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SUGGESTED APPROACHES
TO LOWER SECONDARY
HISTORY TEACHING

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This paper will focus on two History topics that will be taught in Secondary One. The topics are the development of a settlement in Singapore as well as the succession dispute. Both these topics can be ‘covered’ by teachers if they adopt a chronological approach. Teachers can relate the events leading to Raffles’ arrival in Singapore in 1819 and discuss the consequences of Raffles’ decision to establish a British settlement in Singapore. The requirements of a settlement are also explained. They can also explain how Raffles became involved in the succession dispute involving two brothers from the Johore royal family – Tengku Hussein and Tengku Abdul Rahman. How the dispute arose and how it was subsequently resolved can also be explained.

Apart from using this ‘traditional’ approach to teach these two topics, it is possible to use alternative approaches. These approaches would involve the pupils more actively in the learning of local history. In these approaches an attempt will be made to proceed from the known to the unknown.

In the case of the settlement of early Singapore, one can present pupils with a worksheet. (See Worksheet 1)

**Worksheet 1**

Imagine that you have arrived at a new place. You have been given the responsibility of choosing a site for settlement. Which one would you select: a, b, or c? Explain the reasons for your choice.
After the students have made their choice and explained why the site they have selected is suitable for settlement purposes, the teachers can then relate their answers to the content dealing with the development of a settlement in early Singapore. In actuality, site (a) is situated near the Singapore River, (b) represents the location of Fort Canning and site (c) the Kallang Basin. Settlement mainly developed in site (a).

To help students obtain a better understanding of the succession dispute, the teacher can present the students with a problem. The students can be asked a question: How does one become a Sultan? The answers can be discussed and the teacher may conclude with the following diagram presented on a transparency:

How does one become a Sultan?

(a) By inheriting the crown.

Any problems?

No! if the Sultan had only one son or if the Sultan chose one of his sons as the next ruler.

Yes! if the Sultan died before choosing a successor.

(b) By obtaining the support of important people or countries.

At the end of the discussion, the pupils can be asked to complete a worksheet. (Worksheet 2)
Worksheet 2

1) Sultan died

2) He had two sons

3) When he died, the eldest son was away in another place

4) The younger son became Sultan

5) A powerful country supported the younger son

If you were asked to help the eldest son, what would you advise him to do?

Write a letter to him containing 3 possible solutions to his problem.

After discussing some possible solutions given by the students the teacher can then introduce the 'historical' content. The teacher can explain that a similar situation occurred in early Singapore when Sultan Mahmud died. His elder son, Tengku Hussein was away in Pahang at the time of his death. The younger son, Abdul Rahman was made the new Sultan. He was supported by the Bugis and the Dutch.

From these two pupil-centered approaches it is possible for teachers to actively involve their students. The latter will find the subject more interesting and meaningful.