journalist's Trail.  
Congratulations! We hope  
you had fun at the National  
Museum of Singapore today.*



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