



Storytelling sessions at the National Museum expose children to Singapore's rich history

# LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Sharing stories of the past deepens children's appreciation of values such as resilience and tenacity demonstrated by our forefathers.

There are important life lessons to be learned from stories of our grandparents. These stories, passed down from pioneers, are powerful tools for children to learn about how people can touch the lives of others and even change the world. Morals and values are imparted through these stories. For instance, hearing about their grandparents' struggles and successes teaches children about overcoming hard times, and helps them recognise that people can recover from failures and triumph.

## THE PAST INFORMS THE PRESENT

Museums are a repository of such uplifting narratives. Our oldest museum, the National Museum of Singapore, presents over 700 years of the nation's history in ways and themes familiar to young children. This is to ensure that their first touchpoint and experience with Singapore's history and heritage is a positive one, according to Ms Chua Jia Lin, the museum's Senior Manager, Curatorial & Programmes.



Art and craft sessions involve both young and old

The museum has permanent and temporary exhibitions that provide an authentic learning environment for children. For example, they can access uncommon historical objects such as an antique rickshaw or a replica of a World War Two-era Japanese military tank. "These are focal points to facilitate discussions for young children. They can learn about Singapore's history and heritage in an immersive and interactive environment," adds Ms Chua.

An example is the Growing Up gallery, one of the permanent galleries that shows how people lived in the past. Although it focuses on life in the 1950s and 1960s, a tumultuous period of political change and social unrest, it also offers insights into the growing-up experiences during that era. One of the interactive installations features handmade toys. As our young ones explore these exhibits, they discover how children in the past used their imagination and resourcefulness to make their own toys. It also gives them a better understanding of their grandparents' childhood, strengthening their connections to them.

## PASSING DOWN GOOD VALUES

These intergenerational aspects help children establish a connection to the past and develop a sense of their role and place in the community. Building on this, the museum developed its first interactive Family Guide titled *Get Curious!* in collaboration with NTUC First Campus' My First Skool. This is available at the Museum Label shop. Information on selected artefacts in the museum's permanent galleries is presented through bite-sized fun facts, rhymes and interactive elements.



Intergenerational family fun at the museum

"These artefacts tell stories of life in Singapore in the past and values to be learnt from the struggles, challenges and harsh living conditions faced by their grandparents," says Ms Chua. The exhibits showcase occupations and everyday objects typical of the era. Adults can engage children in conversations about values such as hard work (through the experience of a rickshaw puller), the importance of a clean environment (through the feature of a night soil bucket) and resourcefulness (creating toys from found materials).

The *Get Curious!* guide was a hit with kindergartener Amos Dang, a K2 child at My First Skool at Blk 997 Buangkok Crescent, and his father Dang Ren Cai. "The step-by-step guide helped us understand the different installations and exhibits, especially items from the past," says Mr Dang. He shares that after the museum visit, Amos would revisit the guide and recall what he had seen and learned. "Amos was particularly intrigued by the Singapore Stone. He learned about the legend of Badang, the strong young man who lifted the huge rock and flung it into the mouth of the Singapore River. The painting of Sir Stamford Raffles printed in the Family Guide and our discussions also gave him a better understanding of Singapore's early history."

Having the history of Singapore brought to life in an interactive way made the museum visit a memorable and fruitful experience, adds Mr Dang. "I would like my child to learn how the early settlers and pioneer generation contributed to the building of our nation. For instance, we have the luxury of cleaning the toilet with just one flush

## Get More Out Of Your Museum Visit

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE YOU GO.

Use the museum resources to conduct a self-guided tour. Many museums offer recommended itineraries or activity sheets. These may be downloaded beforehand or available upon request on-site. At the National Museum, a set of Early Learning Resources, available from the museum shop, introduces preschoolers to artefacts in the museum through themes based on the alphabet, numbers and colours.

Find out what programmes are offered before you head down. The National Museum's varied programmes include storytelling, workshops and craft-making activities. These are designed to spark deeper conversations between parents and children about Singapore's history.



The museum offers programmes that encourage family participation

now, but during the old days, toilet waste or 'night soil' was collected in buckets. My parents belong to the generation that went through that. One thing I would like to teach my child is to not take Singapore's cleanliness for granted, and that we should show appreciation to those who help keep our country clean and beautiful."

## Children's Season 2020 @ National Museum Of Singapore

30 MAY – 31 JULY 2020

"Get Curious! Stories of You & Me" will feature installations based on selected artefacts found in the *Get Curious!* interactive Family Guide and the permanent galleries. These tell stories of the lives of children growing up in different eras. The interactive installations will be relatable to children, their parents and grandparents, to facilitate intergenerational conversations and family bonding.

Grandparents and their grandchildren can participate in intergenerational programmes such as art jamming workshops, museum tours, drop-in craft activities and performances. More information on Children's Season 2020 will be available on the National Museum's website and social media by early May 2020.



# TRUTH IN FICTION

Master storyteller Kamini Ramachandran shares how storytelling can be used in the museum context to cultivate key values and offers practical tips on delivering an engaging tale.



Kamini Ramachandran

Museums are treasure troves filled with stories from the past and each quiet corner can spark a storytelling encounter, says Ms Kamini Ramachandran, a professional storyteller who has designed some of the National Museum's in-gallery storytelling programmes. "Parents and educators can tap into the wide range of themes within museums to create intimate storytelling moments with their children," she observes.

## HOW DO WE USE STORYTELLING IN THE MUSEUM CONTEXT?

Stories come alive through objects, paintings and exhibits. Each question about a map and every curious query about an old coin is an opportunity for a story to be told. Describing objects, discussing materials and techniques, and explaining changes that happen over time engages children and helps them better connect with the past. Here are some ways to create short stories based on objects:

- > Encourage children to ask questions about what they see.

- > Involve them as co-storytellers and invite them to imagine narratives based on the objects.
- > Complete a museum visit with a reflective activity, like writing a letter to a historical character or painting a picture of an imagined past.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHARE STORIES FROM THE PAST?

It fosters tolerance and understanding of people, communities and cultures. Listening to stories of their grandparents and family members gives children a stronger sense of identity and belonging. This rootedness supports children in knowing who they are and where they come from. Listening to the past experiences of others not only helps a young child make more sense of his world and navigate it, but also gives him the opportunity to identify and express emotions and feelings in appropriate ways.

## HOW DOES STORYTELLING BUILD VALUES LIKE RESILIENCE IN YOUNG CHILDREN?

Our brain processes information by arranging it into stories. So, when we want to talk to children about values such as resilience, the first step is to craft a meaningful story and then support it with experiences or facts. Knowing the story of someone's past struggles can spark empathy and help children see how they, too, can persevere and overcome adversity or challenges.

## 5 Ways To Tell A Meaningful Story



- **Use an imaginary character.** Explore the museum from the point of view of a person (or animal) from the past. It helps you see things from a different perspective.
- **Use props.** Fabric strips, plastic fruits and rattan baskets allow for tactile experiences.
- **Encourage participation.** Create opportunities for children to contribute to the story.
- **Role play.** Create different roles for children to take on at different exhibits so they become the 'voice' of the object.
- **Follow a story trail.** Embark on a mini-tour of various exhibits and artefacts that have a common thread and tell a tale that links them all.

**Kamini Ramachandran** is a master storyteller known for her vast repertoire of oral tradition stories from Asia. She has worked extensively in cultural and heritage institutions using storytelling as a medium to breathe life into the past. She trains museum guides in object-based storytelling and teaches museum-based learning for educators.

win



- One lucky reader will receive a copy of *Get Curious! The Official Interactive Family Guide to the National Museum of Singapore* and a \$100 dining voucher at Food for Thought (National Museum branch).
- Three readers will each receive a set of National Museum of Singapore Early Learning Resources and a \$50 dining voucher at Food for Thought (National Museum branch).

Simply answer this question:  
**Name one permanent gallery that families can visit at the National Museum of Singapore.**

Send your answer to [beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg](mailto:beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg) with your name and contact details.  
Closing date: **15 May 2020**



## Don't Give Up!

Give your child an extra dose of resilience.



### > Confident Parents, Confident Kids: Raising Emotional Intelligence in Ourselves and Our Kids – From Toddlers to Teenagers

By Jennifer S. Miller

Understanding how to manage overwhelming emotions helps boost a child's confidence in navigating various social and interpersonal situations. Read this book to learn about your child's developmental needs while developing your own emotional intelligence at the same time. You can also enjoy relatable anecdotes and try out recommended activities that will help you raise a confident child.

Contributed by Nur Sadidah Binte Mohamad Said, Librarian, National Library Board



### > The Hugging Tree: A Story about Resilience

By Jill Neimark

*The Hugging Tree* is a lyrical ode to nature in all its austere, yet nurturing glory. Neimark urges readers to find strength and comfort in the resilience of the tree, and gives children new ways of understanding themselves through stories. A useful read for parents to communicate better with their children.

Contributed by Maliah Zubir, Associate Librarian, National Library Board

## Events @ NLB



Check out these programmes at the libraries.



### A Book A Day

Register for this programme and read at least one book with your child every day. A lucky draw prize of children's books might be yours!



### All-together Reading Campaign: Read Me a Book

Pick up a yellow apron from your local library and put it on while reading aloud to your child. The campaign runs until 23 April.

For more information, visit [www.nlb.gov.sg/discovereads/abookaday](http://www.nlb.gov.sg/discovereads/abookaday) or [www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary](http://www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary) (and search for "yellow apron").

## FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit [www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk), or scan the QR code



You can also share your passion of "Giving a Good Start to Every Child" by "liking" our Facebook page for daily content, and engaging with other parents and EC educators.



Connect with us at [www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore](http://www.facebook.com/beanstalksingapore), or scan the QR code



It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Find out more about a career in early childhood at [www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow](http://www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow), or scan the QR code.

