

SECRETS OF SINGAPORE

NATIONAL MUSEUM



UNCOVERED BY

DANGER DAN & GADGET GIRL

ASSISTED BY

LESLEY-ANNE & MONICA LIM

“This book is a fascinating way to engage younger readers, to interest them in the history of Singapore, and is a resource that can help them learn about Singapore in a lighthearted yet informative way. Artefacts help to connect us with the past, and I like how they are presented in this book, with captivating stories that transform them from ordinary items in the museum to meaningful things that matter to us.”

—Irene Wong, history teacher

“A very comprehensive and interesting recounting of Singapore’s history from its earliest times, *Secrets of Singapore* is wonderfully written in a style that is exquisitely simple and appropriate for young readers.”

—Koh Boon Long, former MOE Deputy Director,
National Education, and retired principal

“What a wonderful book to teach children (and adults) about the history of Singapore! Danger Dan and Gadget Girl deliver so much information in a fun, humorous and interesting way with lively images and information about many of the artefacts in the National Museum. Parents, teachers and students will all want to have their own copy because it brings so much life into the fascinating history of Singapore. A visit to Singapore, and the National Museum, would be incomplete without this book!”

—Sarah Mounsey, teacher librarian at Dulwich College
and children’s book author

**SECRETS OF
SINGAPORE
NATIONAL MUSEUM**



written by
Lesley-Anne & Monica Lim
illustrated by
Elvin Ching



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Also by Monica Lim
The Good, the Bad and the PSLE

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of Singapore**

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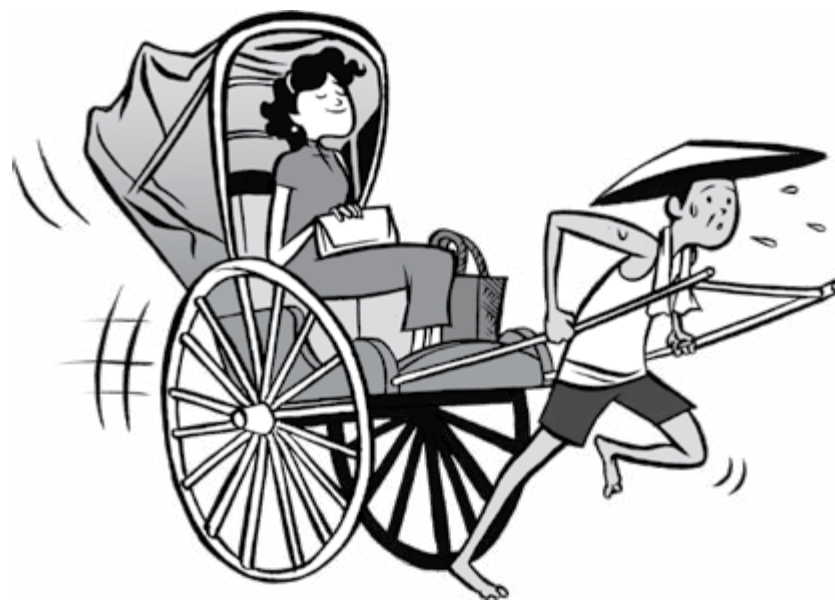
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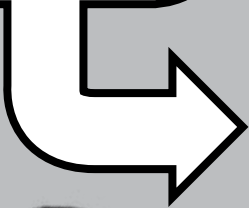
First Edition

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In this book, superhero duo Danger Dan and Gadget Girl explore the exciting National Museum and uncover the secrets behind its many artefacts...





Arty facts? You mean like these?



No! An artefact is a man-made object from the past that tells us how people lived. From the clothes people wore to what they ate and the type of work they did—artefacts help us understand what life was like at different times in history.



Oh, so it's like travelling back in time!

Yes, but since not everyone can time travel like we can, they'll just have to go to the National Museum instead.



Okay, then! We can be their tour guides. I saw some really cool stuff... like a mosquito coil as big as my ear, a walkie-talkie as big as my **face**, and a bell as big as **I AM!** And a horseman that had **NO HEAD!**

All right, all right, Danger Dan, we get it! The museum is an exciting place. Let's start the tour!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The National Museum of Singapore contains lots of cool artefacts, which we refer to as **Awesome Artefacts** in this book. Apart from artefacts, the museum sometimes recreates settings or items to help visitors better understand or experience the past. We call these

★★★★★ **MUSEUM MARVELS** ★★★★★

Go on a treasure hunt at the museum and find all the Awesome Artefacts and Museum Marvels! If you can't spot them and need extra clues, check the List of Exhibits on pages 124 to 126.

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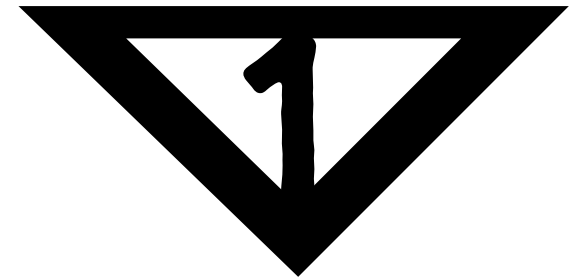
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SECTION



The Real Lion King

Sang Nila Utama and the Kingdom of Temasek

If you're like most people, you probably thought that before Raffles founded Singapore in 1819, it was just a sleepy fishing village. Well, you couldn't be more wrong!

Historians believe that Sang Nila Utama, a prince

from Sumatra, first came to Singapore in 1299 when it was still known as Temasek. While hunting, he spotted an animal with an orange body, a black head and a white chest. His Chief Minister said it was a lion, but he was clearly mistaken because there have never been any lions in Singapore. What he saw was probably a tiger but that, too, is puzzling because Sang Nila Utama would have been familiar with tigers. It's anyone's guess what he really saw!



Sang Nila Utama named the city “Singapura”, which means “Lion City” in Sanskrit. He ruled

Singapura for 48 years and even had a palace built on top of Bukit Larangan (today’s Fort Canning Hill). Bukit Larangan was considered a holy and royal place in Hindu-Buddhist mythology, so maybe he built a palace there to show everyone that he was god-like!

Singapura in the 1300s was a mighty kingdom. It was a very important port for the trading ships that sailed through the Malacca Straits. And these weren’t just ordinary ships! Some of them carried very important visitors from ancient Asian empires, such as Mongol envoys looking for elephants, and ambassadors paying tribute to the grand Malay royal court at Bukit Larangan.

AWESOME ARTEFACTS

1

Classic Chinese blue and white porcelain pieces found along the Singapore River suggest that Singapore was already trading with China in the 1300s! Looks like this sunny little island had the makings of a trading hub even back then.



The source of life in the city was a spring on Fort Canning Hill. It supplied fresh water for the people and the ships that anchored in the harbour.

AWESOME ARTEFACTS

2

A stash of fancy gold jewellery was dug up at Fort Canning in 1928. It included a pair of earrings and an armlet with a design that is typically found in Javanese temples from the 700s to 1400s. Experts believe these are evidence that Javanese royalty lived in this area.

Dug up at Empress Place was a lead figurine of a Javanese rider on a winged horse. This was the first lead statue found from that ancient period in Southeast Asia. Interestingly, he seems to be missing something—his head!



Hey, a headless horseman!

Sang Nila Utama died in 1347. Some believe that he was buried at the foot of Fort Canning Hill. Maybe if you go there at night, you'll catch a glimpse of his ghost.

Just kidding!

After Sang Nila Utama, Singapura was ruled in turn by four kings. But Singapura's glory didn't last long! It was overrun by invaders around 1375 and there was a mighty battle. According to the *Malay Annals*, an ancient text of the Malay Golden Age, "blood flowed like a river". Singapura's last king, Iskandar Shah, fled to Melaka where he founded the Melaka Sultanate.

For the next 300 years, Singapura continued to be an important port but after that, it declined in significance. When Raffles showed up in 1819, it had become a small fishing village with some agricultural activity, and the ancient kings of Temasek were only mystical folklore.

The *Malay Annals*, or *Sejarah Melayu*, is one of the most important written sources of Malay history from the 1300s to 1500s. It records tales of Malay royalty and events, including the discovery of Singapura.

Badang the Bold

One of the legends recorded by the *Sejarah Melayu* was that of Badang—a poor man who was granted supernatural strength by a genie. As fame of his strength spread as far as India, the ruler of India sent his kingdom's strongest man to Singapura to duel with Badang.

The last test in a series of matches was a rock throwing contest. Badang's rival could only lift the rock to his knees. **Pfft!** Badang grasped the colossal rock, heaved it over his head and flung it into the sea.

SPLASH!

The enormous rock landed near the mouth of the Singapore River, where it became known as the Singapore Stone.

A-stone-ishing!

Are you off to a rocky start?



The Badang story may only be a folk tale, but the Singapore Stone is rock solid reality! A three-metre-tall sandstone boulder once stood by the mouth of the Singapore River, near where the Fullerton Hotel stands today. In 1819, the rock was discovered by a group of sailors hired by Master Attendant Captain Flint. They were spooked by the ancient inscriptions on the rock.



Hey, Flint's stone! Yabba dabba doo!

In 1843, the British military blew up the Singapore Stone to build a sea wall around Fort Fullerton. You can see a slab of the Singapore Stone at the museum. To this day, nobody has been able to figure out what the inscriptions mean!



He Came, He Saw, He Conquered

Raffles and the Founding of Singapore

You probably know that it was Sir Stamford Raffles who founded Singapore. But how did it happen and why did he choose Singapore?

You see, back in the 1800s, much of the trade in the Malay Archipelago (roughly Malaysia and Indonesia today) was controlled by the Dutch. They didn't want to share their power with any other Europeans and allowed other European ships to trade only in Batavia, Java.

This made the Dutch very rich! But it also made the other Europeans unhappy (because they all wanted to be rich too).

Ka-ching!

List of Exhibits

AWESOME ARTEFACTS

No.	Exhibits	Gallery	Pg.
1	Blue-and-white porcelain (14th century)	Singapore History – Singapura	3
2	Gold earrings and armlet (14th century) / Lead figurine (14th century)	Singapore History – Singapura	4
3	<i>Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)</i> , 19th century)	Singapore History – Singapura	6
4	The Singapore Stone (10th-14th centuries)	Singapore History – Singapura	8
5	Malay cannons (1800s)	Singapore History – Singapura	12
6	Orang Laut traps (20th century)	Singapore History – Singapura	13
7	Letter from Sir Stamford Raffles to Colonel Addenbrooke (10 June 1819)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	18
8	View of Singapore from Mount Wallich (1856)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	20
9	Silver epergne (1824)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	23
10	Gambier knife (20th century)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	27
11	Secret Societies	Singapore History – Crown Colony	29
12	Gramophone (c1910)	Modern Colony	31
13	Table telephone (Early 20th century)	Modern Colony	31
14	Trunk (1930s)	Modern Colony	32
15	Women's shoes (Late 19th century to 1920s)	Modern Colony	33
16	John Little & Co. advertisement poster (c1910)	Modern Colony	34
17	Anchor from the RMS <i>Empress of Asia</i> troopship (1940s)	Singapore History – Syonan-To	44
18	Changi Prison cell door (1930s)	Singapore History – Syonan-To	45
19	<i>The Sook Ching: A purge of the Chinese</i>	Singapore History – Syonan-To	48
20	Set of propaganda postcards (1942-45)	Surviving Syonan	49
21	<i>Konan Saiken</i> lottery tickets (1942-45)	Surviving Syonan	50
22	Cigarette tin (1940s) / Food ration card (1944-45)	Surviving Syonan	51
23	Hundred-dollar notes / Ten-dollar notes / One-dollar notes (1942-45)	Surviving Syonan	53
24	Elizabeth Choy's clothing (1940s)	Singapore History – Syonan-to	54

25	Force 136 button compass (1940s)	Singapore History – Syonan-to	55
26	<i>5-1-3</i> (1954)	Singapore History – Singapore	61
27	David Marshall's pipes and pipe stand (1970s)	Singapore History – Singapore	63
28	Police shield (1950s–1960s) / Police pistol holder (1950s) / Police baton (1950s) / Police radio (1960s)	Singapore History – Singapore	65
29	Police turret bell (1950s-1960s)	Singapore History – Singapore	66
30	Lee Kuan Yew's barrister robe (1950s)	Singapore History – Singapore	71
31	"Majulah Singapura" flexidisc (1959)	Singapore History – Singapore	72
32	Promotion of Malayan culture	Growing Up	77
33	Personal belongings of S. Rajaratnam (1970s)	Singapore History – Singapore	82
34	"Orchid" series of Singapore currency notes (1967) / Malaysia, Singapore passports and Singapore restricted passports (1965-67)	Singapore History – Singapore	83
35	William Oh's national service uniform (1969)	Singapore History – Singapore	84
36	Mosquito coil boxes, Star Lion brand (1960s) / Box used to contain school chalks, Penguin brand (1960s)	Singapore History – Singapore	86
37	Setron radio (late 1960s to early 1970s) / Setron television set (late 1960s to early 1970s)	Singapore History – Singapore	90
38	Group of Kodak film containers (1985) / Polaroid Colorpack 80 (1970s)	Voices of Singapore	91
39	<i>Tikam-tikam</i> (A Game of Chance) (c1950s)	Growing Up	92
40	Group of theatre programme books, tickets and postcards	Voices of Singapore	93
41	Branch from the first tree planted by Dr Goh Keng Swee at the first Tree Planting Day in 1971 (1990)	Singapore History – Singapore	97
42	Rickshaw (late 19th century)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	100
43	Bricks (19th century)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	101
44	Blacksmith and carpentry tools	Singapore History – Crown Colony	102
45	Night-soil bucket (1900s)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	103
46	Ola leaf scroll (1890s)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	104
47	Hand-sewn cloth cash bag (1940s)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	105
48	<i>Amah samfoo</i> and slippers (1930s) / Set of possessions typically owned by <i>amahs</i> (Ceramic pillow) (1930s)	Modern Colony	106
49	Revere Bell (1843)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	108
50	Portrait of Sir Shenton Whitelegge Thomas (1939)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	109

List of Exhibits

★★★★★ **MUSEUM MARVELS** ★★★★★

No.	Exhibits	Gallery	Pg.
1	Raffles Town Plan (Floor map design next to "Early Travellers")	Singapore History – Crown Colony	27
2	The Japanese Army on the March	Singapore History – Syonan-to	40
3	Type 95 Ha Go Japanese tank (Replica)	Singapore History – Syonan-to	41
4	HDB kitchen	Singapore History – Singapore	87-88
5	Drive-in cinema	Voices of Singapore	95
6	Scent: Polluted Singapore River	Singapore History – Singapore	98
7	Reproduction Photograph of the first batch of Queen's scholars (c1893)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	111
8	Audio Drama Set (next to "Eunos Abdullah")	Singapore History – Crown Colony	112
9	Reproduction photograph of Tan Kah Kee (1930s)	Singapore History – Crown Colony	113

LEVEL
1 » SINGAPORE
HISTORY
GALLERY

LEVEL
2 » MODERN
COLONY
GALLERY

»
SURVIVING
SYONAN
GALLERY

»
GROWING
UP GALLERY

»
VOICES OF
SINGAPORE
GALLERY

"What a wonderful book to teach children (and adults) about the history of Singapore! Danger Dan and Gadget Girl deliver so much information in a fun, humorous and interesting way with lively images and information about many of the artefacts in the National Museum."

—Sarah Mounsey, teacher librarian at Dulwich College
and children's book author

IN *SECRETS OF SINGAPORE: NATIONAL MUSEUM* DANGER DAN AND GADGET GIRL TAKE A PEEK BEHIND THE PILLARS OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM TO SEE WHAT SECRETS THEY GUARD.

AND WHAT A TREASURE TROVE!

FROM WAY BACK TO THE TIME OF SANG NILA UTAMA RIGHT UP TO MODERN DAY SINGAPORE, THE SUPERHERO DUO UNEARTH CURIOUS

ARTEFACTS SUCH AS A HEADLESS HORSEMAN FIGURINE FROM THE 1300s, AND BANANA MONEY (NOT MADE FROM ACTUAL BANANAS) FROM THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION.



IN EXPLORING THE MUSEUM, DANGER DAN AND GADGET GIRL DISCOVER THAT THE MUSEUM ITSELF HIDES A CURIOUS PAST. IT WAS ONCE LOCATED IN A SCHOOL (RAFFLES INSTITUTION, NO LESS!), AND SOME OF THE MORE UNUSUAL GIFTS IT RECEIVED INCLUDED AN ELEPHANT AND A TIGER. LUCKILY, THEY WERE DEAD. OTHERWISE, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN CHAOS AT THE MUSEUM.

JOIN DANGER DAN AND GADGET GIRL ON AN ADVENTURE THROUGH THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AND WATCH HISTORY COME TO LIFE RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES! *#EPIC THROWBACK*



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