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National Museum
of Singapore

My Trip to the National Museum of Singapore





I may be going on a class trip to the National Museum of Singapore with my classmates and teachers. The museum is 130 years old this year!



The National Museum of Singapore looks after and displays our nation's historical artefacts. These are objects and materials that tell us stories about Singapore and its people.

It is important to preserve and take good care of these artefacts so that our future generations can continue to enjoy them and learn about Singapore's history through them.



Before going on the class trip, my teachers will share with us a few rules about our learning journey to the museum. I will have to follow the museum rules. The museum rules are important because they keep us safe.



To get to the museum, I may ride in a school bus with my classmates and teachers.



I will know that I have reached the museum
when I see this sign.



I will wait here while my teachers collect the admission tickets from the Visitor Services counter.



I will receive a special sticker from my teacher to enter the exhibition galleries in the museum.



I will put the special sticker on my shirt so that other people can see it.



We can enter the exhibition galleries with the special stickers.
The special stickers will keep us safe.



It is important to keep the special sticker on my shirt until my teacher says it is okay to take it off.



No flash
photography



No videography



No food
and drinks



No running

Gentle Reminder

My teacher will remind us about the museum rules before we enter the exhibition galleries.



When I see this sign, I will remind myself that I should not touch the artefact on display.



Now that I have my special sticker and understand the museum rules, I am ready to explore the museum.



We will take the escalator down to Level 1, where the Singapore History Gallery is.

Singapore History Gallery



Opening Hours
10am to 7pm
(Last admission 6.30pm)

My classmates and I will follow the teachers to the entrance of the Singapore History Gallery.



A museum staff will greet us at the entrance. He or she has a black tie and / or coat on.



I will see a big screen when I enter the Singapore History Gallery. It shows the settlements around ancient Singapore in the 1500s. Singapore used to be known as “Temasek” or “Singapura” in the past.



In the gallery, I will hear the sounds of rain and thunder, and may be afraid. But I will remind myself that these sounds will not hurt me.



The first object I will see is the Singapore Stone.
It used to be a 3-metre-tall stone boulder standing at
the mouth of the Singapore River.



I will then hear the sounds of splashing waves and chirping birds. I will also see a big European ship in this section.



I will also hear people chatting as they work on metal and pottery. Singapore looked like this 700 years ago.



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 post, 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 Malacca 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, featuring the second largest dry dock in the world and modern conveniences such as electricity, motorcars and international telegraph and telephone connections.

This is Sir Stamford Raffles. He is regarded as the founder of modern Singapore. He renamed Singapura to “Singapore” in 1819.



As I enter this section, I will hear horses galloping. I will also hear the sounds of men talking and bowls clanging. I imagine these sounds to be made by coolies having their meals along the streets.



I will also see a rickshaw. It was the main mode of transportation for people living in olden Singapore before motor cars, electric trams, buses and trishaws became more popular.



Many people used to live in shop-houses with five-foot ways.
As I walk through the five-foot way, I will see baskets of different sizes.
The baskets are made from rattan and can be used for many purposes.

In the past, people used to sell basic necessities, fruits and vegetables,
food and drinks along the five-foot ways or on the streets.

SYONAN-TO 1942-1945

Well before World War Two began, the British had developed the "Singapore strategy" to defend the British empire in Asia. In Singapore, they built a naval base at Sembawang, strengthened the air force and installed large 15-inch coastal guns. Singapore became known as the "Gibraltar of the East" or "Fortress Singapore".

At the same time, the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 stirred up the Chinese community in Singapore. They formed "patriotic" organisations, which raised funds for China's war effort and organised boycotts of Japanese goods and businesses.

On 8 December 1941, Singapore experienced war for the first time when the Japanese bombed the city. On the same day, Japanese troops landed on the northeast coast of Malaya and began their invasion. After a swift 70-day campaign, the Japanese – to almost everyone's surprise – defeated the British and occupied the Malay Peninsula and Singapore.

The British surrendered on 15 February 1942. Singapore was placed under military occupation and renamed Syonan-To ("Light of the South" in Japanese). While the war continued elsewhere, the Singapore population struggled with food and fuel shortages, disease and, at its worst, violence and harassment from the Japanese. The occupation ended only when Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945.



The Japanese occupied Singapore from 1942 to 1945. Singapore was renamed “Syonan-To”, which means “Light of the South”. It was a horrible time for people living in Singapore.



As I enter this section, I will hear soldiers marching, air raid sirens and the rumbling of vehicle engines. I will also see a huge military tank here!



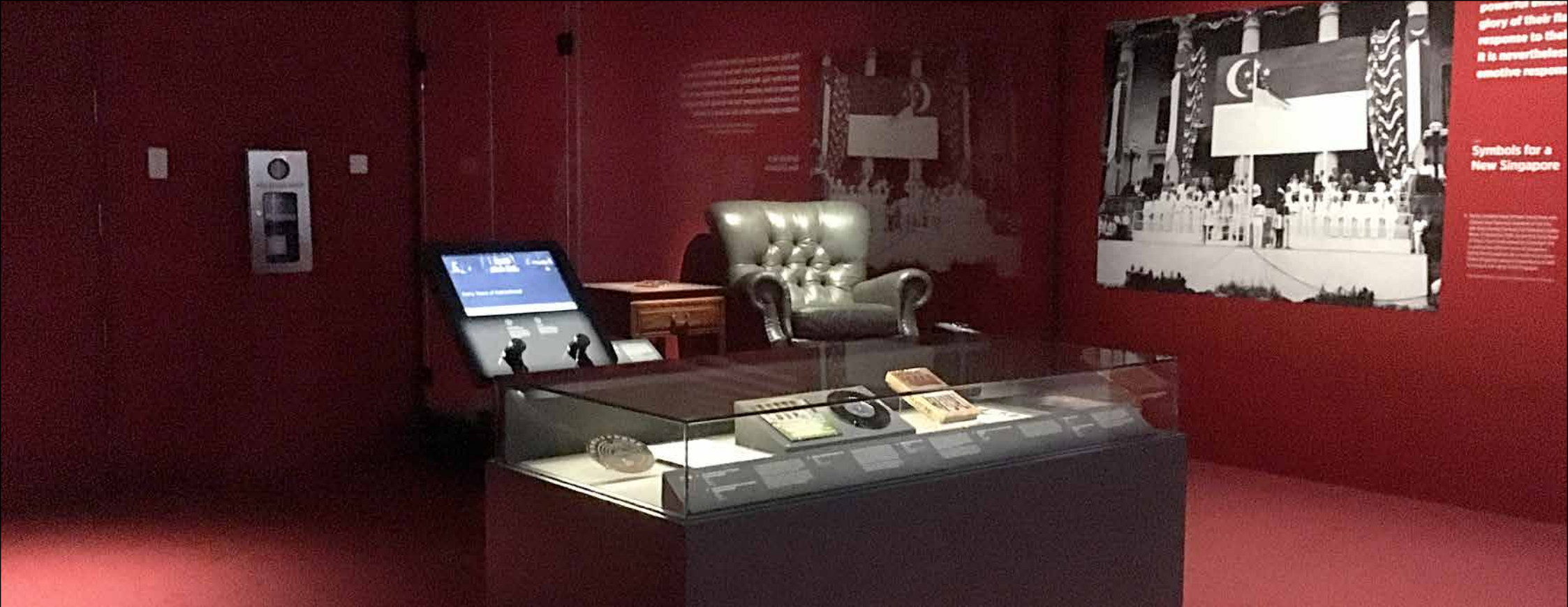
I will see a blouse and a skirt that belonged to Elizabeth Choy. She wore this set of clothing for 200 days in the detention centre. How would I feel wearing the same clothes for 200 days?



Next, I will hear and see Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, in a video about the separation of Singapore from Malaysia.



On 16 September 1963, Singapore became a part of Malaysia. But the merger did not last and Singapore separated from Malaysia and became an independent nation on 9 August 1965.



Mr Yusof Ishak was Singapore's first President. I will learn more about Singapore's national symbols in this room.



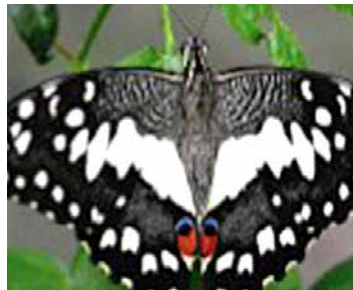
Next, I will see images of men and women busily working in a factory and some products that were manufactured in Singapore, such as mosquito coils, chinks and candles.



I will then see a retro living room with a big interactive table. I can browse through the digital books found on the table and find out more about the homes in Singapore.



When I step out of the flat, I will hear the sound of birds chirping and see a big rain tree, as if I am in a park.



When I look up, I will see images of animals and plants such as the Collared Kingfisher, Pink-Necked Green Pigeon, Blue Pansy Butterfly, Lime Butterfly, Plantain Squirrel, Green Crested Lizard, Bamboo Orchid and Pigeon Orchid.



I will see this infographic wall at the end of the Singapore History Gallery.



After exiting the Singapore History Gallery, we will take the escalator up to Level 2, where the Life in Singapore: The Past 100 Years galleries are.



My teachers may bring us to the exhibition galleries on Level 2 during this visit to the museum.



My classmates and I will follow the teachers to the entrance of the Modern Colony gallery.



On entering the gallery, I will see chairs, tables and a newspaper stand. I will also smell English tea and hear soft ballroom music.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

...every nation meets. Fifty shipping lines
...an immeasurable quantity of native craft of

Journey (1939)

...politan port city with a burgeoning population of over
...advancements in maritime technology and port services.
...in 1869 and the introduction of the telegraph system in
...n colony into a new era of global connectedness.
...vancements in steamship technology, modernising its
...sed volume of shipping and trade.

...snoomy brought thousands of immigrants and travellers
...tions and supporting services such as banks, shipping
...oon sprang up everywhere, as businessmen and shipping
...n swift and reliable contact with ports worldwide.
...avel also shortened dramatically. Many established
...g their interests into rubber and palm oil plantations,
...g of the Johor Causeway in 1923 linking Singapore
...d and rail also gave trade a further boost. During the
...any merchants became multi-millionaires overnight.



I will see a heavy suitcase, which is known as a “wardrobe trunk”. I will also see an old western suit and coat – these were worn by men when they travelled in the past.



I will see a range of traditional outfits known as cheongsam and *baju Shanghai* that were worn by women in the 1910s and 1920s.



I will see high-heeled shoes in this showcase.
The smallest pair of shoes were known as
“golden lotuses”.

the 1900s. Previously, the roles of women were mainly in the home. In the 1920s, however, women were stepping out into public life. The "new woman" in Singapore coincided with similar trends in the rest of the world. In Britain, World War One brought women into the workforce as men had gone abroad to fight the war. In 1920, American women gained the right to vote. Closer to home, the collapse of the Qing dynasty in China now led the modernisation movement for overseas Chinese in Singapore.

Life in Singapore in the 1920s and 1930s through the lens of education. These included attending school, performing charity work, and participating in leisure activities. With the expansion of education in the 1920s, more found employment as clerks, teachers and even lawyers and doctors, careers previously reserved for men. Women also played a greater role in charity and welfare work. Tensions were instantly negotiated their new roles in society. Tensions were evident as matters related to female modesty, such as the wearing of swimwear, were contested in the "Women's Corner" of the press. Women were still expected to stop attending schools after marriage and going out without a chaperone was frowned upon.



This was the first uniform of the Singapore Chinese Girls' School in Singapore. The uniform consists of a pair of blue pants and a white top (known as a *samfoo*).

I will also see a school desk and chair that belonged to the Singapore Chinese Girls' School.



My teachers may also bring us to the Growing Up gallery.



On entering the gallery, I will see a coconut tree.
When I look up, I will also see some bright,
colourful books and a rocket.





I will see a hoop-throwing game. Children would throw the hoops over the bird images to gain points. The various birds represented different points, which were indicated next to their image.



I will see a selection of TOMY toys that were popular in the 1970s.



I will see a selection of wind-up toys which were popular with children before battery-operated toys existed. They had a spring that could be wound up to create movement.



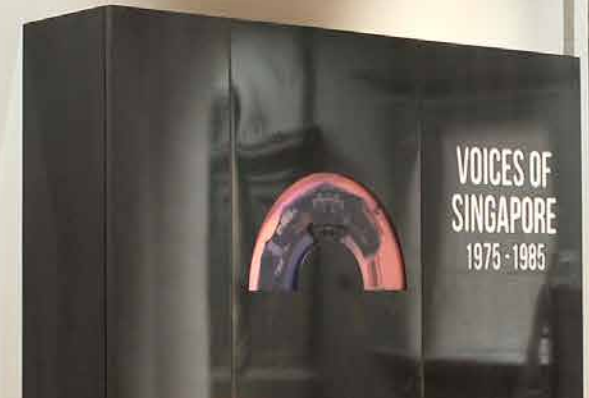
I will see a bicycle that belonged to Mr Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore. His paternal grandmother gave this bicycle to him for his 11th birthday.

This brand of bicycle was very popular in the 1970s.



I will see a sleeveless cheongsam that was commonly worn by teachers in the past. I will also see a school bag that was commonly used in the 1940s to 1970s.

VOICES OF SINGAPORE 1975-1985



Next, we may visit the Voices of Singapore gallery.



In this gallery, I will see a room that may be a little dark.
But I will remind myself that I should not be afraid as it is safe.
The room is filled with dazzling stars and cars.



I can sit in the cars and enjoy a film about Singapore, like how people in Singapore used to enjoy movies in the open-air drive-in cinema in Jurong.



At the end of our museum learning journey, my classmates and I will follow my teachers out of the gallery.



**We hope to see you soon
at the National Museum of Singapore!**

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