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# **N**ational Education: Singaporeans Who Celebrated National Day on 3rd June

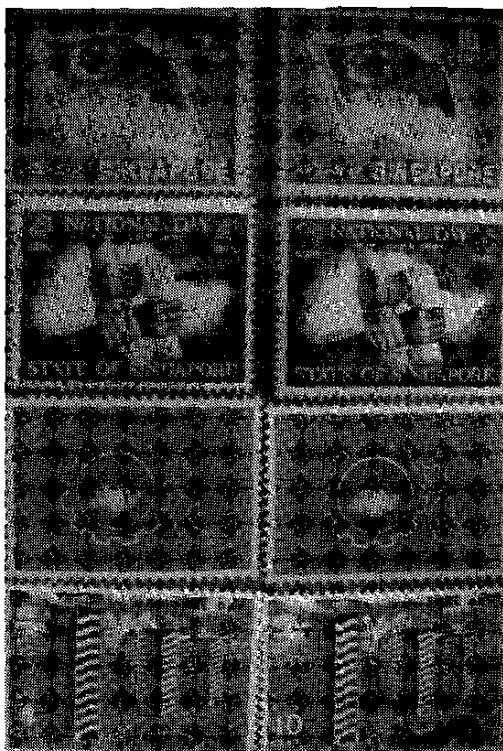
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Is Singapore's National Day on August 9? The answer, of course, would be "Yes". As every school pupil knows, Singapore's National Day falls on August 9. Who, then, are the Singaporeans who celebrated National Day on 3rd June? Most pupils react in disbelief when this question is posed to them. A typical reaction to this question is: "Where got such thing?"

That Singaporeans celebrated National Day on 3rd June is a fact and there is documentary evidence, cheap and easily obtainable, to show this fact. The simple documentary evidence is in the form of stamps and teachers may like to incorporate the following information into a National Education discussion session for their pupils.

Take a look at the following stamps shown in Photo 1.



**Photo 1:**  
State of Singapore National Day  
stamps, 1960–1963

The first pair of stamps shows the Singapore Flag and the words, "June 3, 1960; National Day, State of Singapore".

The second pair of stamps shows an outline of Singapore and the words, "National Day, 3rd June 1961, State of Singapore".

The third pair of stamps shows an outline of Singapore and the words, "National Day; June 3, 1962; State of Singapore".

The fourth pair of stamps shows three blocks of HDB flats and the words, "National Day, 3rd June 1963, State of Singapore".

All these eight stamps testify to the fact that, during one period of time, 3 June was indeed Singapore's National Day. After scrutinizing the stamps, the pupils will very quickly spot two other characteristics besides the '3 June' phenomenon. One is the occurrence of the words 'State of Singapore' and the other is that the period involved is from 1960 to 1963. The pupils will quite naturally want to know why Singapore was then known as a 'State' when it is presently known as a 'Republic'. This will generate a discussion on the differences between a 'State' and a 'Republic'. In simple terms, a 'republic' is a country that is fully independent and responsible for the conduct of all its policies and affairs whereas a 'state' is partially (and sometimes fully) under the control of another country.

Another question that logically follows then is: "If Singapore did not have full independence at that time, then which country had authority over Singapore?" The teacher can explain that this was the period when Singapore was granted 'internal' self-government while its external matters, such as military defence and foreign affairs, remained in British hands. The achievement of this internal self-government status in 1959 is documented in the series of stamps, which bear the words 'State of Singapore', the year '1959', and the portrait of Queen Elizabeth the Second. The stamps are shown in the second photograph (Photo 2).

One implication that the pupils can then draw from the above explanation is that in the years before 1959, Singapore was under the control of the British. That this was indeed the case is indicated in the third and fourth set of Singapore-Malaya stamps which show the portraits of Queen Elizabeth the Second and King George the Sixth (Photo 3). The photograph also shows stamps bearing the portraits of sovereigns who ruled Great Britain before King George VI. [Pupils with keen eyesight will notice the words 'Straits Settlements' but that is another story in itself.]



**Photo 2:** State of Singapore stamps, 1959



**Photo 3:** Singapore (Malaya) and Straits Settlements stamps

Since most pupils already know that Singapore was 'founded' by Stamford Raffles in 1819, they might infer from the above stamps that Singapore was under British rule from 1819 onwards. The teacher can correct this impression by pointing out that, during World War II, Singapore (and Malaya) was under Japanese rule from 1942 to 1945. Again, the documentary evidence in the form of stamps can be used

to show this fact. Photo 4 shows some of the stamps in use during this time (often referred to as the Japanese Occupation period). The 8-cent and 15-cent stamps show, respectively, a memorial structure and a temple constructed by the Japanese in Singapore. An interesting fact that can be deduced from a close look at this photograph is in the 2-cent stamp with the portrait of King George the Sixth overprinted with the words "Dai Nippon". It would appear that in this way the Japanese simply, and bluntly, changed the stamps and postal services from British to Japanese control as the phrase "Dai Nippon" refers to Great Japan (as opposed to Great Britain).



**Photo 4:** Japanese Occupation of Singapore stamps

To continue the 'Singapore National Day' story through stamps, the teacher can now briefly describe the period after internal self-government when Singapore became a part of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965. The stamps in use then are shown in Photo 5. One set of stamps highlights West Malaysia, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak. Notice how tiny Singapore's size is, in comparison to the other countries. The other set of stamps has the words "World Orchid Conference 1963 Singapore, Malaysia" on it.

Finally, on 9 August 1965, Singapore became an independent republic. In the following year, 1966, the first set of Singapore stamps with the words "Republic of Singapore" and "1st Anniversary" was issued.

So, the next time someone asks whether you celebrated Singapore's National Day on 3rd June and you happen to be born before the 1960s you would have to answer, in all truthfulness, "Yes, I did. The stamps



**Photo 5:** Singapore (Malaysia) stamps

commemorating Singapore's National Day in the early 1960s clearly document this fact. However, since 1965 when Singapore became fully independent and master of its own destiny, I celebrate National Day, like all proud Singaporeans, on 9 August."

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