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Historical Investigation: The Importance of Process over Product in the Historical Discipline

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Abstract

Since its inception in 2014, Historical Investigation (HI) has been an integral part of the lower secondary history syllabus. However, some history educators have found the process to be extremely tedious and many would rather opt for direct instruction or to undertake a simplistic version of HI. This article looks at why HI remains essential to the teaching and learning of history as a discipline and why teachers should place emphasis on "the process" rather than simply on "the product" when designing HI.

Introduction

How would we describe a student's understanding of history? When we first step into a history classroom, we usually hear these typical responses to the question "What is history?" – that it is a study of the past, a study of dead people, a boring and useless subject, and so on. For the average thirteen or fourteen-year-old student in Singapore, knowledge about history as a field of study is often thought of as learning facts and figures from key historical events. Owing to the proliferation of information in this digital age , some may even be able to recite the historical events they know of such as the Japanese Occupation, World Wars, Holocaust and surprise us with the tiniest details we may even not be aware of. However, history is not simply about seeking, and subsequently repeating, content information.

Students' lack of knowledge about the subject as a discipline can be worrying as they are likely to grow up with the idea that history is simply about knowing significant events and not much else about what makes the subject a distinct form of knowledge. Beyond knowing the content, students also should be made aware of 1) why and how events or personalities are deemed significant in history, 2) how the stories they read in some of their history textbooks came about, 3) the diverse range of perspectives and the evolving narrative that comes with each new piece of evidence, 4) the reasons behind why and how historical actors made certain decisions, 5) the complexity of local, regional and global connectedness, and 6) the necessity for constant reflection and reexamination of the past in light of new ideas and circumstances.

Similarly, Historians reconstruct knowledge about the past by using and interpreting available evidence, and it is through this process of historical inquiry that they are able to tell us how societies came into being and how they have developed over time. Therefore, historical inquiry is to History, what empiricism is to the natural sciences. As a method of disciplined inquiry, Historical Investigation (HI) is essential to the teaching and learning of history . While the HI process can be tedious and tiring to plan and execute,

students are likely to acquire important understandings about the subject when given the opportunity to actively undertake the entire inquiry process.

Historical inquiry and the teaching of history in school

As history educators, we have been content to tell stories about the past and to have students tell them back to us in essays, projects and skits (Seixas & Morton, 2013: p. 3). An informal discussion with a number of teachers in the service revealed that they dislike the subject due to memories of memorization and regurgitation of facts and figures that were forgotten after the examinations. Parents also have developed such misconceptions. This can be seen in the many emails that were sent to exasperated history teachers asking them "what should their child memorise for the history exam?" Some also complained about the seemingly meaningless projects that students have to do in order to achieve a commendable grade. Such misconceptions about the subject may have been formed by our own experiences in school, where the lack of focus on historical skills and competencies have led to somewhat deficient understandings of history as a subject and a discipline.

Since its inception in 2014, Historical Investigation (HI) has been an integral part of the lower secondary history syllabus and remains so in the 2021 syllabus (MOE, 2021). However, some history teachers have found it to be a chore due to the need to scaffold and guide students through the different HI stages, which include the unpacking of the inquiry question, asking questions, gathering and selecting sources, examining selected sources, and the presentation of the group's conclusion (as the end product). It does come across as an extremely tedious process given that students have to carry out research and apply their historical skills to construct responses to a historical issue. Needless to say, history teachers have had to play a large part in guiding students throughout this entire process. This which can be very draining and, hence it is not surprising to hear of many teachers opting for direct instruction or having students pursue a simplistic version of HI. Rather than getting students to gather and select sources on their own, and to engage in the process of discovery learning through inquiry, schools seemed satisfied with providing students with a set of curated sources having them focus on the presentation or delivery of the end-product (2021). It may appear ironic but by rebuffing the entire HI process, it seems that we are negating the aim or purpose of why we want students to undertake a historical inquiry in the first place. Can we actually say that we are teaching "history" when it is apparent that we are ignoring the fundamentals and practice of the discipline?

The Greek word for history is ἱστορία, which directly translates to "historia", which means investigation or inquiry (Joseph & Janda, 2008). History "when it is done properly is not a body of knowledge to be learned - it is a discipline in which historians take what is left behind from the past and try to build the most faithful and reliable account of what they think happened" (Churchill Archive for Schools, n.d). Marwick defines it as "the bodies of knowledge about the past produced by historians, together with everything that is involved in the production, communication of, and teaching about that knowledge" (Marwick, 2001). In a way, the compulsion to emphasize content coverage (for the purpose of preparing for national examinations) over the development of discipline skills and competencies may serve to deny students opportunities to thoroughly engage in history and a proper study of the past. Clearly, understanding history as a discipline is best achieved by getting students to learn about past events via an inquiry-approach, especially one that is properly designed to allow students

toconduct an investigation of the past through an analysis and interpretation of available evidence. As Marwick (2001) explains:

Training in history is training in analyzing, evaluating, and interpreting both secondary and primary sources. It develops an understanding that everything written pertaining to history, secondary or primary, must be approached with skepticism and caution. It develops the ability to distinguish between pieces of writing which are well-substantiated and logical, and those which simply express theory, hypothesis, or opinion. The skills and learning outcomes rising from historical study are invaluable in a contemporary world which is dominated by information and communications.

Giving students a more genuine experience and getting them acquainted with the nature of the discipline means allowing them to engage in the process of "doing history" (Levstik & Barton, 2015). This may involve students going through the process of finding and using primary sources to address challenging questions of historical interpretation (Sipress and Voelker, 2009). This is not to suggest that students should be expected to "do history" in the same way or at the same level as that of historians but that they should – at the very least – undertake the process of historical inquiry or investigation. HI in schools, essentially, is an extended learning experience that offers students opportunities to apply their historical knowledge and skills to form responses to an authentic historical issue. It provides students with the opportunity to gather and explore a range of sources – artefacts, written, pictorial and oral, beyond what they are exposed to in the classroom. It allows them to engage actively in investigating primary and secondary sources that form the basis of what we know about Singapore's past.

As Seixas and Morton (2013) argued, a predominant problem with history education is that it does not place much emphasis on historical thinking and the skills involved in historical practice. In an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, there is a rising value placed on the humanities and liberal arts vis-à-vis that of traditional STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education. Through the studying of humanities subjects, students may be guided to deal with complex local and global issues and to appreciate diverse experiences. Dealing with complex problems also can expose students to various ways of thinking, analysing and questioning as many educators have concurred (Humanities Texas, 2018). As mentioned by MIT Professor Malick Ghachem, history can help to solve today's issues (O'Neill & Hiestand, 2017) and there is value in using an inquiry approach to the teaching of the discipline.

If we hope to engage students with learning experiences that centre on the historical discipline, the creation of a learning environment that is similar to the work of historians may be necessary. Of course, this requires careful thought and planning. Teachers and students would first need to be acquainted with the nature of the historian's craft and the necessary skills that allow them to engage in historical work. Subsequently, they would need to design assessment tools and pedagogical practice that are in line with what historians actually do. Poch & Yousuf (2017) offers a reasonable explanation:

In a macro sense, many historians describe their work as problem solving guided by active questioning. That is, questions are posed; sources and facts are collected, critically read, contextualized, and organized; and, an interpretation of the past is formed while recognizing that the complexities of history defy easy explanations. Whenever possible,

historians utilize primary sources to form their own interpretations rather than relying mostly on the interpretations of other historians.

HI – if properly conceived and implemented – lends itself neatly to the design of this authentic experience.

Historical Investigation at Beatty Secondary School: How it was done

The planning for HI started at the end of Term 4 in 2020, in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 situation. As learning journeys for large groups were not allowed, there was a need to re-think and re-design the approach. Given strict safe management measures, it would be difficult to bring students out to museums or the national archives to hunt for the sources that they need. After much thought and research, it was decided that *Chapter 5: Did the Japanese Occupation change the way people viewed Singapore?* was a suitable inquiry topic that could engage the students in investigation and research. Generally, the period when Singapore was under Japanese Occupation is perceived as the most exciting chapter of the Secondary Two History syllabus, or Singapore history in general, by students and teachers alike. This may largely be due to the affective nature of the topic and the visually compelling sources that can be used in the classroom. A brief but important period in our nation's history, the event forced people to think hard about Singapore's political future. It was thought that such a topic would appeal to students so much so that they would be more willing to dig deeper into this part of Singapore's history. Furthermore, as the Former Ford Factory had also launched a virtual tour *http://www.nlb.gov.sg/exhibitions/virtual/fff360/FFF360.html* (National Library Board) of the museum, this lent itself nicely to the entire project as students can embark on a virtual learning journey to consolidate their learning for this chapter. Not only did this NHB virtual tour helped save manpower and resources, it allowed the teacher to focus on more important aspects of HI. i.e. the process of gathering and examining sources.

Stage 1 – Unpacking the Inquiry Question

The historical inquiry question that was set for the Express classes was "Did the Japanese Occupation change the way people viewed Singapore?" while the Normal Academic classes worked with the question "How were people's lives in Singapore affected by the Japanese Occupation?". The teacher guided students in identifying the key terms, time frame and historical concept implicit in the question (see Figure 1 and 2) and students were subsequently given some time in class to brainstorm possible areas for exploration. For the Express students, they may choose to explore how these views – 'British as rulers of Singapore', 'Singapore as Home', or 'Singapore as an Impregnable Fortress' have changed over time while the Normal Academic students were given a choice to explore various aspects of life ranging from employment to governance or living conditions during the Japanese Occupation. These inquiry questions are intended to not only develop their understanding of this period of Singapore's history but also to introduce them to what the concept of change and continuity mean in the history discipline. Students will investigate the question through examining a set of sources and be in a position to observe trends in people's ideas across different time periods.

Figure 1. Sec 2 Express HI question

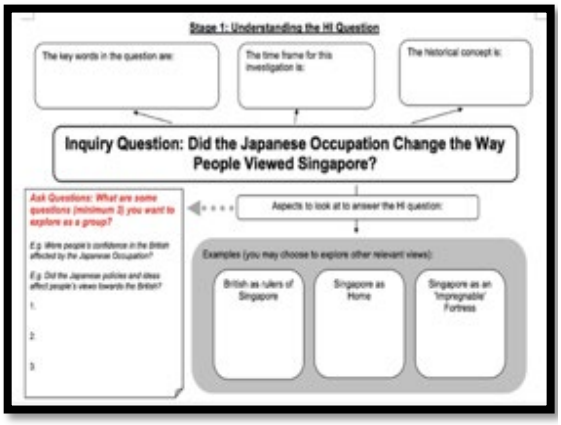
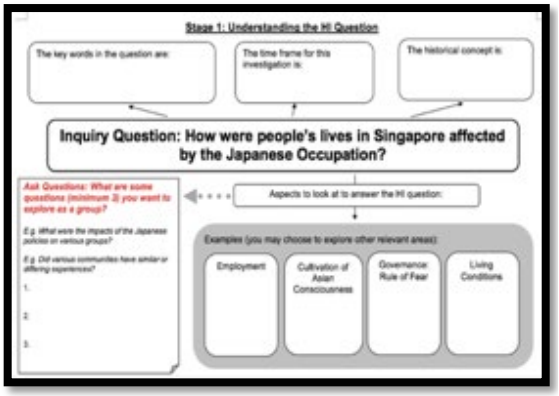


Figure 2. Sec 2 Normal Academic HI question



Stage 2 – Gathering evidence

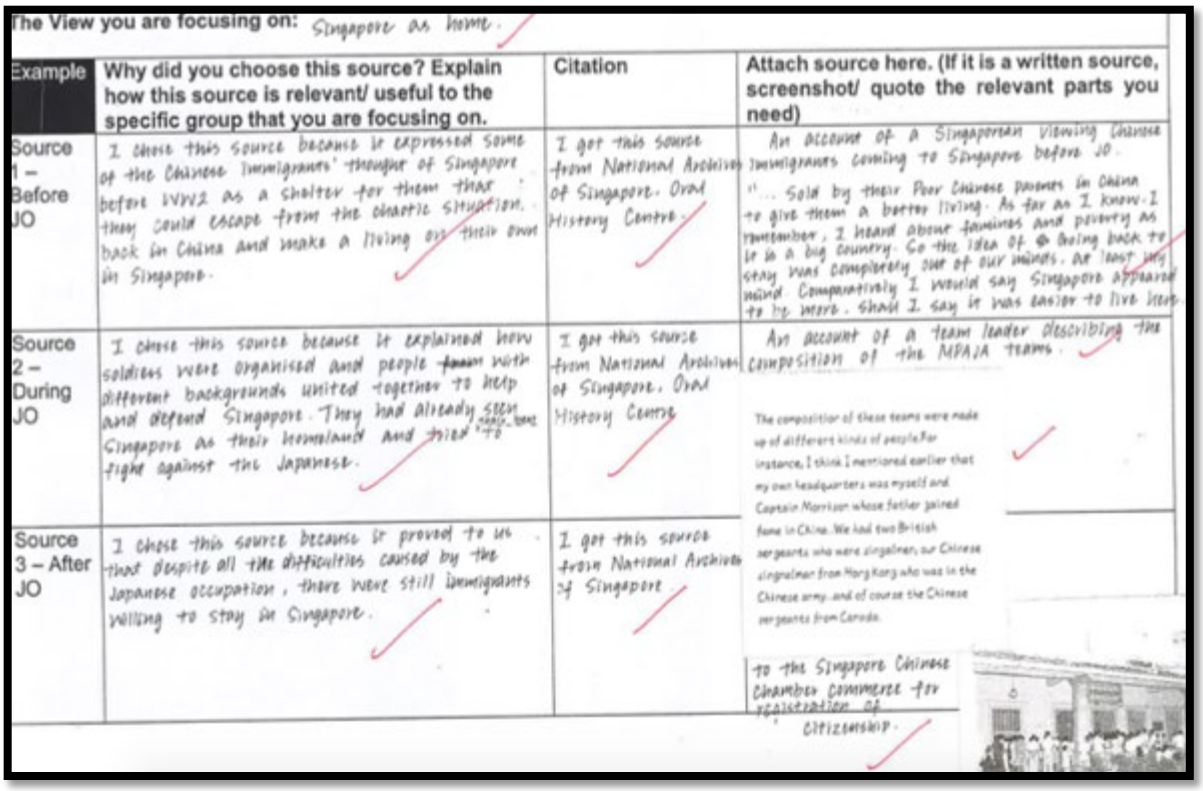
Instead of curating a set of sources for the students to choose from (which was previously done in Secondary 1), students had to go through the carefully-designed task of gathering and selecting relevant materials to support their chosen view. Each student was asked to collect two sets of sources, with each set reflecting the view *Before*, *During* and *After* the Japanese Occupation. Students also must ensure that the set of sources should include one pictorial source and one oral history interview. This stage of the historical investigation required students to plough through libraries, old newspapers, government records, oral histories and the archives for primary sources, similar to the work that historians do. This is essentially the crux of the project – to develop research skills in a student. This meant going through the process of a detailed investigation into an area of study and involves the ability to search for, extract, evaluate and critically analyse information. However, most students do not know where to start and tend to fall back on Wikipedia or the first web link that pops up on their google search which may or may not be reliable.

To make the task a little less daunting, the teacher guided them on how to use websites like Archives Online and NewspaperSG to facilitate the research process. It was inevitable that students found the research process challenging and many faced obstacles in the selection of sources. Not only were they expected to look for primary sources, they had to ensure that the set of sources clearly demonstrated the changing views of the people. To further support the process, students were encouraged to bring the sources they have found to class so that the teacher could guide them on the selection of relevant and useful sources that can be used to answer the HI question. The students responded well to the task and most did well in completing their research tasks and found the sources they needed (see Figures 3 to 5). Some of them were already responding to the questions that were raised during Stage 1 and making astute observations about the kind of sources they needed to pick in order to address the HI question. However, there were also students who faced difficulties at this stage and merely looked for sources that falls into the before, during and after time period without considering the concept of change or how the set of sources selected relate to each other. For example, the first source selected (before JO) would portray the belief in British superiority, the second (during JO) would show Japanese military might, and the third (after JO) involves citizens demanding for rights. At this point, the teacher would provide qualitative feedback and guiding questions

to help these students get back on track. One should recognize the value of this process of gathering and rejection of irrelevant data as it allows students to question and critically think about the kind of information they should be collecting. It also allows them to understand how they can make comparisons across a given time period by finding a set of criteria they can use to find out whether a change has taken place.

The research process and level of support given was no different for the Normal Academic students (see Figure 6). They too, were raising interesting questions about the differences between the various aspects of life and whether a source can be used. For example, a source that portrays frequent arrests and interrogations by the Japanese can be used as evidence to support the use of fear as a method of governance by the Japanese or to portray the type of living conditions people had to experience. Some students even questioned if this was the process historians had to go through when crafting their history textbook. From this experience, it was clear that the research process is most essential in getting students to recognize aspects of the historians' craft, from questioning to the selection of data, and is a stage that teachers should not detach from the HI process.

Figure 3. Student A's work on the view 'Singapore as Home'



The View you are focusing on: Singapore as home.

Example	Why did you choose this source? Explain how this source is relevant/ useful to the specific group that you are focusing on.	Citation	Attach source here. (If it is a written source, screenshot/ quote the relevant parts you need)
Source 1 – Before JO	I chose this source because it expressed some of the Chinese immigrants' thought of Singapore before WW2 as a shelter for them that they could escape from the chaotic situation back in China and make a living on their own in Singapore.	I got this source from National Archives of Singapore. Oral History Centre.	An account of a Singaporean viewing Chinese immigrants coming to Singapore before JO. "... Sold by their Poor Chinese parents in China to give them a better living. As far as I know, I remember, I heard about famines and poverty as it is a big country. So the idea of going back to stay was completely out of our minds. At least my mind. Comparatively I would say Singapore appeared to be more. Shall I say it was easier to live here.
Source 2 – During JO	I chose this source because it explained how soldiers were organised and people with different backgrounds united together to help and defend Singapore. They had already seen Singapore as their homeland and tried to fight against the Japanese.	I got this source from National Archives of Singapore. Oral History Centre	An account of a team leader describing the composition of the MPAJA teams.
Source 3 – After JO	I chose this source because it proved to us that despite all the difficulties caused by the Japanese occupation, there were still immigrants willing to stay in Singapore.	I got this source from National Archives of Singapore	The composition of these teams were made up of different kinds of people. For instance, I think I mentioned earlier that my own headquarters was myself and Captain Morrison whose father gained fame in China. We had two British sergeants who were singalmen, our Chinese singalman from Hong Kong who was in the Chinese army and of course the Chinese sergeants from Canada. to the Singapore Chinese Chamber commerce for registration of citizenship.

Figure 4. Student B's work on the view 'Singapore as Impregnable Fortress'

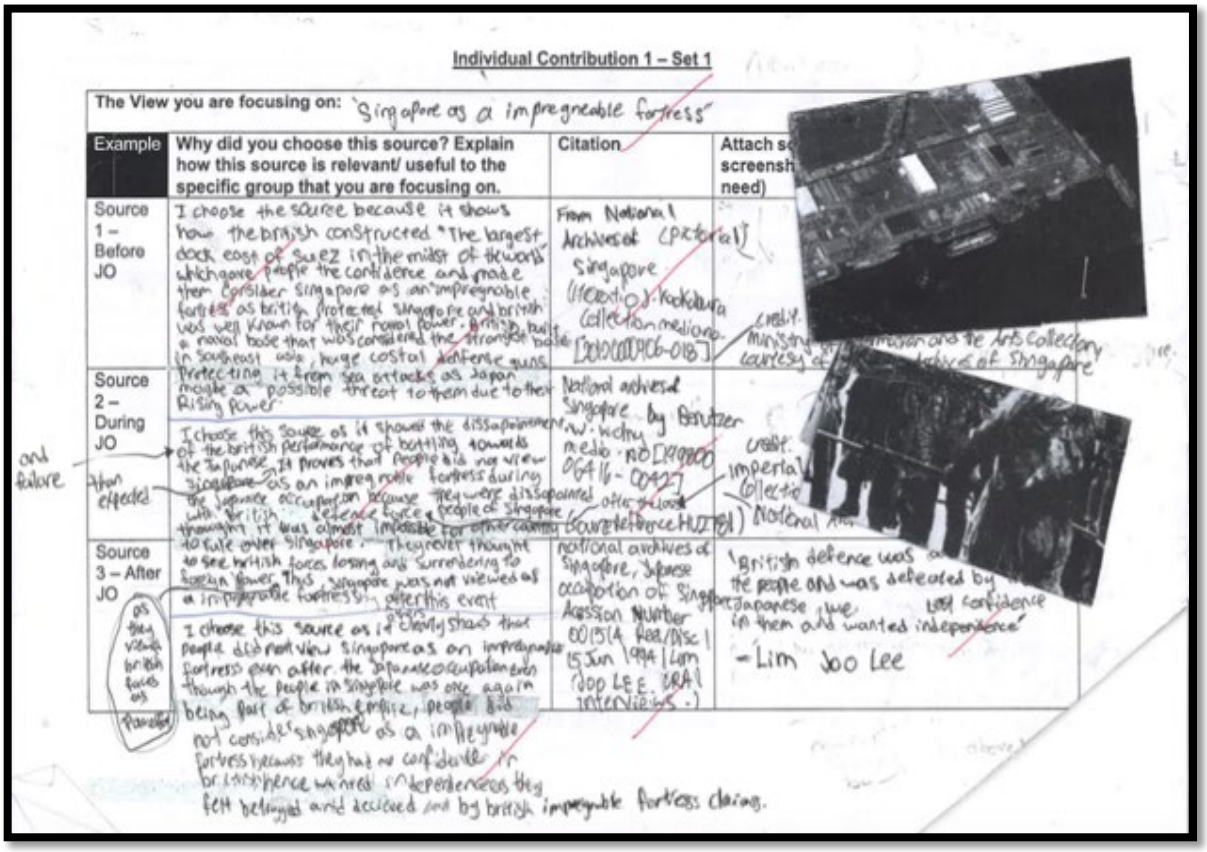


Figure 5. Student C's work on the view 'British as Rulers'

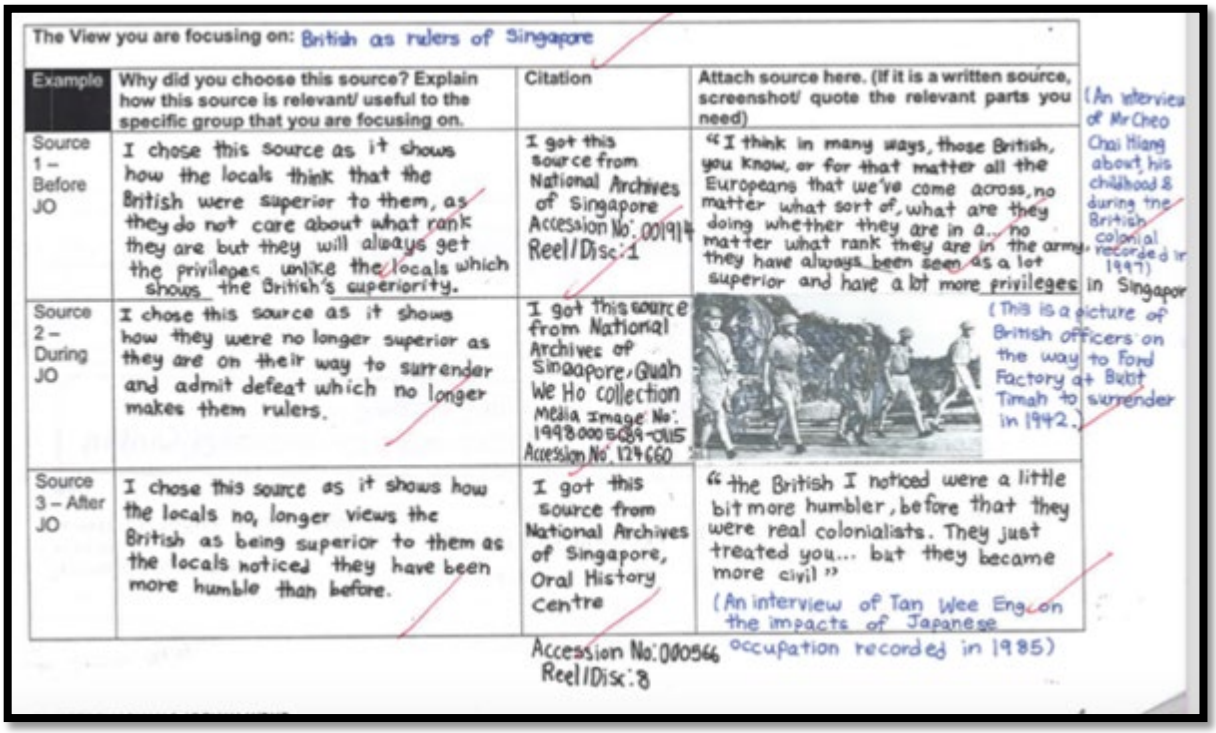
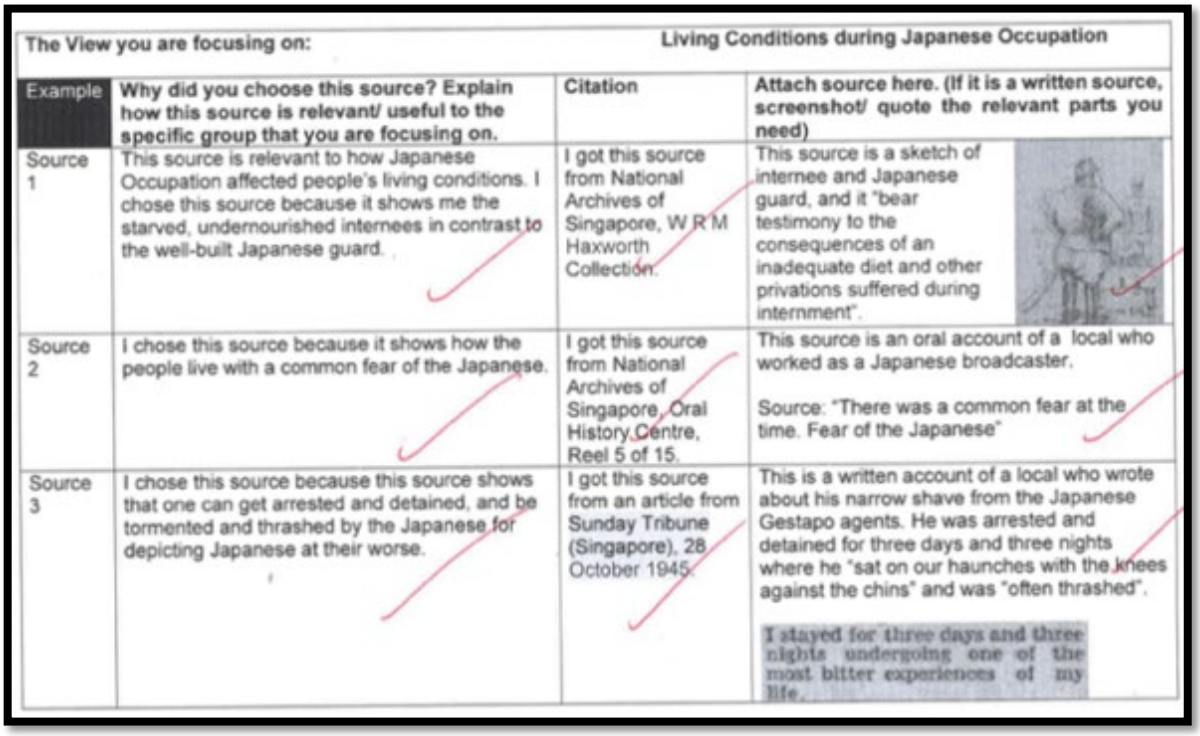


Figure 6. Student D's work on Living Conditions during JO



The View you are focusing on:		Living Conditions during Japanese Occupation	
Example	**Why did you choose this source? Explain how this source is relevant/ useful to the specific group that you are focusing on.**	**Citation**	**Attach source here. (If it is a written source, screenshot/ quote the relevant parts you need)**
Source 1	This source is relevant to how Japanese Occupation affected people's living conditions. I chose this source because it shows me the starved, undernourished internees in contrast to the well-built Japanese guard.	I got this source from National Archives of Singapore, W R M Haxworth Collection.	This source is a sketch of internee and Japanese guard, and it "bear testimony to the consequences of an inadequate diet and other privations suffered during internment".
Source 2	I chose this source because it shows how the people live with a common fear of the Japanese.	I got this source from National Archives of Singapore, Oral History Centre, Reel 5 of 15.	This source is an oral account of a local who worked as a Japanese broadcaster. Source: "There was a common fear at the time. Fear of the Japanese"
Source 3	I chose this source because this source shows that one can get arrested and detained, and be tormented and thrashed by the Japanese for depicting Japanese at their worse.	I got this source from an article from Sunday Tribune (Singapore), 28 October 1945.	This is a written account of a local who wrote about his narrow shave from the Japanese Gestapo agents. He was arrested and detained for three days and three nights where he "sat on our haunches with the knees against the chins" and was "often thrashed". I stayed for three days and three nights undergoing one of the most bitter experiences of my life.

Students were also required to provide accurate references to their sources so as to give credibility to the information that was being presented. Students were also informed that doing so would ensure that the sources can be easily traced and authenticated. As can be seen in the citation column in Figures 3 to 6, students were required to provide the Accession Number and the Reel/ Disc number for oral history interviews. Media-Image numbers and the Collection in which it was from also had to be properly referenced. For old newspapers, the title of the paper, date, page number and microfilm reel number were expected information to be included. While students do not have to present their work in APA or MLA citation format, it is important to teach students about citations being part of the research process and that it is essential to give credit the source of information as they were someone else's intellectual property.

Stage 3 – Examining and interpreting selected sources

After which, students were tasked to analyse and evaluate the sources that they had collected, to see if these can help serve as evidence to help them address the inquiry question. During this stage, students were given the opportunity to apply the source-based case study skills they have learnt by making valid inferences. These were subsequently graded based on their analysis and explanation of the sources (see Figures 7 to 12). Most of the students were able to make pick out the relevant parts of the source as evidence and use them to make accurate inferences to address the inquiry question. Some even went further to explain the concept they had to explore such as what constitutes a 'home' or when the idea of 'home' started to form. Others also demonstrated their understanding of the concept of 'British superiority' and how the changes in the British actions after the war is related to this belief as can be seen in the explanations of

the sources. This stage of the process taught students how to read sources closely in its historical context so as to help them understand what happened in the past.

Figure 7. Student's analysis on the view 'Singapore as Home' before JO.

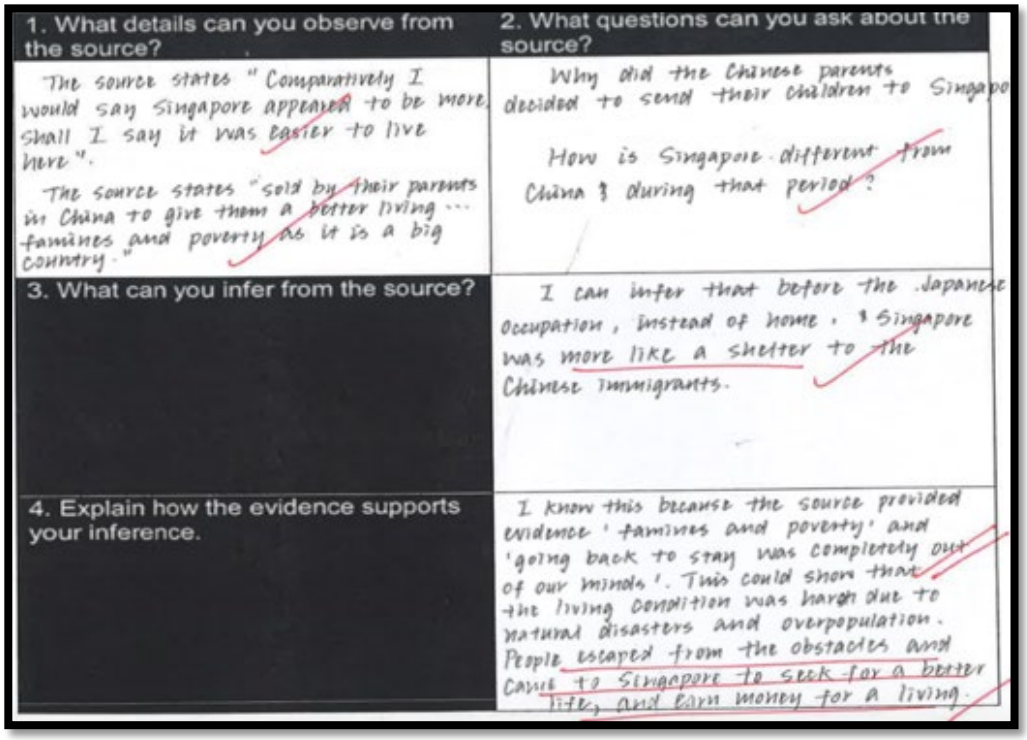


Figure 8. Student's analysis on the view 'Singapore as Home' during JO.

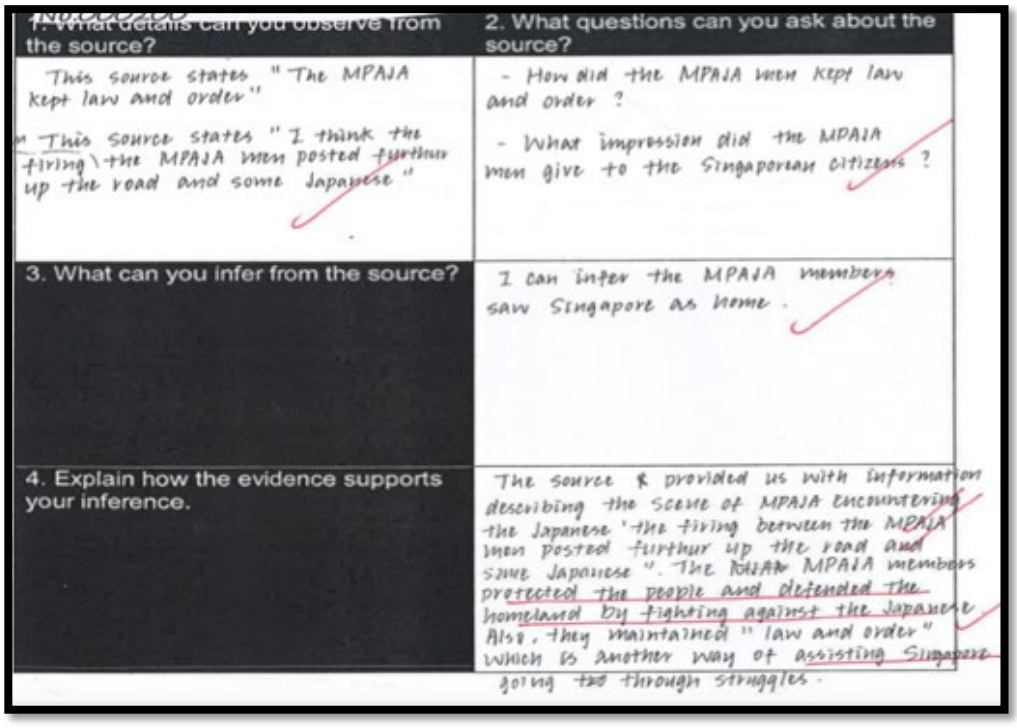
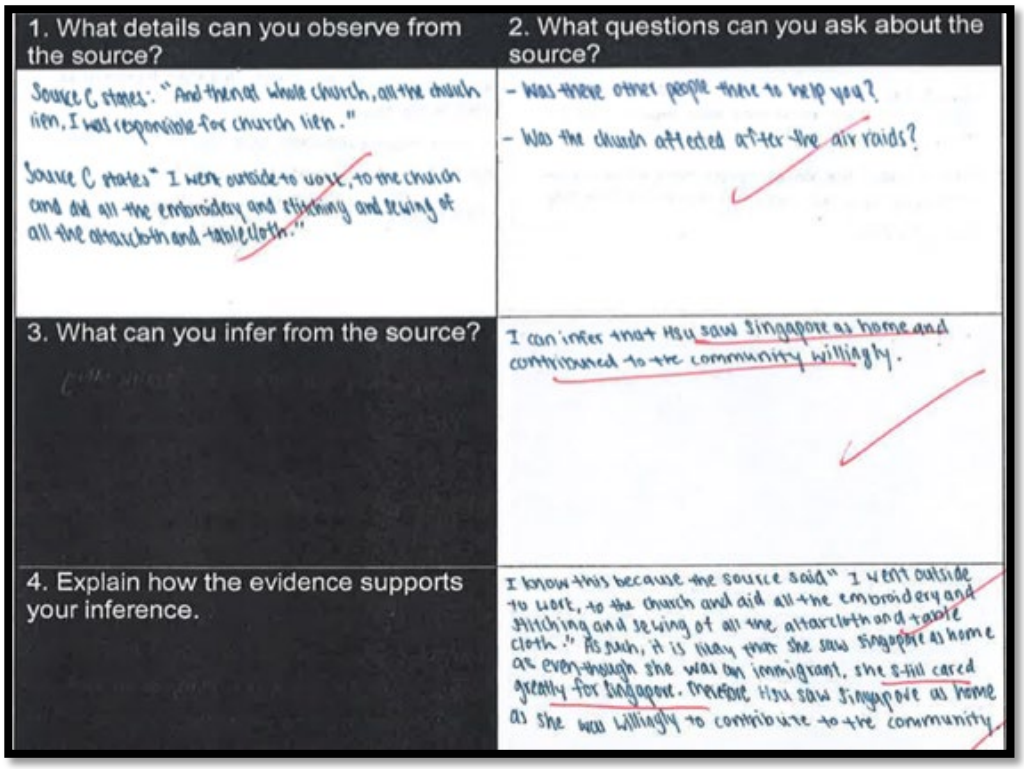
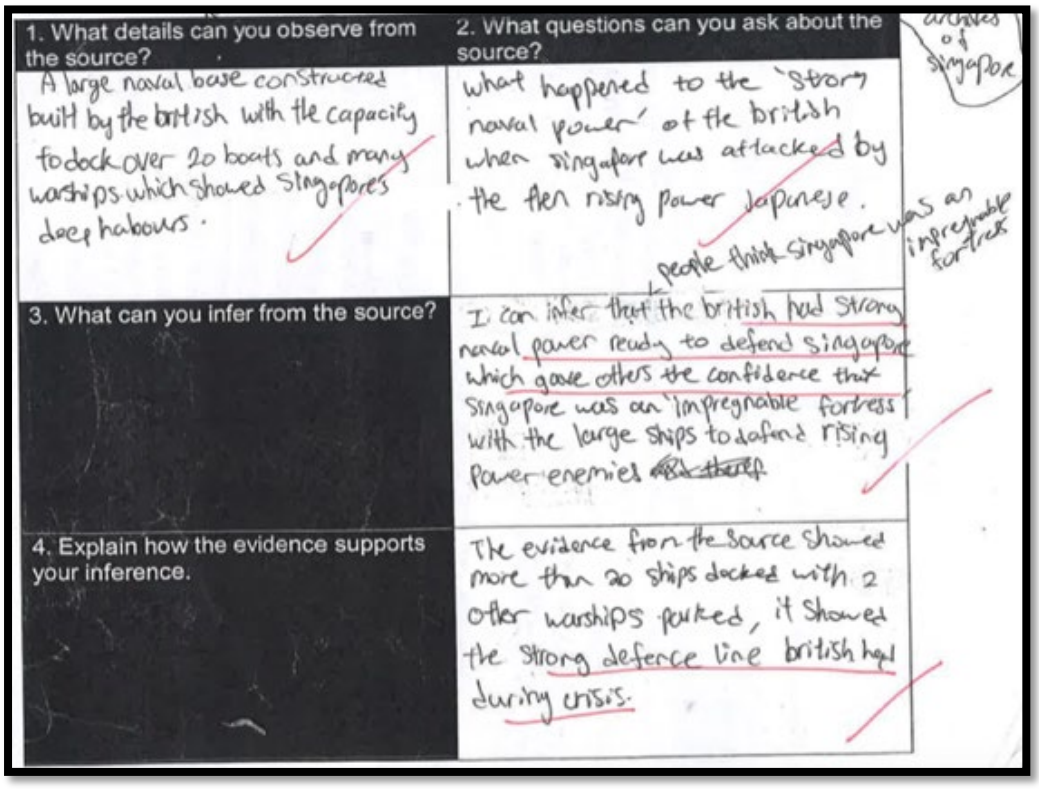


Figure 9. Student's analysis on the view 'Singapore as Home' after JO.



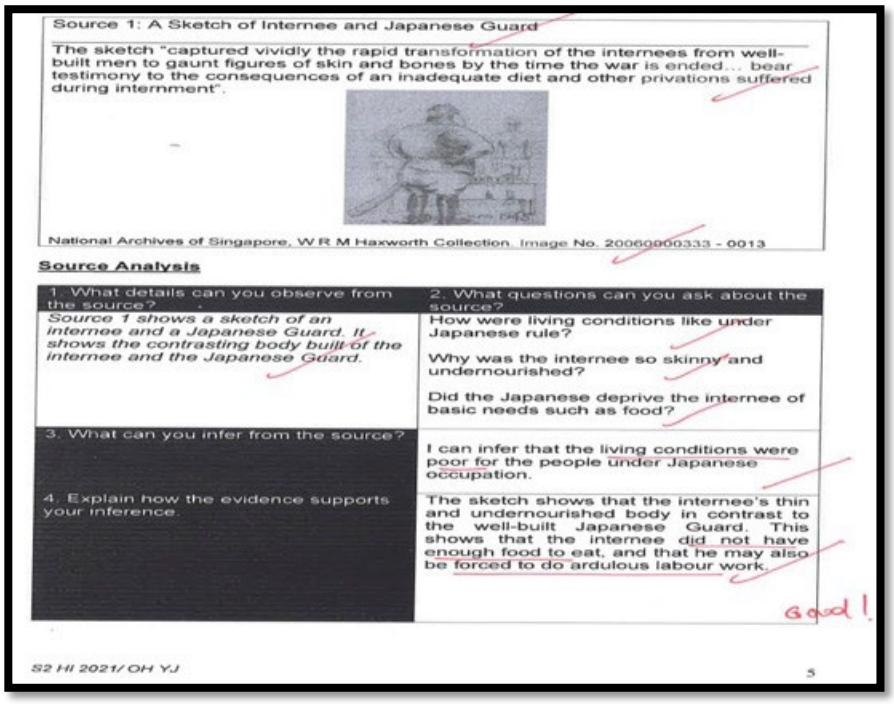
1. What details can you observe from the source?	2. What questions can you ask about the source?
Source C states: "And then at whole church, all the church item, I was responsible for church item." Source C states" I went outside to work, to the church and did all the embroidery and stitching and sewing of all the altarcloth and table cloth."	- Was there other people there to help you? - Was the church affected after the air raids?
3. What can you infer from the source?	I can infer that Hsu saw Singapore as home and contributed to the community willingly.
4. Explain how the evidence supports your inference.	I know this because the source said" I went outside to work, to the church and did all the embroidery and stitching and sewing of all the altarcloth and table cloth." As such, it is likely that she saw Singapore as home as even though she was an immigrant, she still cared greatly for Singapore. Therefore Hsu saw Singapore as home as she was willingly to contribute to the community.

Figure 10. Student's analysis on the view 'Singapore as Impregnable Fortress' before JO



1. What details can you observe from the source?	2. What questions can you ask about the source?
A large naval base constructed built by the British with the capacity to dock over 20 boats and many warships which showed Singapores deep habours.	what happened to the 'strong naval power' of the british when singapore was attacked by the then rising power Japanese. people think singapore was an impregnable fortress
3. What can you infer from the source?	I can infer that the british had strong naval power ready to defend singapore which gave others the confidence that Singapore was an 'impregnable fortress' with the large ships to defend rising Power enemies ~~attack them~~
4. Explain how the evidence supports your inference.	The evidence from the source showed more than 20 ships docked with 2 other warships parked, it showed the strong defence line british had during crisis.

Figure 11. Student's analysis on the aspect of Living Conditions during JO



Source 1: A Sketch of Internee and Japanese Guard

The sketch "captured vividly the rapid transformation of the internees from well-built men to gaunt figures of skin and bones by the time the war is ended... bear testimony to the consequences of an inadequate diet and other privations suffered during internment".

National Archives of Singapore, W R M Haxworth Collection. Image No. 20060000333 - 0013

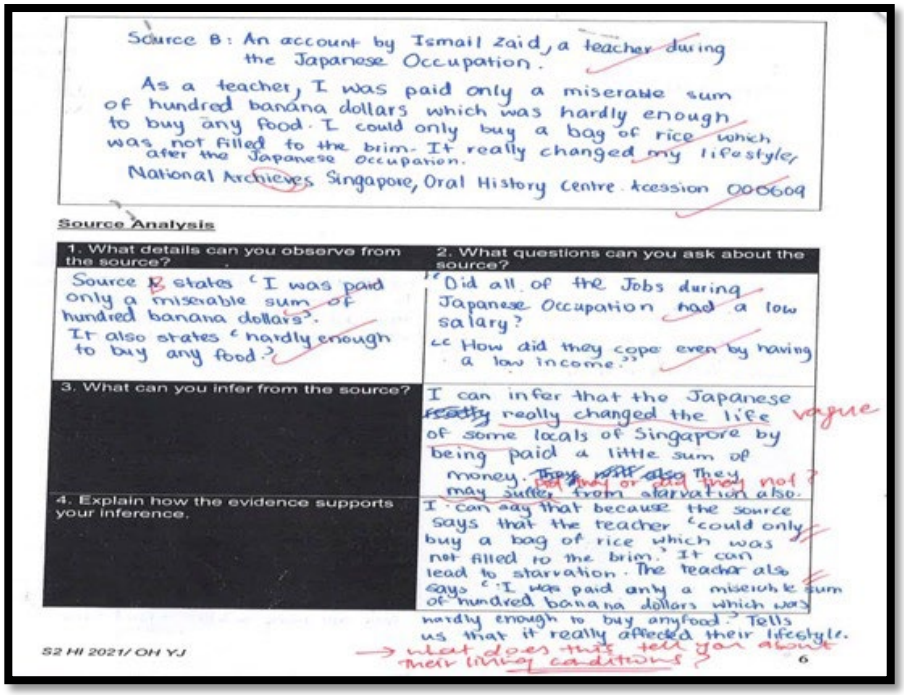
Source Analysis

1. What details can you observe from the source?	2. What questions can you ask about the source?
Source 1 shows a sketch of an internee and a Japanese Guard. It shows the contrasting body built of the internee and the Japanese Guard.	How were living conditions like under Japanese rule? Why was the internee so skinny and undernourished? Did the Japanese deprive the internee of basic needs such as food?
3. What can you infer from the source?	I can infer that the living conditions were poor for the people under Japanese occupation.
4. Explain how the evidence supports your inference.	The sketch shows that the internee's thin and undernourished body in contrast to the well-built Japanese Guard. This shows that the internee did not have enough food to eat, and that he may also be forced to do ardulous labour work.

Good!

S2 HI 2021/ OH YJ 5

Figure 12. Student's analysis on the aspect of Living Conditions during JO



Source B: An account by Ismail Zaid, a teacher during the Japanese Occupation.

As a teacher, I was paid only a miserable sum of hundred banana dollars which was hardly enough to buy any food. I could only buy a bag of rice which was not filled to the brim. It really changed my lifestyle, after the Japanese occupation.

National Archieves Singapore, Oral History Centre Acession 000609

Source Analysis

1. What details can you observe from the source?	2. What questions can you ask about the source?
Source B states 'I was paid only a miserable sum of hundred banana dollars'. It also states 'hardly enough to buy any food.'	"Did all of the Jobs during Japanese Occupation had a low salary? "How did they cope even by having a low income."
3. What can you infer from the source?	I can infer that the Japanese really changed the life of some locals of Singapore by being paid a little sum of money. They may also suffer from starvation also. (vague)
4. Explain how the evidence supports your inference.	I can say that because the source says that the teacher 'could only buy a bag of rice which was not filled to the brim.' It can lead to starvation. The teachar also says 'I was paid only a miserable sum of hundred banana dollars which was hardly enough to buy any food.' Tells us that it really affected their lifestyle. → what does this tell you about their living conditions?

S2 HI 2021/ OH YJ 6

Stage 4 – Consolidating and communicating group's conclusion

At the last stage of the HI process, students were required to consolidate and communicate their findings as a team. Every member would have constructed a response to the HI question, with each providing two sets of sources as evidence to describe the changing views of the people in Singapore. Taking into account all the individual members' research, the Express students were divided into working groups to craft a museum exhibition to showcase how the Japanese Occupation shaped the way people viewed Singapore (see Figure 13 to 16). The exhibits included a selection of the team's best 9 sources with clear annotations and labels for the Secondary Two cohort and teachers who would be viewing the exhibit. Similarly, the Normal Academic students had to put up their exhibits as a class and show how the Japanese Occupation affected various aspects of people's lives in Singapore. The end product was designed as exhibits to make up for these students' lack of opportunity to visit a museum due to the ongoing health situation. Through the exhibition, it was hoped that students can encounter an authentic experience of visiting a space that preserves and provides lessons based on the collective stories of their predecessors.

Students were eager to share their work with their peers and quickly launch into a rigorous discussion on the selection of group's sources and how they can best present them. Some even came up with creative ways such as the use of old newspapers as a backdrop design to bring an authentic feel to the sources or the use of train tracks as a design to present the concept of change and continuity as well. The thought and effort that was put into the design of the end product showed how the students understood the concepts of historical evidence and change and the importance of presenting historical perspectives in an engaging manner to educate the public.

Figure 13. Students designing the end product

Figure 14. Students designing the end product

Figure 15. Group's end product Sample A

Figure 16. Group's end product Sample B

Figure 17. Entrance to exhibition space with reminders about SMM measures

Figure 18. A selection of books for further reading on display

Figures 19 & 20. Curating sources to be placed in display panels

The HI Mini-Exhibition: Preserving a Past for Meaningful Historical Learning

Museums play an important role in impacting the lives of the local community as it preserves the history, culture and art that spans across generations. It is also an important establishment for "nation-building and regional identity" (Hoe & Chong, 2018). As mentioned by Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth at the CIMAM 2017 Annual Conference, museums can shape a more cohesive society as it "could curate their collections in a manner that creates conversations and deepens understanding among different communities (Fu, 2017)." As such, a decision was made to turn the school's heritage gallery into a space where such ideas and conversations can take place. While the students were curating the sources, curation of the exhibition space (see Figure 17 to 20) was undertaken through borrowing of various sources of materials for display. Efforts were also made to design a "museum quest" to add an interactive element in the exhibition. In order to enhance the visitors' experience, old newspaper articles were blown up to A3 sizes and plastered around the room (see Figure 21 and 22). An exhibition brief was also drawn up and sent out as an invitation to the school leaders as well as subject teachers. This was done to provide them with an overview on what the project was about and how the HI process was effectively carried out (see Figure 23).

Figure 21. A sample of A3 old newspapers articles placed around the room

Figure 22. A sample of A3 old newspapers articles placed around the room

Figure 23. Exhibition Brief

Figure 24. A group of students from class 2E2 presenting to the Principal and HOD Humanities

Figure 25. A group of students from class 2E4 presenting to the Vice-Principal

Figure 26. A chart depicting students' responses

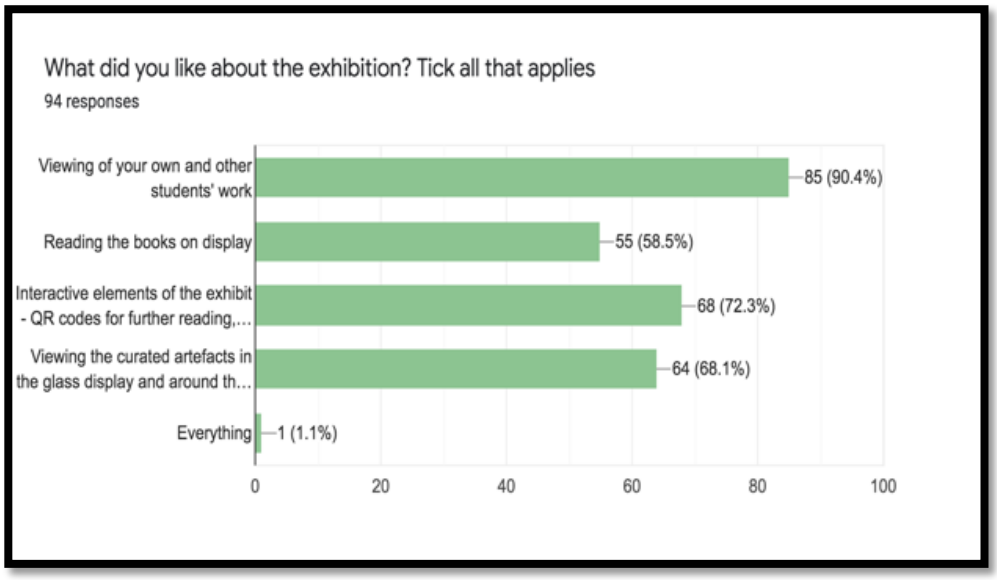


Figure 27. A student viewing the work put up by another class.

Figure 28. The Principal and HOD Humanities attempting the museum quest

Figure 29. Students viewing the newspaper articles on display

Figure 30. Students viewing the curated artefacts in the display panels

On the day of the exhibition, school leaders and various subject teachers were invited as 'real museum visitors' so that students can hone their communication and information skills as docents. Groups of students would take turns to present their work (see Figure 24 and 25). Based on the survey results (see Figure 26), 90.4% of the respondents seem to like the museum experience because it allowed them to view the works of other students (see Figure 27). 72.3% of them enjoyed the interactive elements of the exhibit which contained QR codes for further reading, padlet responses as well as the museum quest (see Figure 28). A sizeable 68.1% also enjoyed viewing the curated artefacts in the glass displays and exhibition space (see Figure 29 and 30). When asked for feedback on what could improve their museum visit experience, students said that they wished they could touch some of the artefacts on display and for more time to be given to view the exhibits (as the history period was too short). Two students commented that there were more sources than they expected which they did not come across in their research. Overall, students and teachers saw much value in the museum experience, and agreed that it brought a constructive end to the HI process.

HI Project Reflection

When I first embarked on this project, I thought about what would make the learning of history more meaningful for our students. I wanted to address widespread misconceptions about history and how the learning of the subject involved only memory work. Another aim was to show that learning history is a worthwhile endeavour for any citizen of a country. Since the shift in our instructional practice had focused towards a more inquiry-based approach (MOE 2012), this activity was designed to allow students to have a deeper understanding of a historian's craft and to see the value of learning the necessary skill-sets attached to it. Having conducted HI for three years, I found the need to revise and enhance the process of conducting HI so as to equip my students with 21st century skills deemed necessary to function in this ever complex world. My belief that teachers should not be simplifying the inquiry process for students, but should instead, expose them to tasks that will allow them to develop experience in the research process was strengthened through this HI project. While the process can be complex, my students showed me that they can manage the given tasks if the necessary scaffolds are out in place to guide them to achieve the desired goal.

There were, however, some problems that arose during the facilitation process. While the students were able to navigate the web pages like Archives Online or NewspaperSG easily, many of them came up to me to protest over how the web searches showed a lack of results and expressed their worries over the inability to meet the demands of the assignment. For example, if one were to key in words like "Singapore as an impregnable fortress" or "Singapore as Home" into the search engine, few results would show up. This was when I realized disparities in the way I worked and my expectations of how my students managed the research process. Researching was an easy task for me because I knew how to manipulate the searches using other key phrases like 'Singapore's defences', 'British military preparations in Singapore', or 'Gibraltar of the East' to replace 'impregnable fortress' and obtain the results I needed. For my students, these moves may not be as intuitive. It was at this point that I had to insert a quick lesson to teach and guide students on how they have to rephrase their word search so that they can receive different sets of results. For example, replacing 'Singapore as Home' with certain

actions that could demonstrate the immigrants' interest in making Singapore a home – such as 'demand for citizenship' or 'locals who defended Singapore during the Japanese Occupation' – could lead to more relevant webpages. I had assumed that by pointing them to reliable web pages and guiding them on the navigation of various functions would be enough. This incident made me reflect on other necessary scaffolds that students may need when engaging in research.

Another difficulty that I faced was that of students' motivations. While the task was meaningful, many students also lamented challenging aspects of the process and wanted to give up on the assignment completely. Many of us may end up giving in to our students' cries and to lower the HI expectations (i.e. making the HI process and deliverables simpler), or to tweak the standards of the assignment., Similarly, I had struggled with this decision. Should I just provide them with the sources and get them to focus on the end product? Should I simplify the HI processes so that things are made easier for them as demanded? To say Yes to these questions would go against the purpose of why I started on this project in the first place. Instead, I realized the importance of implementing a stretch and challenge model in the classroom where we get our students to "recognise that learning should be difficult" but we "make explicit to them how meeting the criteria becomes progressively more demanding (Light, 2017)". Once they have a clear understanding of the learning intentions, the teacher should also encourage them by assuring them that there will be scaffolds put in place to ensure that they can progress through it. As educators, we will have to communicate the learning intentions to our students so that they can understand and accept the (higher) expectations of what we think they can achieve, and to then work with them on it.

Conclusion

Students will only know history when they understand the basis of how claims about the past are made. It is thus important to equip them with the skills to understand history so that students can learn more than just facts or narratives, but also the language of historical processes and methodology. As such, educators should not only focus on the deliverables of the HI project as a form of assessment but to engage students on a deeper level by placing emphasis on the various stages of the inquiry process. The struggles are real but we should strive to develop these disciplinary skills in our students.

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