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*Understanding By Design: Critical thinking
 Strategies for teaching the Founding of
 Singapore*

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Introduction

- How Raffles & the founding of Modern Singapore was traditionally taught in Sec 2 History textbook
- RGS approach to the issue of 'founder of Singapore' using the inquiry based approach & the UBD


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Raffles In Secondary School Text

- Understanding Our Past (1999-2006)
 - The textbook begins with the chapter on "Founding of Modern Singapore"
 - The chapter focuses more on Raffles' role in founding of a British trading settlement in Singapore
 - A supplementary section within the chapter poses a question on whether there was Singapore before 1819


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Raffles In Secondary School Text

- "Singapore: From Settlement To Nation"
 - The textbook begins with the chapter on Singapore before 1819
 - The topic of "Founding..." forms the 2nd chapter
 - Raffles' role in founding is still covered but the chapter poses the question of who really "founded" Singapore


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Raffles In Perspective

- At the same time, there are also other discourses in the academic field that seem to challenge the notion that Raffles is the undisputed founder of "modern" Singapore
- Secondary 2 History department in RGS aims to highlight these new discourses to the students so that they can think critically and make a clear on the issue


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Pedagogical Approach

- Using Understanding by Design as a framework, the unit on "Founding.." is crafted based on certain Essential Questions that will lead them to uncover key concepts.

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UBD : A framework for backward curriculum design

Advantages

- Emphasis on Big Ideas
- Heart of Discipline : Subject-Based
- Uncover Problems & Controversies

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Overview of UBD

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

- What *key understandings* should the students come away with?
- promoting understanding through design rather than good fortune

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Stated desired results in terms of learner's understanding are as followed:

- History can be written biased towards the needs and interests of a particular group of people/nation.
- The interpretation of historical events may change over time as a result of changing perspectives and the availability of new evidence and artifacts.

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Essential Questions

- Was there Singapore before 1819? (By discussing this essential question, students will then argue if the term “modern Singapore” could possibly stretch even before 1819, which again challenge the dominant discourse that modern Singapore period began in 1819.)
- Who was the founder of Singapore?

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Stage 2: Thinking like an Assessor


Modes of assessment are utilized to gauge students' understanding of the topic:

- Source-based Question (SBQ)
 - In this unit, students are exposed to primary documents
 - Hence they are equipped with the necessary skills to evaluate these sources, eg. inference, compare and contrast, assessing reliability
 - Purpose: To allow students to make a balanced judgement

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Stage 3: Learning Experiences and Instruction


- Concept Development
- Paul's wheel of reasoning using the elements of points of view, consequences & implications and inferences & implications; and interpretations and inference . This is done by looking at various sources like journal articles, magazines, and newspapers to examine who the real founder of Singapore was.
- Using a documentary, the “Raffles' Little Child” episode from Discovery Channel's History of Singapore series, to encourage a Socratic discourse. An example of a form of Socratic questioning would be to pose students with the following after the video screening, “How far was the documentary an accurate and objective portrayal of Raffles and Farquhar?”

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Stage 3: Learning Experiences and Instruction

Examples of instruction

- **Intra-class Debate (Motion: Farquhar, and not Raffles, was the real founder of Modern Singapore)**
- **Imagine you are Raffles, write a letter to Lord Hastings to convince him why Singapore was the ideal port for the British**

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Conclusion

- **Need to keep abreast of the new research and findings on “modern Singapore”. At the same time also, students must be informed of these recent developments and be made aware that there is no absolute truth in the interpretation of history.**

The Trial

- Raffles vs The People

Background

- A group of disgruntled Scotsmen, descendants of Johor royalty and local historians are suing the Raffles estate for misappropriation of the title “Founder of Modern Singapore”

The Trial

- Defendant:
 - Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (represented by his estate)
- Plaintiffs:
 - William Farquhar (represented by his descendants)
 - John Crawford (represented by his descendants)
 - Temenggong Abdul Rahman (represented by members of Johor royalty)
 - The people of Singapore (represented by local historians)

The Trial

- The Charge:
 - T.S. Raffles had usurped the title of “founder of modern Singapore” for himself without acknowledging the contribution of other founding fathers/pioneers

Trial Lawyers

- Your group is to assume the role of a group of lawyers assigned to the various plaintiffs and defendant
- You are to come out with arguments to support the case of your clients

Raffles' Legal Team 1

- You are to defend Raffles from the charge
- You are to argue why Raffles deserved the title of “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- Give clear and valid arguments to support this stand

Raffles' Legal Team 2

- You are to defend Raffles from the charge by arguing that the other candidates ARE NOT DESERVING of the title “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- Give clear and valid arguments to support this stand

Farquhar's Legal Team

- You are to present the case for William Farquhar, who claims to be the “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- You are to argue why Farquhar deserved the title of “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- Give clear and valid arguments to support this stand

Crawfurd's Legal Team

- You are to present the case for John Crawfurd, the 2nd Resident of Singapore
- You are to argue why Crawfurd deserved the title of “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- Give clear and valid arguments to support this stand

Temenggong's Legal Team

- You are to present the case for Temenggong Abdul Rahman, a Malay chief and a key Raffles' ally in the founding of Modern Singapore
- You are to argue why Abdul Rahman deserved the title of “Founder of Modern Singapore”
- Give clear and valid arguments to support this stand

Local Historians Team

- You are representing a group of local historians keen on setting the record straight
- You are to argue why Raffles should not be the sole founder of modern Singapore and why credit must be shared by the immigrants, pioneers or other founding fathers
- Give clear and valid arguments to support your stand

References and Materials

- Your textbook, “Understand Our Past”
- Reading materials on “The Founding of Modern Singapore”
- Lecture notes on iNet
- Website on “The Founders of Colonial Singapore”
(<http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/singapore/history/chew/founders.html>)