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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Choo, Helen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td><em>Teaching and Learning, 4(2)63-66</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published by</td>
<td>Institute of Education (Singapore)</td>
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A SIMPLE SONG

I was asked to conduct one two-hour session on Social Studies (the History component) to two groups of 1st Year Certificate in Education students. The topic for the session was teaching methods in History. I conducted a self-contained session that needed no follow-up.

The inspiration for the session came when I looked at the guidelines given by the Ministry of Education on teaching methods:

Teaching Strategies

1. The Social Studies syllabus should not be thought of in terms of information to be passed on didactically by the teacher to the pupils. Rather it seeks to inculcate certain values in the pupils through developing knowledge, skills and attitudes as they explore History and Geography.

2. Teachers will therefore need to vary their teaching strategies to make Social Studies attractive, effective and meaningful. Strategies such as projects, quizzes, simulation games, field trips, films, talks, debates, surveys and reports should be employed.

I noticed that the use of songs was missing as a possible teaching strategy. There could be good reasons for it yet I am confident that singing is an activity highly enjoyed by and attractive to the pupils. At the same time, I know that many children love to memorise songs and so the information contained in the songs will not escape them.

I decided to conduct an "experiment" with my class. I gave them an hour to come up with songs related to the pioneers of Singapore and ended with a short concert at the end of the session during which everyone had to come to the front of the class to sing their song.
The aim was two-fold:

- to demonstrate that it is not difficult or too time consuming for teachers to come up with songs for their classes; and
- to demonstrate that learning through songs is effective and enjoyable.

The “experiment” was a success. The students broke up into groups of five or six and each group put up one item at the end of the one hour.

Here are four of the songs reproduced without any alteration in order to demonstrate to the reader how easy it is. There are some mistakes, but these are first drafts.

I am sure the reader can use them creatively.

by Helen Choo Chieh Chen

**TAN TOCK SENG (Tune: Clementine)**

Tan Tock Seng, Tan Tock Seng
He’s a man from Malacca
He sold fruits and vegetables
In a shop in Singapore (Chorus)

Diseases were spreading all around
So he started a hospital
To cure smallpox and cholera
And a cure for leprosy (Chorus)

Formerly it was at Pearl’s Hill
But the soldiers took over
So it shifted to Serangoon
And later to Moulmein Road (Chorus)

CHORUS
Oh our pioneer (3)
Tan Tock Seng
Was a great man
During his time
Oh our pioneer
Tan Tock Seng
NARAYANA PILLAY (Tune: Happy Wanderer)

Came from Penang with Raffles
First worked as a chief of clerk
First Indian building contractor, who built those brick houses

CHORUS
Narayana(3)
Narayana Pillay
Narayana(2)
Who built those brick houses

That fatal day of his life, when all his goods caught fire
Then Raffles took pity on him and lent him some money

CHORUS
Narayana(3), Narayana Pillay. Narayana(2)
His cotton goods caught fire

And with the money, he made some more
And soon he built a school
He also gave some land for free
To build Sri Mariamman Temple

CHORUS
Narayana(3), Narayana Pillay. Narayana(2)
He was a generous man.

PIONEERS OF SINGAPORE (Tune: One Way Ticket)

One way ticket (6) to Singapore
They all came from various countries
Got a place here and never went back
Ooh . . . they were pioneers of Singapore . . .

They were Narayana Pillay
Syed Omar
Tan Tock Seng and Alex Guthrie.
Ooh . . . They all helped to build up Singapore . . .

And from them came a temple and a mosque
Schools and hospitals too
Roads were built and trade increased
And ships came from everywhere

REPEAT CHORUS
JOSE D’ALMEIDA (Tune: Lacuceracha)

Jose D’Almeida, D’Almeida
He came from Portugal
He was a doctor (2)
And he helped to heal the people

He had a trading firm
Dealing with coffee and spices
He was a leader
of the Portuguese and Spaniards

So remember him (2)
He’s Doctor D’Almeida
So don’t forget him (2)
For the great things he has done

OLE!