

N S M
National Museum
of Singapore

FOUNDERS' MEMORIAL

SEMANGAT YANG BARU

FORGING
A NEW
SINGAPORE
SPIRIT

Recommended for ages 13 and above

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION:


Semangat yang Baru: Forging a New Singapore Spirit captures the ferment, dynamism and pluralism of our early years. It highlights the challenges and dilemmas faced by Singapore's founding leaders and generation in their efforts to make a new country and a new society. It features the lived experiences of well-known individuals and lesser-known voices, in the hope of presenting a rich and nuanced story of how independent Singapore came to be and how it continues to inspire future generations of Singaporeans.



Dear Investigator,

You have been selected to join a team of investigators to uncover the historical figures and moments that shaped Singapore during our early nation-building years. Your journey will take you through the special exhibition, *Semangat yang Baru: Forging a New Singapore Spirit* in the National Museum of Singapore.

Semangat yang Baru explores the values that guided our founding leaders in the decision-making process of Singapore's early nation-building years. It includes the challenges that our founding leaders had to overcome to ensure Singapore's survival as a young nation. These milestones highlight some of our founding values, such as resilience, boldness, openness, and integrity, that have enabled Singapore to thrive.



VALUES	INTERPRETATIONS
Multiculturalism	Celebrating diversity and being united as one people despite differences
Boldness	Courage in attempting that which entails risks and not being afraid to fail
Resilience	Perseverance and adaptability in making the most of opportunities despite obstacles and limited resources
Service to others before self	Sense of devotion to the cause of Singapore
Integrity	Being trustworthy and transparent
Openness	Outward-looking and connected to the world: seeing Singapore in the world and the world in Singapore

Central task

As you explore the exhibition, consider these questions and answer the reflection questions in each section.

- What do you think a “new Singapore Spirit” meant to the leaders and people at the time?
- What were the values expressed by people in Singapore then? How did they practise and/or apply these values?
- What relevance does the “new spirit” have for us today and for Singapore’s future?

Here are a few tips to take note of as you explore the exhibition:



1. Examine the objects in the exhibition carefully.

- a. Look closely at the artefact or images, as they might help you answer the questions in this student guide.



2. Limit food and beverages to outside the exhibition

- a. It is important to keep the exhibition free of food and moisture, as food can attract insects that can cause irreparable damage to artefacts, and moisture can cause certain materials to deteriorate.



3. Take photographs without flash

- a. 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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Entrance	4
Prelude – the 1950s	5
What do we stand for?	6 - 13
Interlude	14-15
How do we move forward?	16 - 25
CODA - Who could we be as a people?	26-27

Finding your way around

Use the navigational map to explore different sections of the exhibition. There are many artefacts to admire and stories to be engaged with in each section.



SECTIONS

- 01 ENTRANCE
- 02 PRELUDE - THE 1950S
- 03 WHAT WE STAND FOR
- 03A JUSTICE AND EQUALITY
- 03B REGARDLESS OF RACE, LANGUAGE OR RELIGION
- 04 INTERLUDE - WE PLEDGE OURSELVES
- 05 HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD
- 05A LOOK OUTWARDS
- 05B TAKE COURAGE
- 05C CLEAN AND GREEN
- 06A DIFFICULT MOMENTS - AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- 06B CODA - WHO COULD WE BE AS A PEOPLE

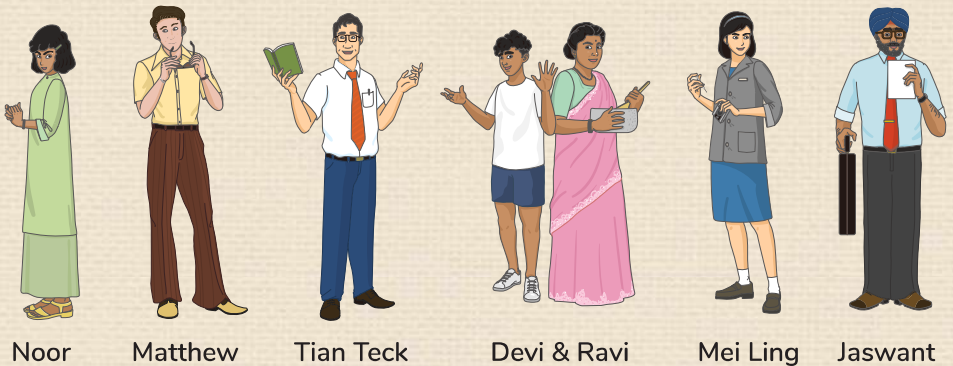
1. ENTRANCE



The exhibition title, Semangat yang Baru which means a “new spirit”, is from the chorus of our national anthem “Majulah Singapura”. Our national anthem, reflected a vision to unite all in our country, in a new Singapore spirit.

What do you think “A New Singapore Spirit” entailed?

A large white rectangular area with a decorative, wavy border, intended for a response to the question above.



Noor

Matthew

Tian Teck

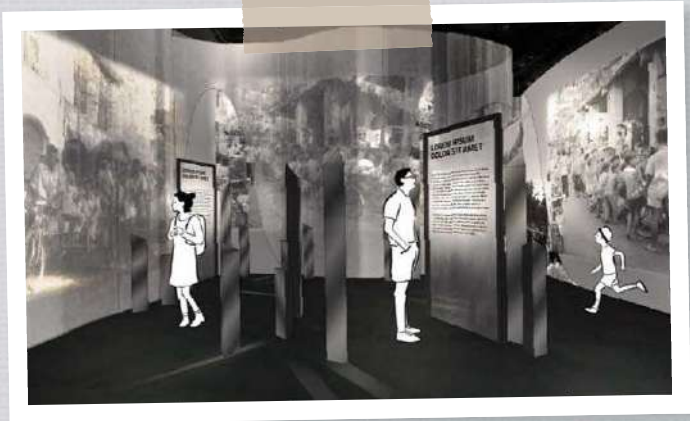
Devi & Ravi

Mei Ling

Jaswant

Meet the various characters who have interesting stories to share with you at each section of the exhibition! You can also select one of them to be your guide!

2. PRELUDE



Singapore in the 1950s was a time of excitement and possibilities as former colonies around the world charted their own way forward towards independence. However, it was also a period of much uncertainty.

Pause here for a moment to take in your surroundings.

1. (a) Based on your observations, circle up to **2 words** that describe how you feel:

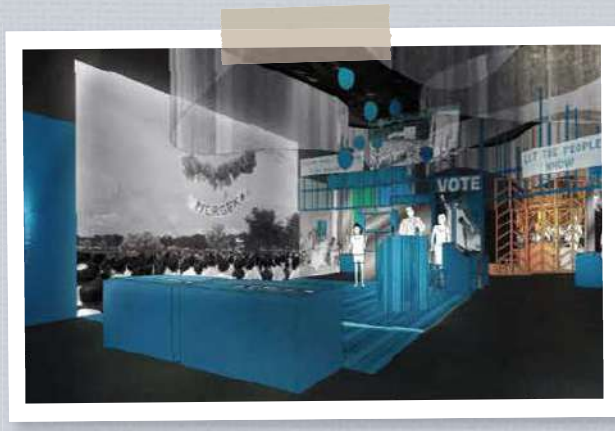
ANGRY	ANXIOUS	BORED	CALM	CONFUSED
DISGUSTED	EXCITED	FEARFUL	HOPEFUL	SAD

- (b) Why did you feel this way?

This section of the exhibition has been designed to evoke feelings of what people in Singapore might have felt in the 1950s.

2. If you were living in this time period, what would be your major concerns and hopes?

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? FIGHT FOR MERDEKA



Amid the growing echoes of “Merdeka!” (meaning “Independence!”), more people started taking active interest in Singapore’s political future. They were ready to make sacrifices for their beliefs, and to stand up for their values – values which resonated deeply in society, and which started to form the bedrock of the budding nation.

Walk around the rally section and check out the multimedia station. You can even attempt to recite a speech at the rostrum!



DID YOU KNOW?

S. Rajaratnam was a journalist before he became a politician. He boldly expressed his political views about Singapore and Malaya. Sometimes his articles, which were critical of the colonial government, landed him in trouble with the government. His opinions caught the attention of Lee Kuan Yew, Toh Chin Chye, and Goh Keng Swee. Together, they later formed the People’s Action Party in 1954.



Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? FIGHT FOR MERDEKA



Raayat ("People") magazine published and edited by S. Rajaratnam 1995
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore,
National Heritage Board

Locate the magazine titled Raayat ("People"), published and edited by S. Rajaratnam, and have a closer look! The article "When Malaya Ruled Britain" presents a fictional world, where Britain is the unhappy colony and Malaya is the colonial power that has brought great benefit and improvement to Britain.



1. Based on the article, what were Malaya's reasons not to grant Britain immediate independence? Tick the correct reasons from the list below:

- ☐ Malayan rule had brought benefits, and thus should remain in power.
- ☐ The people in Britain were not ready for independence, as they were not united.
- ☐ There were threats of extremist parties who would cause greater harm to Britain.
- ☐ There was still a strong caste system and religious differences that divided people.
- ☐ Britain still needed Malaya's protection against their enemies.

2. Why do you think S. Rajaratnam wrote this article?

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

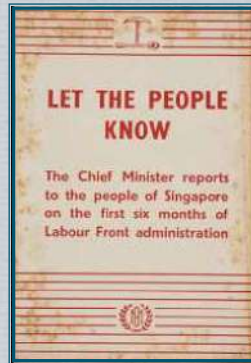
INTEGRITY

In the 1950s, many saw the possibility of Singapore being self-governed, and actively campaigned for various visions of Singapore.

Thus, many newly-formed political parties in Singapore rallied the people for support as they participated in the elections. These aspiring leaders pledged to be honest, impartial, and efficient.

In 1955, the Labour Front won the election and David Marshall was elected as Singapore's first Chief Minister.

Take a closer look at "Let the People Know – Chief Minister David Marshall's Report on the Labour Front Administration", dated 1955.



Let the People Know
- Chief Minister David
Marshall's report
on the Labour Front
administration 1957
Collection of the National
Museum of Singapore,
National Heritage Board

1. According to the report, what did the Labour Front manage to achieve as a government? What does it tell you about the Labour Front?

2. If you were an aspiring political leader during that period, what would you have advocated for?

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? CHAMPIONING MULTIRACIALISM

A major challenge the government faced was uniting the diverse population in Singapore. People spoke different languages and had different cultures. The leaders thus sought ways to create a multicultural society, where all races could exist together harmoniously.



Take a closer look at the picture of the National Loyalty Week Variety Concert at Tao Nan School.



National Loyalty Week Variety Concert at Tao Nan School 3 December 1959
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

1. How did the following activities during the National Loyalty Week help to create a sense of belonging among different people in Singapore? Match the activities to the reasons!

ACTIVITY		REASONS	
Cultural Performances	●	●	Represents Singapore as a sovereign state, which also meant representing different races together as one nation
Introduction of National Symbols	●	●	Appreciation and interaction with different races will help to build friendship among different people.
Installation of Head of State	●	●	It unites different people by instilling a sense of pride, identification, and loyalty to one country

2. As a student in Singapore today, what do you think can help create a greater sense of belonging among people in your neighbourhood? Share your thoughts with your friend!

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS



The call for equality was not just between races, but also between men and women. People rose to campaign for women's rights, most notably in the form of the "one-man-one-wife" law and family planning. They argued that with a more dignified and well-balanced family life, women could also contribute actively to nation building. However, these activists faced many challenges, including from those who advocated for women to remain in their traditional roles in the household.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dr Maggie Lim was the first woman in Singapore and the second Singaporean to win the prestigious Queen's Scholarship. As a doctor, she specialised in maternity and child health from 1940. She was concerned about poorer women having a larger number of children and these children often suffered from malnutrition. Through her efforts, the system of maternal and child health clinics was established throughout the island.



Collection of the
Peranakan Museum,
National Heritage Board.
Gift of Patricia Lin

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Have a listen to the interview with Madam Hoe Puay Choo in the multimedia station and read more about Dr Maggie Lim in the captions.



A jacket owned by Dr Maggie Lim 1950s
Collection of the Peranakan Museum, National
Heritage Board. Donation of Patricia Lim

1. What problems did the women activists encounter in their campaigns?
How did they overcome them?

2. From the list of values listed below, circle those which you think the activists exemplified.

RESILIENCE

BOLDNESS

INTEGRITY

MULTICULTURALISM

SERVICE TO OTHERS BEFORE SELF

OPENNESS

Why did you choose them?

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

A COMMON LANGUAGE, A COMMON IDENTITY

From the 1950s, Singapore's education system also evolved to meet the needs of unifying its diverse population and securing its economic viability. Prior to this, students attended vernacular-medium schools, where classes were taught in languages such as Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

Umar Pulavar Tamil High School is an example of a vernacular-medium school. It was founded by the Singapore Kadayanallur Muslim League and was the first and only Tamil-medium high school in Singapore.

Look for the Umar Pulavar Tamil High School report book and take a closer look.



Umar Pulavar Tamil High School report book 1981
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

1. Compare the students' subjects against what you are currently learning. What are the similarities and differences?

SIMILARITIES

A large, white, rectangular area with a decorative, wavy border, intended for students to write their observations on similarities.

DIFFERENCES

A large, white, rectangular area with a decorative, wavy border, intended for students to write their observations on differences.

2. In your opinion, why do you think there was such a focus on these different subjects then?

A large, white, rectangular area with a decorative, wavy border, intended for students to write their opinion on the focus of the subjects.

3. WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

A COMMON LANGUAGE, A COMMON IDENTITY

To break down language barriers and build unity in preparation for independence, the government promoted bilingual education. Some challenges remained, as there were multiple dialects within a community, which affected the effectiveness of the bilingual policy in education. In support of the policy, the Speak Mandarin Campaign was launched in 1979 to promote the use of Mandarin.

Take a closer look at the Speak Mandarin Campaign T-Shirt and read the captions.

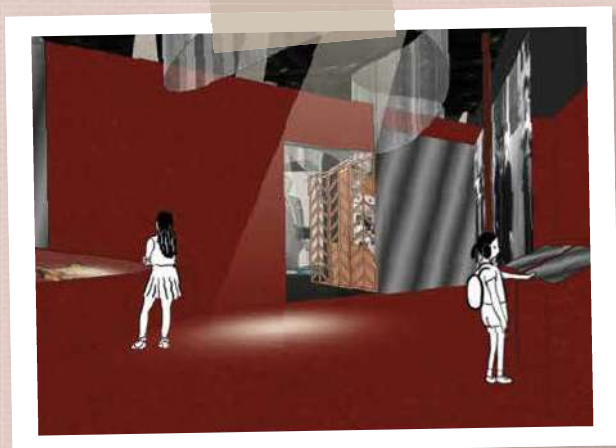


Speak Mandarin Campaign T-shirt 1983
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore,
National Heritage Board. Gift of Thang Ruoh Shan, Cleo

1. What were the difficulties that the government faced in finding a common language for the people in Singapore? What were the trade-offs involved?

2. Reflect on your own experience in conversing with a member of the older generation, for instance your grandparents, who may not be able to speak in English. What was it like? Were there any challenges, and if so, how did you overcome it?

4. INTERLUDE – WE PLEDGE OURSELVES



One people, one Singapore. As Singapore moved forward as a new and young nation, what symbols could best represent us? Our national anthem, pledge, flag, and crest became very important in articulating the common ideals and values that define us as Singaporeans in the past, present, and future.

Listen to Toh Chin Chye and Zubir Said's interviews as they talked about the formation of the national flag and national anthem. Do you recall what the symbols on our flag represent?



Try out the flag-raising activity, a recreation of the flag-raising ceremony held at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in 1965, where our national flag was hoisted for the first time after Singapore was admitted into the UN.

Play the interactive game in this section to create your own flag!



4. INTERLUDE – WE PLEDGE OURSELVES



National coat of arms made by the Baharuddin Vocational Institute 1965-1990
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board. Gift of the Parliament of Singapore

This is our national coat of arms. Read the captions to find out more!



The lion represents Singapore's status as the Lion City (Singa Pura) and symbolises three national values: courage, excellence and strength. The tiger represents Singapore's historical ties with Malaya (and later Malaysia).

1. Can you name a few places/objects where our national coat of arms is used?

2. Why do you think it was important for Singapore to have a national coat of arms?

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? BRINGING THE WORLD TO SINGAPORE



Economic survival and protecting our sovereignty were among the key concerns Singapore had as a young nation. Refusing to despair, our leaders painted a bold new vision of Singapore as a Global City thriving on the open flow of capital, people, and ideas.

To survive economically, Singapore had to attract overseas companies to establish their businesses here. Hon Sui Sen and other leaders worked hard to encourage these companies such as Hewlett Packard (HP) to come to Singapore.



DID YOU KNOW?

Hon Sui Sen played a major role in Singapore's industrial and financial market developments during his years as a civil servant and then Cabinet Minister. As EDB's first chairman, Mr Hon played a critical role in industrialising Singapore's entrepot economy to lower the unemployment rate. For instance, he spearheaded the building of the Jurong Industrial Estate, which set the stage for Singapore's rapid industrialisation in the 1960s.



The Hon Sui Sen Collection,
courtesy of National Archives
of Singapore

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? BRINGING THE WORLD TO SINGAPORE

This calculator was presented by HP to Hon Sui Sen, who was the Chairman of the Economic Development Board (EDB). Read to find out more about the story behind this calculator.



Hewlett Packard (HP) calculator belonging to Hon Sui Sen 1970s
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board. Gift of the Hon Family

1. Do you think it is still important to have overseas companies locate their factories or offices in Singapore today? Why or why not?

2. From the list of values listed below, circle those which you think Mr Hon and his team exemplified. Why did you choose them?

RESILIENCE

BOLDNESS

INTEGRITY

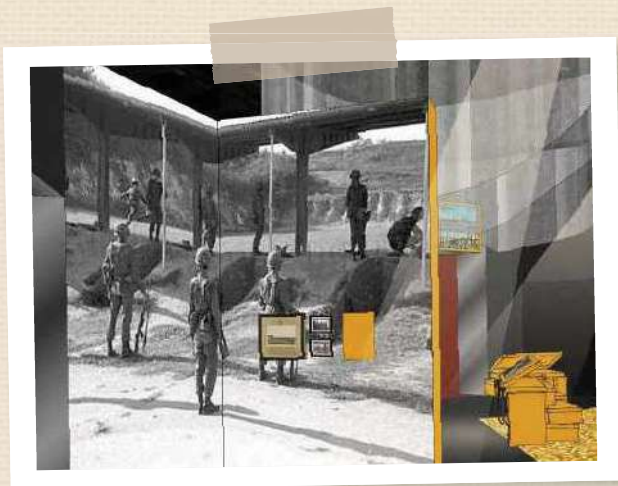
MULTICULTURALISM

SERVICE TO OTHERS BEFORE SELF

OPENNESS

Why did you choose them?

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? STANDING ON OUR OWN FEET



Moving forward, especially after the news of the British military withdrawal from Singapore, our leaders knew we could not simply rely on others for protection and needed to stand on our own feet. Yet our resources were limited then, and so, our leaders built trust with our friends and neighbours in the region and beyond in order to secure Singapore's future.

Take a look around this section and note down your observations.



DID YOU KNOW?

The People's Defence Force (PDF) began in 1965 as a volunteer group that comprised volunteers from the European and local communities. When compulsory conscription for National Service (NS) was introduced in 1967, the number of volunteers for the PDF shrunk. The PDF still exists today as part of the Singapore Armed Forces. Their work now focuses on maintaining internal security within Singapore.

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? STANDING ON OUR OWN FEET



Examine the picture of the People's Defence Force (PDF) closely.



First People's Defence Force (PDF) Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) orientation course at Maju Camp 1968
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board. Gift of Seet Ah Bah.

1. What is your impression of the soldiers in the picture?

2. What do you think motivated people to volunteer as soldiers in 1965?

Let's reflect! Apart from being a soldier, how can Singapore citizens contribute to protecting Singapore? Share your thoughts with your friend!

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? A HOME FOR EVERYONE



In the 1960s, there was also an urgent need to provide housing for the growing population. The government decided against conventional wisdom to embark on large-scale construction of affordable high-rise housing. The government had to overcome various challenges, including acquiring land from private landowners and finding a way to make these houses affordable for Singaporeans.



DID YOU KNOW?

Under Lim Kim San's leadership, Housing Development Board (HDB) built affordable and functional housing quickly. By 1965, it built enough houses to house 25% of Singapore's population. This was a testament to the tenacity and foresight of Mr Lim and his team.



Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection,
courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The first HDB houses were built in the Queenstown estate, at 45, 48, and 49 Stirling Road. These flats still exist, so the next time you go by Queenstown, do remember to visit them!

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? A HOME FOR EVERYONE



Housing and Development Board (HDB) medals
belonging to Lim Kim San 1983
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore,
National Heritage Board. Gift of Lim Kiat Seng

Take a closer look at the HDB
medals belonging to Lim Kim
San and read the captions.



1. Why was it important for HDB to build so many flats quickly?
(Select only 1 answer)

- ☐ Because there was an earthquake in the 1960s which made housing conditions unliveable.
- ☐ Because the people in Singapore demanded to stay in high-rise buildings.
- ☐ Because living conditions were unsanitary and there was rampant overcrowding.
- ☐ Because there were many landowners willing to sell their land cheaply to build housing.

2. Most residents were happy to move into their new HDB flats with amenities such as electricity, drinkable tap water, waste disposal services and toilet facilities. However, not everyone responded positively to this change. Why do you think some people were unhappy with the change?

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? A BETTER LIFE FOR YOU AND ME

In the 1970s, the National Stadium was envisioned by then-Minister for Culture and Social Affairs Othman Wok to be a sports facilities centre. It would spur people's interest in sports and improve the fitness of youth, especially that of national servicemen.

Take a closer look at the bulb
and read the captions.



Bulb from the floodlights of the former National Stadium 1973 - 2007
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage Board

1. Reflect on your own experiences as a student in school. Does your school organise sports or art performances? What was memorable about such events?

2. Can you think of other reasons why hosting sports events was beneficial for Singapore?

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD? RESETTLING FARMERS, REJUVENATING WATERWAYS



With industrialisation, pollution in Singapore also increased. Our cityscape was at risk from haphazard growth if urban planning was not put in place. Our leaders decided to strike a balance between economic development and environmental protection, to clean and green our city. However, for the vision of a Garden City to come true, every detail mattered: from identifying suitable species of plants to line our roadways, to tidying up pieces of garbage left behind by the occasional litterbug.

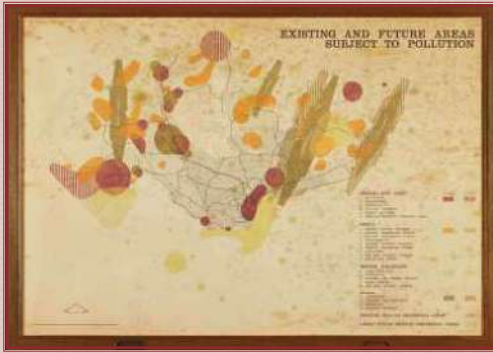
Have a look at the artefacts and stories in this section to find out more about how our leaders brought the vision of a Garden City to life!

Watch some these stories in the multimedia stations too!



5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

RESETTLING FARMERS, REJUVENATING WATERWAYS



Map titled Existing and Future Areas Subject to Pollution
from Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Istana Office Mid 1970s
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National Heritage
Board. Gift of the Prime Minister's Office

Locate the map entitled
“Existing and Future Areas
Subject to Pollution”!



1. Look at the map closely. Can you identify
 - a. Jurong Island
 - b. Changi Airport
 - c. Singapore River
2. Compare the areas with heavy smoke, smell, water, noise, and dust pollution in the past to the situation today. Is there a significant difference? Jot your thoughts below:

3. Why do you think it is important for Singapore to be a clean and green city?

5. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

ANTI-POLLUTION AND THE GARDEN CITY

The Singapore River clean-up began in March 1969, when then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew tasked the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Public Utilities Board (PUB) to draw up a plan. The plan was meant to clean up Singapore's waterways and curb future pollution.

At that time, the river was heavily polluted. Boats unloading cargo at the docks spread oil and debris as they cruised along the river. Many businesses along the river dumped their waste into the waters which their activities added to the pollution and stench of the area.



Tools used for picking up rice sacks 1950s-1970s
Collection of the National Museum of Singapore, National
Heritage Board. Gift of Neo Kim Teah

*Labourers like Neo Kim Teah
would have depended on boats
unloading at the Singapore River
for work.*



1. How do you think the clean-up might have affected his livelihood and others who depended on the river for work?

6. CODA - WHO COULD WE BE AS A PEOPLE?



In the process of building up our nation, our founding leaders exemplified values that guided their decisions to enable Singapore to survive and stand on her own feet.

RESILIENCE

BOLDNESS

INTEGRITY

MULTICULTURALISM

SERVICE TO OTHERS BEFORE SELF

OPENNESS



What values resonate with you the most?

In your opinion, how would the values that guided our founding leaders and generation continue to take us forward?

6. CODA - WHO COULD WE BE AS A PEOPLE?

We have achieved much as one people, one Singapore. But the ever-changing and often unexpected challenges of today's world call to mind the tumult and upheavals of our nation's formative years. Now we need to renew, re-interpret, and strengthen the Singapore spirit for our times.

What have you learnt about the new spirit in Singapore's nation-building years?



What does this new spirit mean to you today? You may draw or write!



REFLECTIONS

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

- A. What are **three** new things you have learnt about Singapore's nation-building years?



- B. Give **two** reasons why you think it is important to learn about Singapore's nation-building years.



- C. Name **one** artefact or story that is most memorable to you after today's visit.





Artist's impression of the Founders' Memorial

The Founders' Memorial is a new national landmark and museum, slated to open at Bay East Garden. It is envisioned to be a landmark that honours the legacy of our founding generation of leaders and inspires the future. Featuring an integrated gallery and gardens experience that is evocative and anchored in context, the Memorial aims to be a unifying point for all Singaporeans to reflect on our values and ideals.

The Memorial will feature key milestones in Singapore's nation-building history (1950s–1970s) from the perspective of how:

- Experiences of our founding leaders shaped their values
- Policy deliberations, decision-making and actions demonstrated such values
- These values are expressed in today's context

Find out more on our webpage or scan the QR code to visit www.foundersmemorial.gov.sg



SCAN HERE

Presented by



An institution of



National
Heritage
Board

Supported by



This resource has been put together in consultation with the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) and MOE (Humanities Branch).

The Founders' Memorial would like to credit Ms Huang Chenmei Juliet, an educator at CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School, for her contributions to this resource, as part of her Teacher Work Attachment with the Memorial.

All information is correct at the time of print. The Founders' Memorial and the National Museum of Singapore reserve the right to make changes and modifications to the exhibition without prior notice.

All rights reserved. Materials in this publication may not be reproduced in part or in whole without written consent from the Memorial, the publisher. © 2023 Founders' Memorial.