



SINGAPORE PORTRAITS

Let The Photos Tell The Story

Singapore Portraits is a tribute to some of Singapore's most creative personalities. It features the works of and interviews with local artists which together tell the story of Singapore through their words and images. Besides the paintings and photographs, write-ups detailing the background of the artwork, social and historical contexts and artist biographies are also included.

< for Secondary School Students >

Educators' Guide



Education and
Community Outreach Division

About The Exhibition

Generations of Singapore artists and photographers have expressed themselves through art that tells stories of about the nation, its history, people and way of life. This exhibition looks at how Singapore has inspired art-making and the stories art tells about Singapore.

Art in Singapore

Drawn by the prospect of work in the region's new European settlements, artists began to arrive here as early as the late 18th century. By the early 20th century, immigrant artists were forming art societies and the first school in Singapore, the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, was established in 1938.

Among the most significant artists from the pioneering generation were Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee, Liu Kang, Chen Wen His, Georgette Chen and Lim Cheng Hoe. They were instrumental in establishing the Nanyang Style, the first local art style that emerged in the 1950s. Their work influenced younger generations of artists who followed in their footsteps to explore fresh ways of expressing local identity and local relevancy through their art.



Take some time to share with students the importance of appreciating **Art and the Arts** that can help in their overall development.

Self expression is crucial for the development of students' identity and Art can help to promote that.

When students can freely express themselves, they can then begin to **explore their interests and strengths**. This helps them **think about who they are** and **who they want to be when they grow up**.

"Education serves to help students develop a keen awareness of their personal, social and cultural identity as well as deepen their appreciation of the diversity of cultures across their community and the world. Art and music are particularly suitable to nurture such qualities in our students."

Speech by Mr Heng Swee Keat, at the Art and Music Education Conference 2011

Art can enhance our sensitivities, enrich our lives, strengthen community bonding and move the society forward.

You can connect *Singapore Portraits* to your curriculum using these Key Concepts. The *Pulse, Places and People* sections of the exhibition contain insightful educational themes that are beneficial for students.



Key Concepts

1

The exhibition provides a platform for students to understand the importance of respect and acceptance of other races, religions or nationalities. Students should learn to fight against racial prejudice and stereotypes in order to avoid such racial riots in the 1950s from happening again. The diversity of ethnic cultures we enjoy today is the result of how ethnic traditions continue to be part of our everyday lives. The part that migrant workers played in Singapore also deserve acknowledgement. Of those who put down roots in Singapore, they have contributed towards shaping Singapore as the multi-racial and multi-cultural society we know today. Thus it is important for us to learn to accept one another and recognise each other's contribution to our nation. Educators can also explore with students on their personal stories about living in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society like Singapore.

2

Going through the stories of Places and People will also cultivate a sense of appreciation for our heritage. Students would feel a sense of pride learning about Singapore's heritage and better understand what is so special about our young nation. In tending to our roots, we maintain rootedness in our sense of identity and our cultural contributions to society.

3

The exhibition serves as a platform for students to appreciate and understand the concept of nation-building. Stories featured in this exhibition aim to show that Singapore has been through various stages of development to be what she is today. Educators can encourage students to share stories of what they know about kampong life or what they have heard from their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents. The stories in the exhibition portray the hard work that was involved in building a nation and the struggles our pioneer generation had to go through. Indirectly, students can learn about the values of resilience and perseverance to overcome challenges. Students can also think of what roles can they play in future development of Singapore.

4

These stories about traditions should encourage challenge students to talk to the older generation in earnest conversations. These stories on traditions can also spur conversation topics between the old and the young. This will provide educators with the opportunity to integrate knowledge sharing into the lesson to educate students on the importance of conversations with those who have lived through times different from us, to understand that they have a story to tell too!

5

From the exhibition, students can inculcate the habit of being responsible individuals and learn to care for the environment. The exhibition tells us the story of The Singapore River that was not always the clean and scenic waterway we know of today. The busy waterway was smelly and polluted due to heavy river traffic and years of accumulated wastes dumped in the river. It took more than ten years to transform the waterway into a pollution-free river. From this story, students can help to think of ways to keep the environment clean and green. Educators can also expound on the idea of being thankful for the clean and green Singapore that we have today and to continue showing care for our environment.

Some examples of stories about the different races highlighted in the exhibition:

Uniquely Chinese

The Chinese believe that a dragon boat or a mask is animated when its eyes are dotted, or filled in with black paint. Eye-dotting thus breathes the essence of life into otherwise inanimate objects.

Goh Beng Kwan, *Dotting The Eye*

Uniquely Indian

Hindu concept of creation and preservation through the perfect and indestructible union of two fundamental forces: the masculine and feminine principles traditionally embodies in the forms of the deity Shiva and his consort Sakti respectively. Unified in oneness, Shiva-Sakti manifests Visvayoni, the womb of the universe.

S. Chandrasekaran, *Visvayoni*

Uniquely Malay

Batik's wax-dye technique was first used in the 1950s to make modern batik paintings. Even though the process of making a batik painting is an elaborate and time consuming one, many artists quickly saw the medium's possibilities for creating works of modern art with a distinctively regional identity.

Jaafar Latiff, *Unspoken Dialogue*



pre-visit

Come Prepared

Review this guide prior to your visit to the exhibition. You may research for more information about Singapore's Heritage in terms of our history, our people and our ways of life.

Class Discussion

Before you visit the exhibition, let your students know that they will be able to learn about various Pulses, Places and People that influence the Singapore we see today. Read aloud the write up that can be found in the "About the Exhibition" page to your students and discuss the Key Concepts with your students.

Ask them to write down their thoughts in the **Pre-Exhibition Questions** space!
If you wish to discuss more, consider using these questions!

- What are some memories of Singapore that resonate with you?
- What is so unique about your race/ religion?
- Are you proud of the Singapore you see today?
- How has Singapore change from the past till today?

During the exhibition

Encouraging Students to Think!

Ask students to think about these questions:

- What can they do to preserve the historic places in Singapore?
- How can they forge better relationship with the diversity of people in Singapore?

A pre-visit

Before visiting the exhibition, write down your thoughts here!

What do you think Singapore Portraits Exhibition is about?

I think it is about



What do you hope to learn from the exhibition?

I hope to learn about



How do you feel about visiting this exhibition? Why?



Let your thoughts tell a story

B MY SINGAPORE...

From the artwork below, identify **ONE** structure/building/place that makes you very proud of Singapore.
Briefly describe how this structure/building/place is significant to Singapore.



Example:

The Singapore River- A busy waterway in the past. The river reflects the flourishing trading activities in Singapore.

Metropolis Singapore by Wong Keen

Name of Structure/Building/Place.	This structure/building/place is significant to Singapore because...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central Business District (CBD) 2. Suntec Singapore Convention Centre 3. Port of Singapore 4. Esplanade 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The centre of all commercial and financial activities. Some of the most prestigious companies, both local and international. Here we can find the impressive skyscrapers that are part of Singapore's beautiful skyline. 2. It has one of Asia's largest column-free space, in the form of multi-purpose convention halls. 3. Port of Singapore has played a significant role in the development of Singapore, helping the Republic become a first world economy in one generation. The maritime industry currently contributes significantly to Singapore's economy. 4. A world-class performing arts centre.

After going through the **Pulse Section** of the exhibition, pen down your thoughts in the space provided.

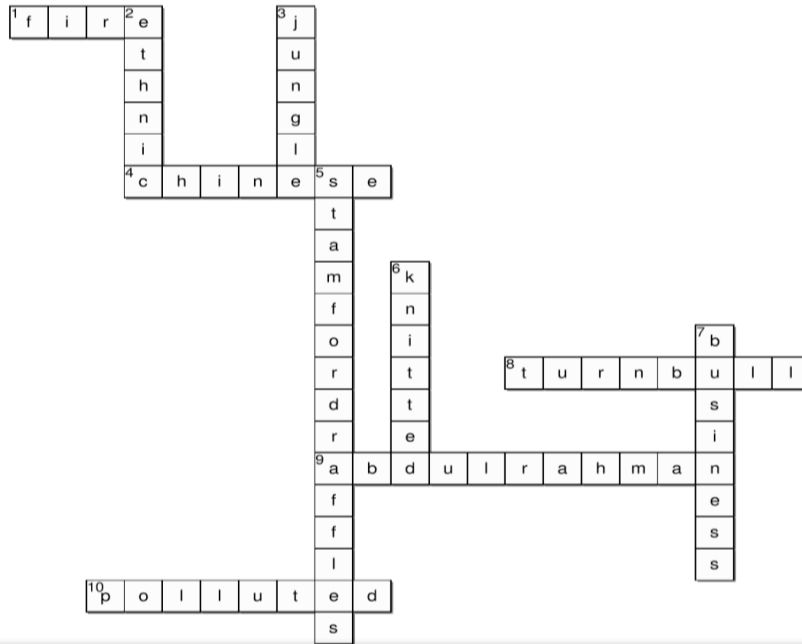
My favourite artwork is...

I like this artwork because...

STORY OF PLACES

Story of Places in Singapore

Places in Singapore tell stories about our nation, its history, people and ways of life. Complete the crossword below to find out more!



Down

2. Under the Town Plan, specific areas around the Singapore River were designated for _____ enclaves and for commercial and governmental activities. (**ethnic**)

3. Large areas of virgin _____ covered much of Singapore when Sir Stamford Raffles first arrived on the island in 1819. (**jungle**)

5. The river was where Sir _____ established the harbour that was the main port of call for merchant vessels. (**stamfordraffles**)

6. Kampong life is seen as one _____ in community interaction and sharing. Women do their chores together, neighbours stop to chat and children play by the river under the watchful eyes of older siblings. (**knitted**)

7. Around its banks, the Central _____ District and the Civic District converge to bring significance to the historic river. (**business**)

SG Portraits

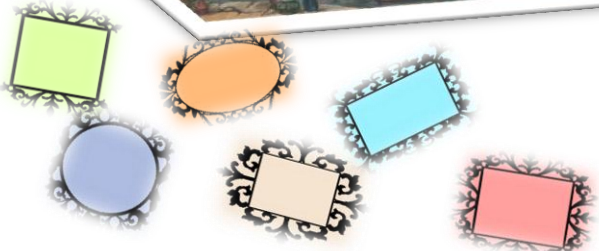
Across

- _____ hazards and poor sanitation were some of the major concerns of kampong dwellings. **(fire)**
4. In the Singapore River painting by Cheong Soo Pieng, you can spot the building with the distinctive Chinese-styled arched roof which is the former Overseas _____ Banking Corporation building on Chulia Street. **(chinese)**
8. The Thomson's Bridge was built in 1843 and named after John _____ Thomson, a British civil engineer who built the bridge and played an important role in infrastructural developments of early Singapore. **(turnbull)**
9. In the past, the Malay ruler of Singapore, Temenggong _____, lived at the mouth of the Singapore River with his followers in kampong Temenggong. **(abdulrahman)**
10. The Singapore River was not always the clean and scenic waterway. Until the late 1980s, the busy waterway was smelly and _____ due to heavy river traffic and years of accumulated wastes dumped. **(polluted)**

Lithographic Print: *View of Singapore River with Thomson's Bridge*
by Lieutenant Edwin Augustus Porcher



Painting: *Singapore River*
by Cheong Soo Pieng



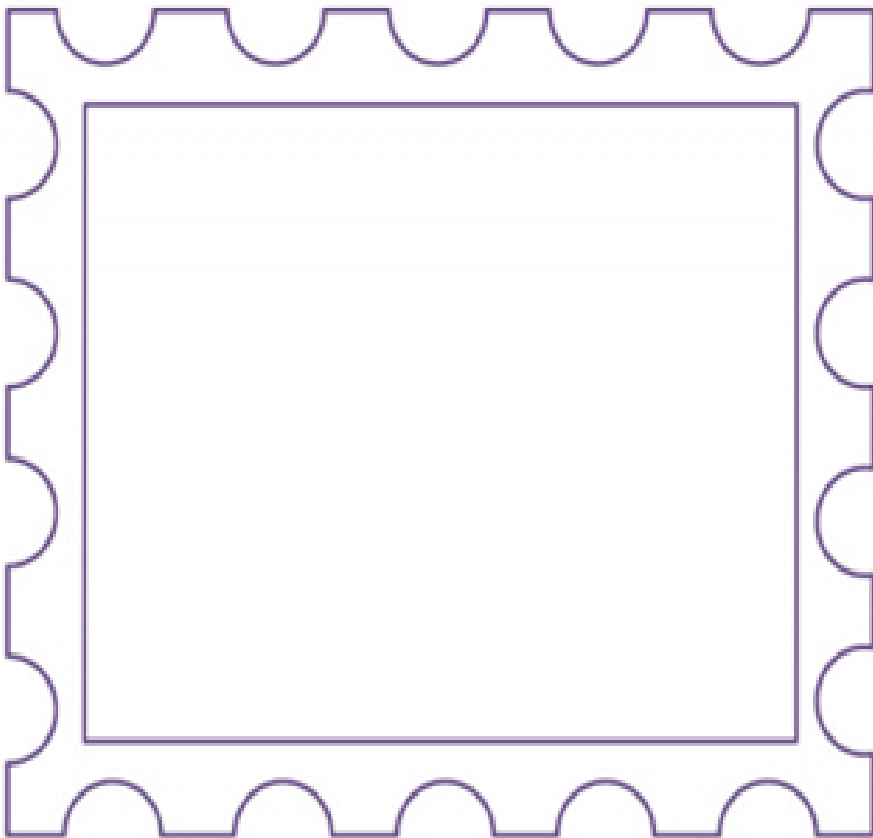
D MY HERITAGE STAMP

- Design your own stamp and feature a place in Singapore that you would want to commemorate.
- Explain why you choose to commemorate this place in the space provided.



These are stamps from a set of five titled 'National Day- Tourist landmarks' issued on 9 August 2007 to commemorate Singapore's National Day.

A Sketch of My Stamp Design



Why I choose this place?



IE TACKLING THE ISSUE...

In the **People Section** of the exhibition, woodcut prints by Choo Keng Kwang and Koeh Sia Yong were featured. The prints cast light on the hardship the poor endured. The artists make use of social realism to draw attention to unsatisfactory conditions under the British rule.

Example:

Hardship

In the past, poor families could not afford an education. They often worked hard to supplement the family income.



Solution:

Education system was nationalised and primary level schooling was made free to all.

- What is **one issue** that youth in Singapore are commonly facing today?
- Sketch out how you would present this issue.
- What can be done to help resolve this issue?

Issue:

1. Stress
2. Relationship problem
3. Low self-esteem
4. Bullying/ Aggression

Sketch:

Possible solution (s) to resolve issue:

1. Set priorities; set realistic goals;
2. Talk to an adult, friends or a counsellor; read self-help books
3. Develop hobbies that give you pleasure and which you can pursue independently; focus on strengths; make assertive decisions- parents/friends to provide affirmation
4. Report to a trusted adult or talk to a counsellor; share your feelings; learn to manage anger in a positive way



POST-EXHIBITION REFLECTIONS

One important value we can take away from this exhibition is **living in harmony**. Racial integration has shown us that friends, co-workers and fellow enthusiasts can share common values and interests to create meaningful histories.

Give 2 examples of things you should not take for granted. Explain why.

I should not take for granted

I should not take for granted

1

because....

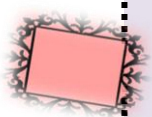
2

because....

**What was most memorable for you in this exhibition?
Draw and write in the space below!**

Congratulations for completing this Activity Sheet.

You are so marvellous!



IF POST-EXHIBITION REFLECTIONS

Think and Discuss these questions with your students!

Take some time in class to do either group discussions or as a mass class discussion to sum up the experience!

1. What were some of the things that you have learned from reading the panels? Try listing as many positive ideas as possible in the space given below.
2. Why do you think Singaporeans should remember our unique places even though they have evolved over time?
3. Do you think kampong life is more carefree than the life we have now?
4. In view of the multi-racial and multi-cultural Singapore, how can we overcome stereotypes?

Further Reading

In addition, you may wish to consider asking students to explore these websites to find out more! Do give students encouragement after they have completed the Activity Sheet!

To read up about other Singapore' Culture Heritage:

<http://www.yoursingapore.com/see-do-singapore/culture-heritage.html>

To read up about other Singapore's well remembered places that Singaporeans will enjoy:

<http://www.iremember.sg/>