

INVESTIGATING HISTORY: COLONIAL SINGAPORE 1819 - 1941



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INTRODUCTION

This resource has been put together in collaboration with the Academy of Singapore Teachers (AST) for the Historical Investigation (HI) question “**How was life like for people in colonial Singapore?**”. It is designed to help you to better plan for HI visits to the National Museum of Singapore (NMS).

- We have identified sources from the Crown Colony zone in the Singapore History Gallery (SHG on level 1) and the Modern Colony gallery (level 2) that you can consider when designing a HI question in relation to colonial Singapore or planning for a visit for this HI unit.
- These sources have been categorised to allow students to investigate how people’s lives were like in colonial Singapore.
- We have also suggested a few thinking questions to help students engage with the sources in a more critical manner.
- A sample of the gallery text and artefact captions for the Crown Colony zone in the SHG is provided in **Annex A** of this resource.

We hope you find this resource packet useful when planning your HI visits to the museum and that your students will enjoy seeing the actual sources and being immersed in our galleries.

Please contact us at nhb_nm_schools@nhb.gov.sg should you have any questions or require further assistance in planning.

You may also email us if you require the full gallery text and artefact captions for **Annex A** and **B**.

ABOUT THE COLONIAL EXHIBITS IN NMS



The start of the Crown Colony zone in the SHG.

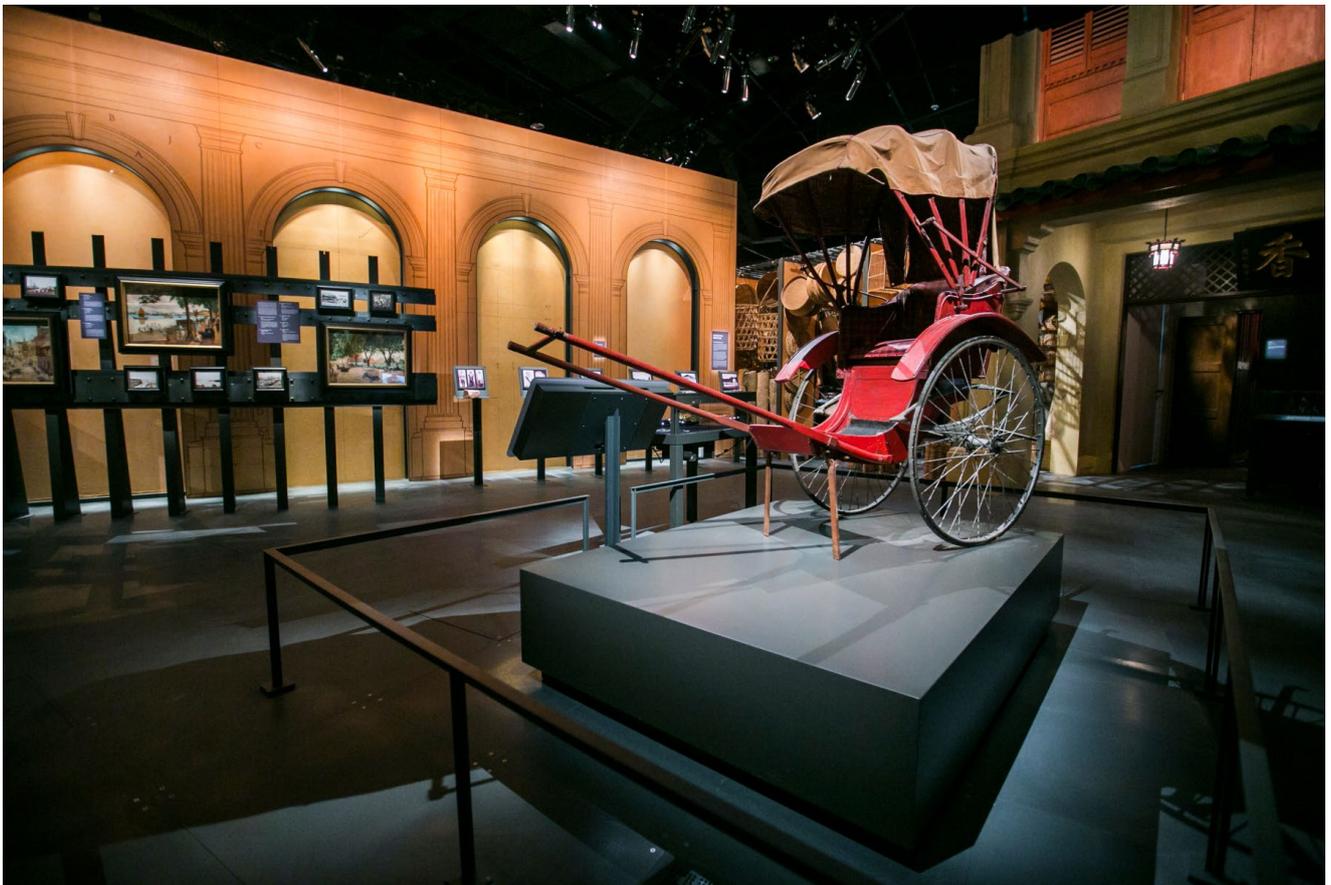
The curatorial approach undertaken by the NMS for the colonial exhibits was two-pronged. The Crown Colony zone in the SHG was envisioned to explore the complex question of the role of colonialism in Singapore's history. The exhibits show the different perspectives about different episodes in Singapore's colonial history. On the other hand, the Modern Colony gallery explores how modern, cosmopolitan and progressive Singapore was as a British Crown colony in the 1920s to 1930s.

I. Crown Colony zone in SHG (Level 1)

The decision to name this zone "Crown Colony" acknowledges the impact that British colonialism had on Singapore's growth and development from the 19th century. The prestige of being named a Crown Colony went hand in hand with the tensions that colonialism created in Singapore's society. The gallery presents how these tensions were played out:

- Different sources that question the typical understanding of the "founding of Singapore" by Sir Stamford Raffles by presenting William Farquhar as an underdog of history. For example, the local Chinese community presented to Farquhar a silver epergne as a parting gift but no such gift was presented to Raffles.

- Sources that show inter-ethnic interaction like how Syed Omar Aljunied donated land to Tan Tock Seng for the construction of Tan Tock Seng's hospital. These horizontal inter-ethnic ties are generally cordial.
- The gallery also shows vertical inter-ethnic ties that exposes the inequality inherent in colonial society. The display of the rickshaw in the middle of the town square that is overlooked by a trio of Straits Settlement governors shows the inequality that existed in colonial society between the privileged passengers and the overworked, underpaid rickshaw coolies.
- The underbelly of Singapore society is revealed in two rooms dedicated to the stories about opium smoking and secret societies.
- Different sources that show the cracks that were emerging in colonial society like the Sepoy Mutiny in 1915 and the Kreta Ayer Incident in 1927.



A two-wheeled rickshaw takes centre stage in the Crown Colony zone in the SHG.

II. Modern Colony gallery (Level 2)

This gallery explores how modern, cosmopolitan and progressive Singapore was as a British crown colony in the 1920s to 1930s. Visitors are introduced to various members of a household residing in a 20th-century black-and-white bungalow. Such bungalows were initially built for colonial administrators and wealthy businessmen in the 19th-century. This immersive, contextualised setting allows the museum to share stories about Singapore society in the 1900s.



The “spaces” in the front room of the gallery are designed to suggest the different roles adopted by women in Singapore in the 1920s and 1930s.

- A large portrait of Sir Song Ong Siang personifies the lives of men of privileged background who lived during that era. The painting and the artefacts surrounding it show the lifestyle, taste and attitudes of a growing number of English-educated Asian professionals.
- Behind the painting are spaces that are more traditionally associated with women, such as the living room, dining area and the servants’ quarters. It is here that the progressiveness of the status of women is seen through the artefacts that represent some of Singapore’s earliest schools for women.
- The new modern status of women in Singapore society was not widespread, there were households where women were expected to adhere to their traditional roles. This tension is exhibited through fashion, where embroidered shoes for bound feet confined women to the house are juxtaposed against high-heeled shoes that are worn by women who travelled the world.
- The progressiveness of Singapore society is also evident in the story of the amahs. They symbolise a group of women who were independent socially and financially in pre-war Singapore. Their personal items and details of their work are featured in the “Under the Staircase” section.

SUGGESTED THEMES AND SOURCES

In this section, we have highlighted several sources that have been grouped around different themes when Singapore was a British colony. We have also provided several thinking questions that you may use to help your students to engage with the sources in a more critical manner.

You may also view the sources online by going to <https://roots.sg> and keying in the Accession Number for those artefacts with a number.

I. EMPLOYMENT

With the arrival of the British, Singapore's economy expanded which attracted migrants from the surrounding region. This expansion in trade created many new job opportunities for those who wanted to seek a better future. Not all of the new jobs that were created were backbreaking work; some of these new jobs grew out of the need for services to support the rapid growth of the economy while others were services that supported the resident living in the colony.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

Rickshaw
Late 19th century
Mixed media
National Museum of Singapore

For the thousands of Chinese migrants who were arriving in Singapore from China, pulling a rickshaw was a job that many able-bodied young men could take up.

The rickshaw first appeared in Japan around 1868. Its name originates from the Japanese *jinrikisha* (*jin*=human, *riki*=force, *sha*=vehicle). It was brought to Singapore around 1880 and became the main form of cheap transport for both Asians and Europeans.

Rickshaws were either imported from Japan or manufactured locally, although the latter were usually of poorer quality. Given the high wear and tear from daily use in Singapore's tropical climate, they usually lasted five years if properly maintained. The rickshaw here is the type that seats one passenger.

செட்டியர்களின் புகார்ப்புத்தியை
 கீழ்க்கண்டவாறு விவரிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.
 கீழ்க்கண்டவாறு விவரிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளது.
 அமைதி.

Doubtful debts

| No | Date | Name | Amount due on date of death |
|-----|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | 13-12-26 | W. de Rodriguez | \$104 |
| 2. | 4-2-27 | do | \$104 |
| 3 | 1-4-27 | Fr. Aroozoo | \$2875.83 |
| 4. | 31-12-26 | Tan Jeng Seng | \$130. |
| 5. | 27-7-26 | Lee Hoon Keng | \$120. |
| 6. | 2-1-27 | do | \$960 |
| 7. | 3-1-27 | Tan Seng Pak | \$720 |
| 8 | 5-1-27 | Low ah Fatt | \$240. |
| 9. | 2-4-27 | do | \$240. |
| 10. | 6-1-27 | Ceng Saw Ch | \$36. |
| 11. | 7-1-27 | Low Beng Sw | \$280. |
| 12 | 11-1-27 | Tan William | \$200. |
| 13. | 2-12-26 | Tan Seng Keat | \$104. |
| 14. | 28-1-27 | do | \$12. |
| 15. | 19-2-27 | Ceng Chye Sui | \$225. |

SOURCE 2

List of "Doubtful Debts"
 1927
 Paper
 National Museum of Singapore

The Chettiers originated from Tamil Nadu in India and were primarily moneylenders across the British empire in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. In Singapore, their places of business, known as *kittangi* ("warehouse" in Tamil), were near the Singapore River along Chulia and Market Streets.

The Chettiers were important to the economy because they obtained credit from the British and offered loans to small businesses. Their clients were mainly Chinese businessmen or civil servants, as well as the Tamil community.

Chettiers kept lists of individuals who were slow in paying their loan instalments. The fourth column from the left, "Amount due on date of death", indicates the amount the Chettiar would claim from his client's next of kin or guarantor should the client pass away before fully settling his debt.



SOURCE 3

Photograph of the graduating class of 1925 of the
King Edward VII College of Medicine
1925

Reproduction

National Museum of Singapore

Accession Number: 2000-03284

With English education, a new generation of Asians could be trained for professional work – as lawyers, doctors, dentists, teachers or journalists – or become a clerk or secretary in a commercial house or the civil service. This led to the emergence of a new generation of students who adapted to Western customs and engaged in European sports and pastimes.

This photograph shows the graduating class of 1925 from the King Edward VII College of Medicine. Established in 1905, the college was Singapore's first medical institution to train local men and women in Western medicine. Peranakan Chinese such as Tan Jiak Kim contributed generously to the building of the college.

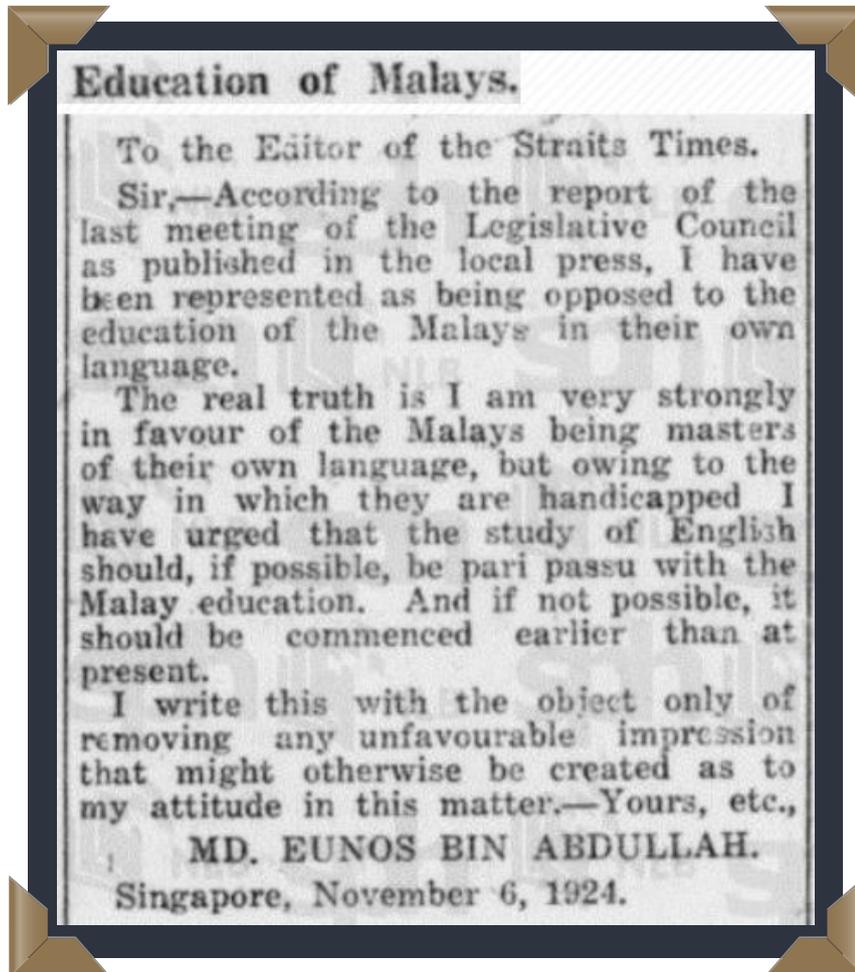
THINK:

1. What do these jobs that existed in Singapore tell you about life in the colonial era?
2. Why did these people find jobs in Singapore?
3. What do these jobs tell you about Singapore's economy?
4. What are the similarities and differences among the three occupations?

II. EDUCATION

In colonial Singapore, schools were set up by various groups such as European missionaries, Straits Chinese, Chinese nationalists, educationalists and the colonial government.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

Letter from Eunus Abdullah to *The Straits Times*
7 November 1924
Reproduction
Courtesy of Singapore Press Holdings – The Straits Times

Singapore-born Mohamed Eunus bin Abdullah made his mark in 1924 as the first Malay and only Muslim representative on the Straits Settlements Legislative Council. In 1926, he co-founded the first Malay political party in Singapore, Kesatuan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay Union).

He had previously distinguished himself as one of the few Malay students at Raffles Institution, then as the editor of the Malay-language newspapers, *Utusan Melayu* and *Lembaga Melayu*. In the Legislative Council, Eunus argued for improved education for Malay boys so that they could become more literate and get better jobs.

At the Legislative Council meetings in 1924, Eunus Abdullah made an impassioned call for Malay children to start learning English at an earlier age. He felt that this would counter the handicap they faced in transiting from vernacular to English education. However, acting Director of Education Dr R. O. Winstedt insisted that “the only way to give a boy a beneficial education in English is first of all to ground him in his own vernacular, and give him a language in which he can think”.

SOURCE 2

Photograph of the first batch of
Queen's scholars
1893
Reproduction
Courtesy of Lee Hin Ming,
National Archives of Singapore



In the late 19th century, more Asians (primarily men) in Singapore became doctors, lawyers, clerks, officials, businessmen or become a clerk or secretary in a commercial house or the civil service. This created an Asian middle class that increasingly adopted Western customs and engaged in European sports and pastimes.

Through these experiences, the educated Asian class was influenced by ideas about nationalism and politics. More people began to explore the meanings of nation, citizenship and empire. Over the years, although some still identified with their ancestral nation based on language or culture, others began to think of Malaya as their home and nation – a multicultural “Malaya for Malaysans”.

In 1885, the Queen's scholarship was established by the colonial government to enable outstanding local English-speaking students to attend British universities. This photograph bears the signatures of some of the early scholars: J. Aitken, C. S. Angus, P. V. Locker, D. A. Weris, Lim Boon Keng and Song Ong Siang. Many of these men would contribute to Singapore after finishing their studies in Britain.

SOURCE 3

A Day at School

Extract of Audio Footage, Ms Tan Sock Kern, Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore

"I went to Singapore Chinese Girls' School because my father wanted me to study and learn English. As far as English was concerned, it was very difficult for me. Because you only speak English with the teacher. I was about seven. We were all from Swatow. The aim of the school is to produce good wives for Singapore men for which they have to learn reading, writing, sewing, Chinese and Malay. That was in 1899...."

They taught us sewing, which is mending. We did knitting. We had cooking, we made cakes. Rock buns and butter cakes. They taught us how to make beef stew. I did not like cooking, I did not like sewing, but I liked Hygiene. Mrs Hunter taught us Hygiene and for me it was very easy because talking about different parts of the body, the stomach and all those things, the digestive system. In Standard Seven, we started History for the first time. It's some English history."

Tan Sock Kern was sent to Singapore Chinese Girls' School by her father to learn English in 1925. In this audio footage, she shares what a typical school day was like for her in Singapore in the late 1920s.

A new generation of educated women with modern attitudes emerged in Singapore at the turn of the 20th century. This was due to the efforts of European missionaries, Straits Chinese, Chinese nationalists and educationalists. Prior to the 1900s, education for females was almost non-existent. The education reform movement started in 1887 when Australian Methodist missionary Sophia Blackmore established the Methodist Girls' School in a shophouse on Short Street. In 1899, the Straits Chinese Girls' School (later known as the Singapore Chinese Girls' School) was founded by a group of British-educated Peranakan Chinese men.

By the 1930s, several English and Chinese language girls' schools had sprung up all over Singapore. Subjects taught in schools included arithmetic, cooking, sewing, reading, writing, geography and world history. Some schools also introduced physical education (PE) lessons later in the 1930s. However, while boys were given an education to elevate their social status, most women were educated in order to be worthy of their husbands. Sewing, as well as cooking and caring for babies, were considered important skills for their future roles as daughters-in-law, wives and mothers.

THINK:

1. How widespread do you think education was for the people in colonial Singapore?
2. Do you think everyone had equal opportunity to get an education in colonial Singapore? Who did? Who did not?
3. Why do you think there was uneven opportunity for access to education in colonial Singapore?
4. Based on the sources, what was the impact of education on the lives of people in colonial Singapore?
5. Why was education viewed as important back then?

III. LIVING CONDITIONS

As more people started to move to Singapore, the town grew bigger and new houses had to be built to accommodate the different groups of people living in Singapore. The type of houses that were built and their respective living conditions reflected the socio-economic structure that existed in Singapore at that time.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

Hokkien Street
1890s
Reproduction of albumen
print
National Museum of
Singapore
Accession Number:
1995-00570

As Singapore became more urbanised, there were insufficient houses being built for the many immigrants who were pouring into Singapore. Many people in Singapore then lived in overcrowded shop-house conditions in the town or similarly squalid conditions in villages.

Due to ignorance and poverty, disease and unhygienic practices were rampant. For example, night-soil buckets were used to collect human waste and the Municipality's attempts to introduce a town sewage collection made little progress until the 1920s.



SOURCE 2

River scene and native huts
Early 20th century
Reproduction of postcard
National Museum of Singapore
Accession Number: 1994-05150

This postcard shows houses that were along the river. In the colonial era, large parts of Singapore were still undeveloped and in those places, the residents of Singapore would live in these huts near the river.



SOURCE 3

View of a house in Singapore

1857

Percy Carpenter

Watercolour on paper

National Museum of Singapore

Accession Number: HP-0112

This watercolour was painted by the English artist Percy Carpenter, who resided in Singapore in the latter half of the 1850s. It depicts a European house atop a hill in Singapore, with a Danish flag on the flagstaff next to it. This is possibly the property of Danish consul George Garden Nicol, who at that time owned a large nutmeg plantation called Sri Menanti Estate. Another house can be seen in the background on the right, as is characteristic of Carpenter's preference for panoramic views.

THINK:

1. Can you identify any differences among the three types of houses/living conditions?
2. Who do you think lived in the houses of each image?
Why do you think so?
3. What do the differences in living conditions tell you about Singapore society during the colonial era?
4. What do these differences tell you about the economic development of Singapore?

IV. LEISURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Life in the colony could be boring with the daily grind of work but there were leisure and entertainment options for everyone along the socio-economic spectrum.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

Chinese man smoking opium
Reproduction of postcard
National Museum of Singapore
Accession Number: 1999-00484

New immigrant workers from China would take up temporary residence at lodging houses. Most of these spaces were crowded and grim. They were used to house transient workers until they found work in Singapore or left to work in the Malayan interior.

For many of these working-class men, opium smoking was a form of relaxation and escape from their cramped and unpleasant living conditions. However, if they succumbed to addiction and could not pay the rent, they would be turned out by their landlords.

Opium smoking was not restricted to the working-class, rich Chinese *towkay* (boss) were also smoking opium. They usually smoked their opium while relaxing on comfortable beds in their large mansions.



SOURCE 2

Mahjong set
c1920s
Bamboo, ivory, metal. wood
National Museum of Singapore
Accession Number: XXXX-08651

A game of strategy played by four persons, this mahjong set contains 144 tiles each carved from ivory with a bamboo base, a set of miniature dice and three “direction” indicators. Mahjong was the second most popular game played by women in 1920s and 1930s Singapore after the card game bridge, and mahjong tea parties were often organised at various clubs for entertainment and fundraising. In 1940, the Chinese Ladies Association raised \$300 for the Patriotic Fund through a mahjong and bridge drive.



SOURCE 3

Opera glasses
1900s
Indonesia
Metal, leather, mother of pearl
National Museum of Singapore

This pair of elegant, high-quality opera glasses is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Compact in form and equipped with low-powered optical magnification lenses, this was purchased from G.C.T. Van Dorp & Co. Semarang Surabaya, Indonesia, a major Dutch bookstore and publisher based in Java. Similar items could be purchased at local departmental stores and would have cost about 25 dollars in the early 1900s. The Theatre Royal on North Bridge Road was a popular venue for daily evening performances of Shakespeare's plays in Malay by the Star Opera Company.

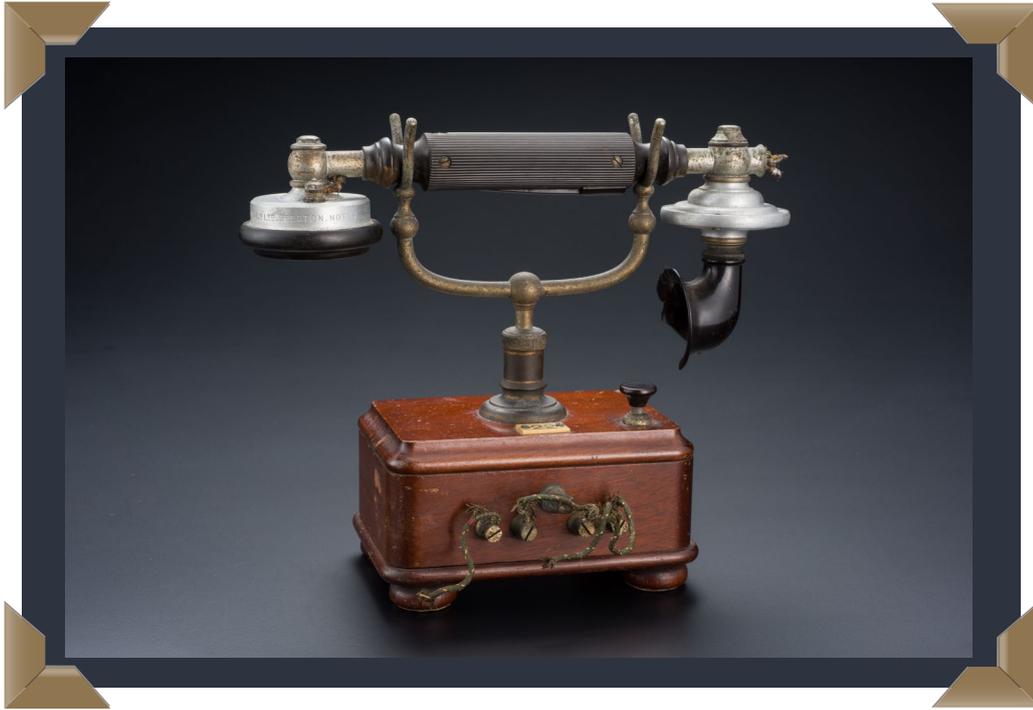
THINK:

1. What do these different forms of entertainment tell you about Singapore in the colonial era?
2. Can you identify any similarities and differences among the three leisure and entertainment options?
3. Who do you think enjoyed each type of leisure and entertainment option?
4. Why were leisure activities a part of people's lives in the colonial era?

V. CONNECTIONS TO THE WORLD

As an important port in the British empire with connections to many parts of the world, Singapore was exposed to new technology. The effects of these new technologies in Singapore usually benefitted some people more than others.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

Table telephone
Early 20th century
Beeston, England
Wood, metal
National Museum of Singapore

This is believed to be one of the first free-standing telephones, which incorporated both the microphone and receiver in a single handset. Inscribed on the receiver are the words "Beeston, The British Manufacturing Co. Ltd" and "L.M. Ericsson". In the 1920s, Ericsson Group's largest foreign manufacturing unit was in Beeston, a town in Nottinghamshire, England. In the 1920s, wealthy families in Singapore had telephones on lease in their offices and homes. More significantly, the introduction of the telephone in homes connected women to the outside world without the need for chaperones.



SOURCE 2

The mail arrives and the mail leaves
1890s
Reproductions of photographs
National Museum of Singapore

In 1867, Singapore became a Crown colony, together with Melaka and Penang. Over the next few decades, it grew rapidly into a city with global connections. As steamships became more common, and with the opening of the Suez Canal, Singapore's trade increased eightfold between 1873 and 1913.

Before there were steamships, mail and goods from London, India and China took several months, or even up to a year, to arrive by sea. By 1845, steamships were delivering letters and goods more frequently.



SOURCE 3

Postcard of Kallang Airport
1900s–20s
Cardboard
National Museum of Singapore

In the 20th century, Singapore attracted an increasing number of visitors due to the growing global tourist industry. Travellers stopped in Singapore on round-the-world cruises. After Kallang Airport opened in 1937, they also came on flights that stopped to refuel en route to Australia or other parts of Asia.

THINK:

1. Who do you think introduced these new technologies to Singapore?
2. Why did these people introduce these new technologies to Singapore?
3. Do you think everyone benefitted from the introduction of these new technologies? Who did? Who did not?
4. What does the presence of these new technologies tell you about Singapore during the colonial era?
5. How do you think these technologies affect Singapore?

VI. PEACE AND ORDER

Colonial Singapore was not always peaceful. There were bouts of violence that erupted in and around Singapore during the colonial era. These incidents tested the British resolve to ensure there was order in the colony.

POSSIBLE SOURCES THAT CAN BE EXPLORED IN RELATION TO THE THEME:



SOURCE 1

The Padang in Singapore
1851
John Turnbull Thomson
Oil on canvas
National Museum of Singapore
Accession Number: HP-0054

This is an oil painting by J.T. Thomson, who served as the first government surveyor in Singapore from 1841 to 1853. It shows a view of the Padang from Scandal Point, the Saluting Battery (a small knoll above the original shoreline since levelled) situated at the edge of Connaught Drive, southeast of St. Andrew's Church (St. Andrew's Cathedral today). The Padang was the heart of social life in 19th-century Singapore, and is depicted here in its most bustling state in the late afternoon with different communities dressed in their respective costumes.

It creates the impression that Singapore was an idyllic multicultural society. However, the representation of Europeans on an elevated plane – on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages – while Asians are either standing or seated on the field, subtly suggests that it was the Europeans who held the authority in the settlement.



SOURCE 2

Article in the *Sphere* newspaper on the Sepoy Mutiny
 1 May 1915
 Reproduction
 National Museum of Singapore

Note: Please refer to page 39 of this booklet for the text in this article

On 15 February 1915, 850 soldiers from the 5th Indian Light Infantry, which was temporarily stationed in Singapore, launched an armed uprising against the British. From their barracks at Alexandra, they spread out to Tanglin, Outram, Keppel Harbour and Pasir Panjang, sabotaging infrastructure and attacking Europeans.

When the violence ended several days later, about 47 officers and civilians, mostly British, had been killed. The mutiny shocked the colonial administration. At the time, Europe was embroiled in the World War One. Although a German prisoner of war claimed to have instigated the mutiny, the Indian soldiers testified during their court-martial that they had been influenced by political agitation by Indian Muslims in Singapore and propaganda from the Ghadar party, a revolutionary, anti-imperial movement from northern India. The all-Muslim unit had also been concerned that they would be dispatched to fight in Europe against fellow Muslims from Turkey (which was then allied with Germany). The Singapore Mutiny rattled the colonial authorities. The subsequent court-martial found 201 soldiers guilty of involvement in the uprising; 47 were publicly executed by firing squad outside Outram Prison from March to May 1915. The matter was also raised in the British Parliament amid concerns over German intrigue during the ongoing World War One.

After the mutiny, Indian civilians were forced to register with the Special Branch, a police department created to monitor subversive acts. Many were angered by this because they had not played any part in the violence.

SOURCE 3

Singapore – A Police Background

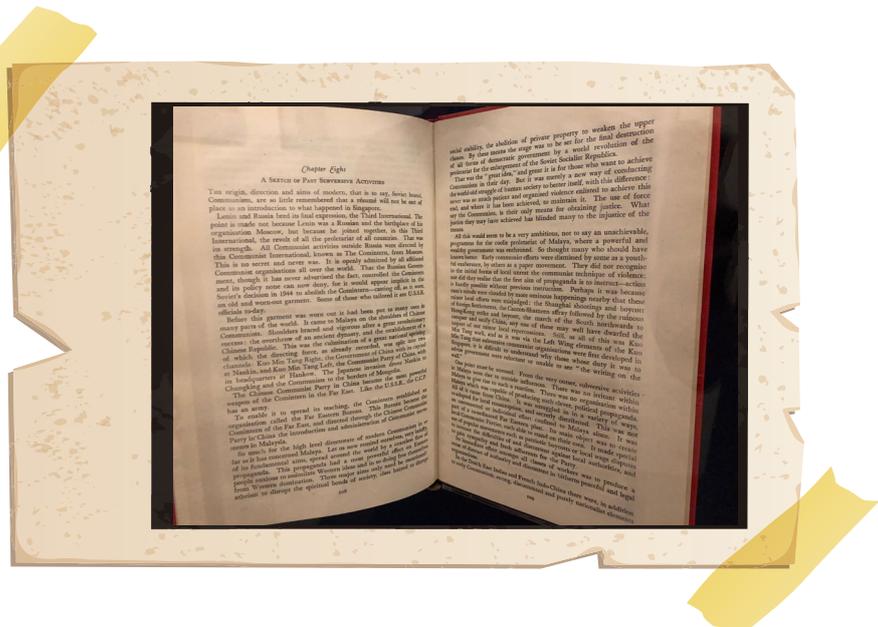
by René Onraet

1945

Paper

National Museum of Singapore

Excerpt from *Singapore – A Police Background* by René Onraet



“One point must be stressed. From the very outset, subversive activities in Malaya were due to outside influences. There was no irritant within Malaya to give rise to such a reaction. There was no organisation within Malaya which was capable of producing such clever, political propaganda. All of it came from China. It was smuggled in a variety of ways, re-adapted for local consumption, and secretly distributed. This was not an unconnected or individual effort confined to Malaya alone. It was part of a co-ordinated Far Eastern plan. Its main objective was to create local Communist Parties, each able to stand on their own. It made special use of popular movements such as patriotic boycotts or local wage disputes to gain sympathy and fresh adherents for the Party.

Its immediate effect amongst all classes of workers was to produce a sense of distrust of authority and discontent in hitherto peaceful and legal organisations.”

Englishman René Onraet joined the Straits Settlements Police Force in 1907. He later moved to Singapore and in 1922, he became the head of the Criminal Intelligence Department (later renamed the Special Branch). The unit was responsible for internal security matters, such as the surveillance of political suspects and infiltration of “seditious” groups. It also monitored racial, religious and social activities. The Special Branch was especially concerned with Chinese communist subversives who advocated anti-Westernism and anti-imperialism. They knew that the Chinese Communist Party had influence in Singapore’s Chinese night schools, labour organisations and the local Guomindang. Onraet also noted that the working-class Hainanese community was more susceptible to leftist ideology. The Special Branch conducted numerous raids and immigration checks to detain or deport suspected revolutionaries, and significantly weakened the influence of the Malayan Communist Party.

This book is an account of Onraet’s experiences in Singapore from his time as a police cadet in 1907. His chapters on local politics were published in *The Straits Times* in 1946 and caused quite a stir. In one of those chapters, displayed here, Onraet attributes the occurrence of subversive activities in Singapore to propaganda from China, imported mainly by the left-wing elements of the Guomindang (Kuomintang).

THINK:

1. Whose point of view is being presented in the three sources? Are there any biases in the three sources?
2. How reliable are these three sources in helping you understand the state of peace and order in colonial Singapore?
3. What other type of sources would you recommend to give a better idea of the state of peace and order in colonial Singapore?
4. What do you think was the state of law and order in Singapore at the time? Explain your answer with evidence.

RESOURCES

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12. Heritage TV. "Roots.sg Presents: The Story of Raffles". Video, 02:51.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkBWV7b_Bb8&t=1s
13. British Pathe. "Singapore (1920–1929)". Video, 0:18.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd0lrWjzyVo>
14. The Travel Film Archive. "Singapore - Crossroads of the East 1938". Video, 11:20.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvvhY6DtfZs>

Websites

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<http://www.nas.gov.sg>
16. National Heritage Board
<https://roots.sg>

WHY GATHER EVIDENCE AT THE MUSEUM?

YOUR TASK:

Visiting a museum is not only about admiring the beauty of artefacts or listening to fascinating stories about the past. It is also about experiencing and being immersed in these recreated historic environments.

In this activity, observe how the museum has tried to create an immersive experience for visitors. Write your observations in the spaces below.

CROWN COLONY ZONE IN SHG

| SOUND | SIGHT |
|---|--|
| DESCRIBE THE KIND OF SOUNDS YOU CAN HEAR. | DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SEE. E.G. COLOURS, PATTERNS, SIZE |

CROWN COLONY ZONE IN SHG

| |
|--|
| WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE SOUNDS AND SEE THE DESIGN OF THE SPACE? |
| DRAW OR WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS IN THE SPACE BELOW. |
| |

MODERN COLONY GALLERY

| SOUND | SIGHT |
|---|--|
| DESCRIBE THE KIND OF SOUNDS YOU CAN HEAR. | DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SEE. E.G. COLOURS, PATTERNS, SIZE |

MODERN COLONY GALLERY

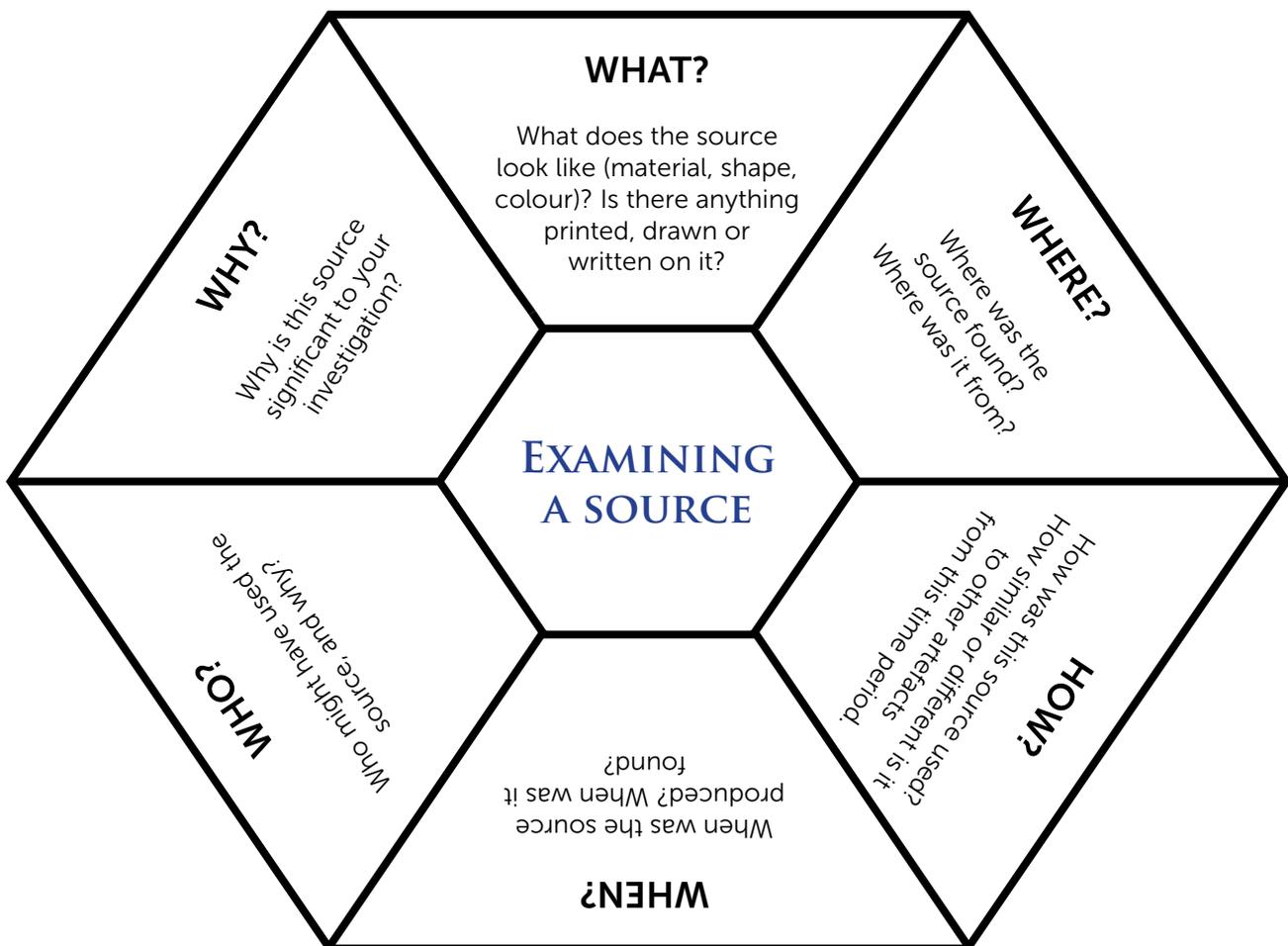
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| WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU HEAR THE SOUNDS AND SEE THE DESIGN OF THE SPACE? |
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| |

HOW WAS LIFE LIKE FOR PEOPLE IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE?

YOUR TASK:

Most of your activities for this trip will be conducted in Crown Colony, the second zone of the Singapore History Gallery and the Modern Colony gallery on level 2. In both of these galleries, you will find different types of sources (artefacts, written records, oral history and pictorial records) that have been used to construct the history of Singapore during the colonial era.

In the same way, you as a young historian can use all of these sources to construct your own knowledge of the past: First, select a few sources in the gallery that interest you. Then use the questions below to guide you to extract relevant information from each selected source. Lastly, based on the details from the object and other relevant background information, what inferences can you make about how life was like for the people in colonial Singapore?



MAKING INFERENCES:

WHAT CAN YOU INFER FROM THE SOURCE ABOUT THE LIVES OF PEOPLE IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE?

HOW WAS LIFE LIKE FOR PEOPLE IN COLONIAL SINGAPORE?

YOUR TASK:

Consolidate the information you have gathered at the museum. Which sources have provided you with the most relevant information on how life was like for the people in colonial Singapore?

Examine these sources in greater detail and use the table below to record your responses.

| NAME OF SOURCE | DESCRIPTION OF SOURCE | ASPECT OF LIFE | WHAT CAN YOU INFER ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF LIFE IN SINGAPORE DURING THE COLONIAL ERA? | WHAT EVIDENCE DOES THE SOURCE PROVIDE TO SUPPORT YOUR INFERENCE? |
|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|--|--|
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ANNEX A: GALLERY TEXT FOR CROWN COLONY ZONE IN SHG

You and your students may also view the content of our galleries digitally by using the National Museum of Singapore app.

Step 1:

Go to the Apple Store or Google Play Store to download the National Museum of Singapore app.

Step 2:

Find the "Look Up" icon at the bottom of the screen.

Step 3:

Enter the Look Up code. The Look Up codes are the four digits at the start of each panel, for example, enter 1025 for the section on "Crown Colony".

Step 4:

To read another panel, just exit and press the "Look Up" icon.

Crown Colony

1025

Crown Colony (1819–1941)

In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles and Major William Farquhar arrived in Singapore. They struck a deal with the local Malay rulers to set up a British trading port, which Raffles declared would be “open to ships and vessels of every nation free of duty”. This brought in traders and ships from as far away as Arabia and Africa. By the 1850s, Singapore was the centre of trade in Southeast Asia.

Singapore became a Crown colony in 1867, together with the other Straits Settlements of Melaka and Penang. As the British empire flourished, so did Singapore. The population swelled with migrants from the Malay Archipelago, China and South Asia. Some came to trade, as before, but many more came to work in the port city and in the plantations and mines of Malaya.

Indeed, Malayan rubber and tin powered Singapore’s growth into an export and international financial centre – on a smaller scale, but not too different in character from what it is now. By the time Singapore celebrated its Centenary Day in 1919, it was a modern city, boasting the second largest dry dock in the world and modern conveniences such as electricity, motorcars and international telegraph and telephone connections.

1026

Emporium (1819–1867)

A free port to “destroy the spell of Dutch monopoly”

The opening of the British free port triggered a dramatic transformation. Singapore’s population grew to over 10,000 within five years, and the harbour, from Telok Ayer in the west to Kallang in the east, was filled with ships from the Malay Archipelago, Asia and Europe. They brought cargo such as cloth and opium from India, silk, tea and ceramics from China, as well as Straits produce such as spices, pearls, bird’s nest and tortoiseshell.

The ships also brought labourers from China and British India. They did much of the hard work of clearing the land, transporting cargo and building the town. By the 1830s, the Chinese were the largest ethnic group in Singapore. In particular, the towkays (Chinese merchants) dominated commerce for much of the 19th century. Like their Arab, Armenian, European and Indian counterparts, they were involved in regional trade, as well as in property, opium, and pepper and gambier plantations.

Timeline date and text:

1819 A British port was started in Singapore

Contact us at nhb_nm_schools@nhb.gov.sg if you require the full gallery text and artefact captions for Annex A and Annex B.

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Text for Article in the The Sphere, May 1, 1915

The Rioting at Singapore: How the Mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry was Quelled

The story of the outbreak at Singapore of the 5th Light Infantry was given in The Rangoon Gazette by an eye-witness, who arrived in Rangoon from Singapore shortly after the mutiny was quelled. He wrote: "On the afternoon of the outbreak, between five and six o'clock in the evening, a large part of the European population of Singapore was out at the park near the golf links where there is a fine drive, enjoying splendid weather. Without warning there came, it seemed from a dozen places, rifle volleys, and several people fell mortally wounded. The alarm was quickly brought into the town and volunteers assembled rapidly at their armoury. Europeans who were not Volunteers were called to the police headquarters and made special constables and were sent out to bring women from the residential quarters into the hotels of the town, where they could be protected, and this was done. It was then learned that nearly all the 5th Light Infantry were trying to make their way into the town. The Volunteers were rushed to the scene of the firing, which was close to Kettle Harbour where the regimental barracks are, in motor gharries and rickshaws, and at once opened fire on batches of men they could see. To locate them was difficult as they were not in one column, but in numerous small columns or bands. Fighting took place all Monday night and the Volunteers aided by a detachment from a British gunboat in the Singapore Harbour and men from the R.G.A., prevented the rioters from getting any nearer to the town than the outskirts.

"In the meantime wireless messages were being sent out to ships which were known to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Singapore. On Tuesday morning women who had been guarded in the hotels the previous night were sent on board the ships in the harbour. The prompt work of the Volunteers and R.G.A., aided by sailors from the gunboat, saved the situation, and while they accounted for a large number of the rioters, it was not without some loss to themselves both in officers and men. Large numbers of rioters were captured in addition to those who were shot, and about 150 or 200 laid down their arms when they were first attacked.

"The next morning various vessels began to arrive, and as fast as they did they sent men ashore. There was still fighting on Tuesday night and Wednesday, and the riotous troops, finding large forces were operating against them, fled in the direction of Johore, closely pursued. On entering the Sultan's territory many were captured, and those who resisted were put out of the way. After the landing of men from the vessels the women on the ships were allowed to go ashore again, but only to houses in prescribed areas, hotels, or Government House."

A personal narrative in The Times ends thus: "I couldn't stand the dirt of the same old clothes on any longer this evening. S----- was dying for a bath too; so, armed with a rifle and with two warders, both armed, we marched up to the house. Everything looked as usual, only a horrible garment soaked in blood just outside the garden to remind us of the dangerous time we have been through. Such a sweet, pretty young bride who was out at Changi with us the other day was killed with her husband. One of our warders died from his wounds yesterday, and twenty-one English men and women were buried yesterday afternoon. The Sepoys went quietly about in couples with haversacks full of ammunition and shot at every European."

ARTEFACTUALLY SPEAKING

Conversations With Museum Educators



This new museum-based learning experience is designed for:

- *Historical Investigation – to complement and strengthen Historical Investigation at the Museum
- CCE and National Education – to allow students to explore issues of home and identity.

* Teachers can also download the new and free Historical Investigation resources that can be found at <https://bit.ly/2GAhPo5>.

Special extension for pilot programme – the first 20 schools to sign up will experience it for free!

PROGRAMME FEATURES



Able to accommodate an **entire level of students** at any one time



A **student-directed learning experience** where students can choose from a list of artefacts to explore and interact with our Museum Educators



Museum Educators who will engage students in conversations as they share fascinating stories about the artefacts



A **passport** to guide students' exploration of the galleries



Opportunity to collect **tokens** that are based on historical documents and objects, which can serve as sources for history learning



Pre- and post-visit resources that teachers can use to facilitate students' learning before and after the programme

The Educators' narratives were excellent. The takeaway artefacts were great too. Well done!

Teacher

The Museum trip was meaningful and interesting. I learnt more things compared to my previous museum trips. The museum educators were engaging as well.

Secondary 2 student

Recommended level:
Secondary 1 to 3

Curriculum relevance:
National Education,
Character and Citizenship Education (CCE),
Lower Secondary History,
Upper Secondary Social Studies

Capacity:
Minimum 120, maximum 300 students

Duration: 2.5 hours

Fees: Free of charge for first 20 schools to sign up, on a first come, first served basis.

Contact us at nhb_nm_schools@nhb.gov.sg to find out more or to book this programme.
Secure your desired slots early!