RECORDS — What did you hear?

In Records, you hear the reflections of the founding leaders. Read the quote below and answer the questions.

Goh Keng Swee: "I've had enough of Malaysia. I just wanted to get out. I could see no future in it... the political cost was dreadful and the economic benefits, well, didn't exist. So it was an exercise in futility — a project that should be abandoned once you see that it's worthless."

What political cost was Goh referring to?

What "economic benefit" was Singapore hoping to achieve from merging with Malaysia?

FINAL REFLECTIONS

1. The Albatross File reveals previously classified documents about Singapore's early independence years. How has the exhibition changed or deepened your understanding of the challenges Singapore faced during nation-building? Use specific examples from the exhibition to explain your answer.

2. Explain why understanding Singapore's early independence struggles remains relevant for young Singaporeans today.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

Take the perspective of a Singapore citizen living in the period after 9 August 1965. Write a letter to one of the founding leaders of your choice to:

1. Share your feelings about separation from Malaysia.
2. Express your thoughts about separation in any or all of these aspects:
   i. multiculturalism in Singapore,
   ii. economic independence without Malaysia as the hinterland, and;
   iii. building Singapore's national identity and sense of belonging.
3. Share how you intend to contribute to the newly formed nation of Singapore.

Write your letter in the space provided here.

This educational resource is brought to you by the National Library Board, for The Albatross File Exhibition at National Library Building, Level 10.

For more information, visit go.gov.sg/albatross

© NLB Singapore. All rights reserved.
Reproduction or distribution of this material, in whole or in part, is not allowed without permission.

Answers: [Who are they?] Goh Keng Swee; Tunku Abdul Rahman; E W Barker; Lee Kuan Yew; Toh Chin Chye and S Rajaratnam.
[What happened?] Sabah; Sarawak; Devan Nair; Riots; Malays; Chinese; Confederation; looser; British; Convention; Malaysian Malaysia; shingles; Malaysia

Student's Name

Date of Visit

THE ALBATROSS FILE:

Singapore's Independence Declassified

KEY PLAYERS — Who are they?

Can you identify the key players and the roles they played in Separation?

I kept a secret file of documents and notes that recorded every step leading to Separation. I codenamed it "Albatross".

Answer:

I wrote a letter to Toh Chin Chye to urge him to agree to Separation, for the peace and security of Malaysia and Singapore.

Answer:

I drafted the Separation Agreement and all the legal papers needed to make Singapore independent.

Answer:

I drafted the constitutional re-arrangements to negotiate giving Singapore more autonomy and to reduce communal tensions.

Answer:

We campaigned strongly for "Malaysian Malaysia", and were reluctant to sign the Separation Agreement.

Answer:

WHAT IS "ALBATROSS"?



In Goh Keng Swee's oral history in 1982, he explained that the "Albatross" referred to Malaysia. He said that Malaysia "became an Albatross round our neck", a burden that Singapore carried in a "very sad but instructive episode in our political education".

KEY EVENTS — What happened?

Spot the key events on the Atlas Wall and fill in the blanks below!

1963

16 Sep — **Merger**
Singapore merges with Malaya, _____, and _____ to form the Federation of Malaysia.

21 Sep — **Singapore's General Election**
PAP called for the polls and won, while the Singapore Alliance party, supported by Tunku, failed to win any seats.

1964

25 Apr — **Malaysia's Federal Election**
PAP contests seats in the Malaysian Federal Election, only _____ wins one seat.

21 Jul – 02 Sep — **Race _____**
Two major communal clashes erupt between the _____ and _____ in Singapore.

1965

Dec 1964 – Feb 1965 — **_____ Discussions**
Discussions of a _____ association between Singapore and Malaysia ended when the _____ found out about it.

09 May — **Formation of the Malaysian Solidarity _____**
PAP begins rallying for a "_____".

22 Jun — **Tunku in London**
While recovering from _____ in London, the Tunku decides Singapore should be cut off from _____.

15 Jul – 20 Jul, 26 Jul – 03 Aug — **Meetings between Goh and Razak to discuss Separation plans**
Goh Keng Swee meets Razak and Ismail, and suggests Separation. The planning and drafting begins.

09 Aug — **Separation**
The Separation Bill is passed and Singapore becomes an independent nation.

ROOM What did you see?

Which sources were used to tell the separation story in the Room?
Tick the checkboxes below!



News Reports ☐



Academic Essays and Expert Commentaries ☐



Personal Diaries and Handwritten Letters ☐



Maps and Directories ☐



Speeches and Interviews ☐



Films and Modern Reproductions ☐



Photos and Videos ☐

Which of these sources are not primary sources?

What other sources could we potentially use to tell Singapore's story?



How did you feel when you were watching the film in the Room? Circle the words below!

ROOM How did you feel?

shocked **curious** **glad** **hopeful**

inspired **moved** **worried** **relieved**

Which scene or event was most memorable to you and why?

THE STORY No other way?

In the span of 23 months, many events took place that eventually led to separation.
Reflect on what you have seen and heard so far.

From your point of view, was Separation expected?
At which points do you think things could have turned out differently?



RECORDS Handwritten notes

Find a handwritten note in the exhibition and take a closer look!

Title:

Author:

Date:

What was the purpose of this note?

What new insights can we gain from this note about Separation?

DID YOU KNOW?

Writing down notes helps us to think, recall, and in this case, keep records of discussions behind these major events that might otherwise be lost forever.



Singapore's Memory Keeper

The National Archives of Singapore is our key memory institution, preserving the nation's stories through documents, photographs, films and audio recordings.

Look around Records — thanks to the dedication and care of our archivists who kept our records safe over many decades, we are able to present the original documents in this exhibition today!



RECORDS Typewritten documents

Find a typewritten document in the exhibition and take a closer look!

Title:

Author:

Date:

What was the purpose of this document?

What new insights can we gain from this document about Separation?



DID YOU KNOW?

Before computers existed, the typewriter was a common tool for preparing official documents.

Every copy had to be typed by hand and carried authority — from the letterhead to the signatures and official stamps. One signed page could approve, instruct, or change the course of major events.