

Welcome to this starter pack—a guide to help you organise your very own *Brown is Redacted: Reflecting on Race in Singapore* book club. Here's what you can find on this page:

- I. Discussion questions from selected chapters to help you get started
- II. Book Club etiquette

I. CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. What was something new or unexpected you learned from this chapter?
2. What was your most important takeaway from this chapter?
3. What was your favourite passage in the chapter?
4. How did you feel while reading this chapter?

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“Brown Is Haram” by Kristian-Marc James Paul and Mysara Aliaru

“Brown is Haram: Genesis, Gesture and Gestalt” by Nabilah Said

1. What do you think of the title *Brown Is Haram*? What are its different implications?
2. Nabilah writes that there seems to be a “feeling like there was soon to be a radical shift in the air”. How have conversations about race in Singapore changed, if at all? How do you see these conversations evolving in the future?
3. What is the role and ethics of discomfort in socially-conscious art and stories?
4. What is the difference between a performance-lecture and creative non-fiction? What are their similarities? How does a work like this being performed live differ from it being read on the page?

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“Doubly minoritised: Indianness in Singapore and xenophobia as racism” by Laavanya Kathiravelu

1. How do Laavanya's arguments around race and citizenship relate to other entries in this anthology?
2. A concept that is related to Laavanya's essay is the idea of 'passing', where an individual of one social group is accepted or perceived ('passes') as a member of another. How does 'passing' work in relation to race in Singapore? More specifically, how does 'passing' work in relation to the arguments Laavanya brings up about citizenship? How do people 'pass'? Why do some people 'pass' better than others?

3. Laavanya discusses “the rising “anti-CECA” sentiment” in Singapore. How has this sentiment emerged? What are the bigger socio-political structures that produce and reproduce this sentiment?
4. What aspects of ‘Indianness’ are not explored in this anthology, and in Singapore more broadly? What questions do you have about these aspects?

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“Illegitimate” by Danielle Kaur

“Curry Corner” by Prashant Somosundram

1. How does Danielle’s entry explore the dynamics of minority race experiences? What are some terms that come to mind when reading her entry?
2. How does the role of ‘Mother Tongue’ in Singapore’s education system affect, shape and influence the construction of race in Singapore?
3. How do Prashant and other writers explore the relationship between sexuality, queerness and brownness?
4. Prashant discusses his “love-hate relationship” with select spaces in Singapore. What love-hate relationships do you have in Singapore? How do you navigate these relationships?

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“Senang Diri” by raihan

““Thank you for sharing this”: Social media as a pedagogical tool for anti-racist activism and critical consciousness” by Paul M. Jerusalem

1. How does race relate to National Service?
2. Discuss the implications of the ‘model minority’. What does this stereotype reproduce? Why do some people buy into this stereotype?
3. What is the role of social media in anti-racist activism in Singapore? What are its strengths and limitations?
4. What spaces of alternative education exist in Singapore? How can and should these spaces be constructed? What does your ideal alternative education environment look like?

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“Kita dah cukup manis? (We are sweet enough?): Resisting the bitter pill of racialised health framing on the Malay community” by Hazirah Mohamad

““A better tomorrow”: An interview with ashisdead, the rapper, the reject, the reflection” by Muhammad Ashyur

1. What aspects of your daily life, outside of food, are altered by your identity? Are any of these aspects reinforced by Singapore state policies, like Hazirah outlines in her article?

2. Hazirah discusses the importance of *Both Sides, Now* in engaging dialogue. What do you think are the most important principles in engaging in multicultural dialogue?
3. What are the aims of incarceration in Singapore? Do you believe in its objectives? Why or why not?
4. Ash discusses how music becomes his outlet for his story. What is your medium of expression? If you don't know, what do you think it could be? What would you like to try?

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Further Reflections

1. Was there anything unexpected that you learned or experienced from reading *Brown is Redacted*?
2. How do you think a creative non-fiction approach to discussing race is different from a more traditional, academic approach? What is the relationship between non-fiction and fiction in *Brown is Redacted*?
3. What do the different chapter headings, *within*, *without*, *being* and *choice* mean to you? How do the entries within each chapter speak to each other?
4. What questions about race in Singapore are you left with after reading *Brown is Redacted*?
5. Where will your learning journey go after this? What has *Brown is Redacted* prompted you to explore?
6. The book is not intended to be an encyclopedia of facts but an anthology of experiences. What perspectives would you include in your own version of *Brown is Redacted*?

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II. BOOK CLUB ETIQUETTE

Thank you to Group Reading Committee and Kei Franklin for helping to craft this section! Here are some tips to help you organise your book club:

- **Establish a workable schedule:** Decide as a group how frequently you'd like to meet to talk about the book.
 - You could read the whole book together (e.g. 1-2 chapters every week/month);
 - Or, you could read specific chapters based on an agreed theme/topic;
 - Or, you might want to join a public reading group that is currently reading the book, and follow their schedule.

Deciding upon the level of commitment and schedule beforehand can help maximise engagement for all members of your book club.

- **Before the book club:** We recommend assigning someone in your group to facilitate the discussion. Most successful book clubs have a clearly defined ‘host’—someone who can take the lead and direct the flow of conversation. The host can provide a general overview of the chapter/book, share discussion questions, and help to focus the conversation. This will make the session more engaging and meaningful.
- **During the book club:**
 - You might want to begin with some simple warm-up questions. If you have new members, introduce yourselves (name, age, favorite animal, pronoun, why they’ve joined the session, etc.). Do a Check-In by asking everyone to describe how they are feeling that day—you can be creative by inviting people to use colors / textures / types of weather to describe how they’re feeling, rather than emotions. A good book club is also a fun social space.
 - At the first session, you may want to collectively agree on some discussion guidelines, which will help the space be inclusive and safe for all participants. Some suggested guidelines are:
 - Avoid using discriminatory language. (If you’re not sure if something sounds discriminatory, it probably is.)
 - Avoid using difficult or inaccessible words and concepts. If you feel that certain terms are useful but it’s possible that not everyone knows or understands them, explain them.
 - Agree that it is OK to ask for clarifications and that is also OK to make mistakes—we avoid shaming individuals for any reason.
 - We agree to speak from our own perspective, rather than attempting to represent the opinion of a larger group or anyone else.
 - As a ‘host’, try and be aware of group dynamics. Pay attention to how much space any one individual is taking up. Try to balance out who is speaking, and provide openings for different people to contribute to the discussion. You can also include this in your discussion of group guidelines (e.g. We agree to ‘share the mic’).
- **At the end of each book club session:** We recommend doing a Check-Out—ask everyone to share how they feel, or any final thoughts they might have.
- **Considerations for online book clubs:** If you’re holding your book club online, here are some extra tips for you.
 - Pick a convenient time so that folks from other time zones can join!
 - Mute audio when not speaking
 - For hearing people, the use of hand signs can be really useful to convey information to each other, without having to interrupt the speaker. Plus they’re fun! [There are many hand signs you can use, and this video \(Signs #2, 4, 10 & 11\) is a good example of what we mean!](#) Feel free to come up with your own unique hand signs, and test them out before you start the discussion.

- Have fun with virtual backgrounds (related to the topic or not)



You can purchase a copy of *Brown is Redacted: Reflecting on race in Singapore* [here](#).

Thank you to Kristian, Mysara and Yan for helping us develop this starter pack!