



**“Stories of Casual Racism”
educational resources**

Teacher’s Guide

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Racism means to treat some people worse than others, just because they are of a different race or skin colour, come from a different place, or have a different culture.

Everyday racism is a form of racism where people say or do hurtful things without intending to be unkind. Everyday racism is also called “casual racism”, although there is nothing casual about it for the person at the receiving end.

Sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)
as part of our nation’s commitment to the International Convention
on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

SECTION 1

Introduction

“Stories of Casual Racism” is a set of resources for primary schools to educate about racial discrimination. While school rules can abate direct, aggressive racial attacks, they are less able to reduce more subtle forms of racial discrimination. Hence, the need for other ways to educate children about casual/everyday racism.

Our learning goals

1. At a basic level, students will be able to spot casual racism in its various forms.
2. Used effectively, these resources will help students to:
 - grow **empathy** for social minorities
 - realise that many factors contribute to **alienation**
 - realise the need to address **discrimination**.
3. Gradually, students will also internalise the principles of **human dignity** and **worth** for all.

Our team’s approach

As racism is a sensitive topic, our guiding principle is that children – both ethnic minority and majority groups – must feel safe participating.

Chew Wei Shan, a local composer and musician, presents as a Chinese Singaporean on a learning journey about casual racism here. Artist Linda Yew illustrates the stories with rich, friendly artwork that draws in young readers. The IDEAS activities and whole-class project are also predominantly arts-based. They promote friendship skills as the foundation for reducing racism.

Shan and Linda know their target audience well: both former MOE teachers, they are now regular contributors to What’s Up, our monthly newspaper for children.

Teachers’ questions

We asked teachers to share concerns and questions they had about these resources. In Section 6 of this Guide, you will find some of the more frequently asked questions and our answers. We strongly encourage you to read the Frequently Asked Questions in Section 6 before using any of the Casual Racism resources.

SECTION 2

Everyday Racism Articles

There are nine articles:

1. Was that a compliment or an insult?
2. “You don’t look Singaporean.”
3. Racial jokes: “But they’re cool with it!”
4. Why is my accent funny to you?
5. Language can be a weapon
6. What it means to be friends
7. What’s in a name?
8. Ouch! What a thoughtless question
9. One human race, many peoples

Each article focuses on a different form of everyday racism.

THE FORMAT

A conversation — This is based on interviews the writer conducted. Adults shared their childhood experiences of casual racism and reflected on the anecdotes with the wisdom that hindsight offers. Pseudonyms are used and the speakers are composite characters of the interviewees.

Author’s reflections — Every article also has a side bar of key takeaways and advice for students.

Illustrations — The main illustration zooms in on an issue or anecdote. Don’t miss the symbolism in many of the details. In the second illustration, everyone is happier so that the article ends on a positive note.

Vocab Builder - Unfamiliar words are defined.



ARTICLE 1

Was that a compliment or an insult?**The conversation**

Amir and Nabil talk about compliments that were hurtful, even if unintentional, because of negative racial connotations.

Side Bar: Helping everyone belong

Encourages us to watch out for stereotypes that might turn compliments into insults. And, suggests how to respond if we are at the receiving end.

Illustration

A girl is giving her friend a lovely bouquet of flowers (the compliments) but the flowers have teeth that can bite.



ARTICLE 2

“You don’t look Singaporean.”**The conversation**

Some people do not fit into common stereotypes about what Singaporeans look like. Nivya, Dewi, and Phyu share their thoughts and stories about this with Shan.

Side bar: The Singaporean look

Explains how these one-size-fits-all images of the Singaporean look may be fed by the media and other influences. Suggests a couple of simple ways in which kids can help diversify the Singaporean look.

The illustration

The kid in the centre does not look different from the others but is being singled out as not looking Singaporean merely because his dressing does not have national icons and colours.



ARTICLE 3

Racial jokes: “But they’re cool with it!”**The conversation**

Jeesa and Aadi tell Shan of the times when they were the butt of racial jokes, but felt compelled to laugh along just to fit in.

Side bar: Stamp out jokes that hurt

Creates awareness about how racial teasing hurts. Encourages everyone to treat others with respect.

The illustration

At first glance, this is a happy group of friends. Look closer and you will see the green child is crying through his smile because his friends are likening his skin colour to green peas. They do not notice he is crying because the rain masks his tears.



ARTICLE 4

Why is my accent funny to you?**The conversation**

Imitating another person’s accent may be unkind, not funny. Tejas and Luz share how they feel when others poke fun at their accents.

Side bar: Examine our motives

Raises the question of when it is okay and when it is not to impersonate another person. Prompts us to think about our motives.

The illustration

Everyone in this drama cast has exciting roles except for the forlorn child in the corner who is just a stage prop – a tree trunk – presumably because of a different accent.



ARTICLE 5

Language can be a weapon**The conversation**

Adhiti and Mazri tell Shan about the times they felt bad because others used language to exclude them.

Side bar: Let's include everyone

Explains how languages can help to connect or disconnect people. Reminds us to be mindful not to exclude others who may not speak the same language, and to respect languages different from our own.

The illustration

This joyous multi-lingual scene depicts using words that say we care for one another!



ARTICLE 6

What it means to be friends**The conversation**

Soe Hla, Adam, and Nguyet talk to Shan about what true friends are and what they are not.

Side bar: Am I a good friend?

Prompts us to think about whether our friends are considerate of us and treat us as equals and with respect, and whether we do the same for them.

The illustration

When the child in the middle is hurt, the other kids help him to feel better.



ARTICLE 7
What's in a name?

The conversation

Iman and Reyansh tell Shan what their names mean, and how upset they feel when others mispronounce or make fun of their names.

Side bar: Getting names right

Invites us to put ourselves in the shoes of our friends who have had their names mispronounced or made fun of. Encourages us to be considerate towards others.

The illustration

Do you see the word NAME spelt out in the stylised hairdos of these girls? All the other things in the hairdos answer the question "What's in a name?". Just about everything!



ARTICLE 8
Ouch! What a thoughtless question

The conversation

Sometimes, people ask questions in ways that hurt others. Xiao Xin and Rozaini share their stories with Shan.

Side bar: Keeping an open mind

Affirms that it is good to ask questions for our learning. Encourages us to always be respectful and never rude or judgemental when asking questions.

The illustration

They are asking sweetly enough but the questions turn out to be cacti with sharp thorns.



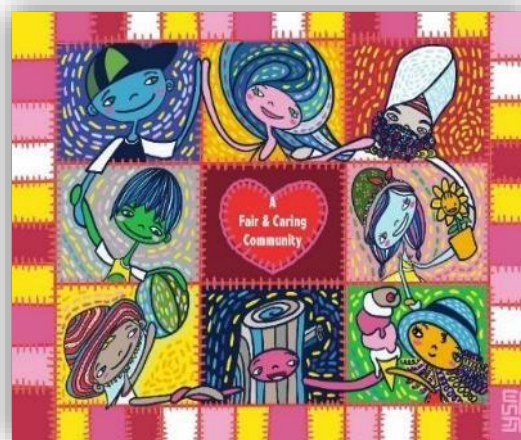
ARTICLE 9

One human race, many peoples**The conversation**

Shan reflects on what she has learnt about everyday racism from her conversations with her friends. She invites everyone to join her in making Singapore a better home for all.

The illustration

Those who shared their stories in the first eight articles are seen to be happily reaching out of their boxes to join hands, forming a circle and symbolising a fair and caring community.



SECTION 3

IDEAS activities

There are 12 activities in all.

1. A True Singaporean
2. Collage Art Speaks for Us
3. Flowers that Bite
4. Funny, Not Mean
5. How Are We Alike?
6. In Another's Shoes
7. Love in Any Language
8. Are We Really Friends?
9. Seeing You Seeing Me
10. Switching Lenses
11. Welcoming Differences
12. Your Name is Beautiful!



You can assign the activities in any order. Some of the activities require students to first read one or two of the articles about everyday racism. Other activities are best done after students have read all the articles.

ACTIVITY 1

A True Singaporean

Lesson objective: To explore what it means to be a true Singaporean.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in speech bubbles after observing the characters’ facial expressions and thinking from their perspectives.
- Answer questions that reflect on the impact caused by judging whether or not someone is a “true Singaporean”.
- Circle descriptors of “true Singaporeans”.
- Draw or write to describe “a true Singaporean”.

3) Take a look at the following descriptors of what makes a Singaporean. Circle the ones which you think apply:

Being English	Speaking "Singaporean"	Being Singaporean	Being a Singaporean
Whether the character speaks English	Belongs to one of the ethnic groups in Singapore	Shares one of the traits Singaporean Singaporeans	Belongs to one of the ethnic groups in Singapore
Has the character Singaporean characteristics	Knows the physical and cultural aspects of Singapore	Shows respect and kindness towards others	Contributes to Singapore
Has a good NRIC	Speaks English well	Knows Singapore	Other examples?

4) In your opinion, what makes someone truly Singaporean? Explain why you think so.

5) What does it mean when you think of "a true Singaporean"? What makes this person truly Singaporean in your view? Write and/or draw your answer below.

ACTIVITY 2

Collage Art Speaks for Us

Lesson objective: To reflect on the beauty and challenges of living in a community of diverse peoples.

Students are asked to:

- Create collages after brainstorming and discussing in their groups on how monochromatic and kaleidoscopic societies would look like.
- Answer questions that help in reflecting on their emotions on their depictions of the two societies.
- Do a whole-class discussion on the pros and cons of the two types of societies.

6) As a group, study your collages. Take turns to have each member respond to their partner:

- How did you feel about using only green, black and white paper for your first collage?
- How did you feel about using whatever you wanted for the second collage?
- On a scale of 1 to 3, how well were you able to appreciate the title "Our Monochromatic Society"? Explain why you chose that number.
- On a scale of 1 to 3, how well were you able to appreciate the title "Our Kaleidoscopic Society"? Explain why you chose that number.

7) Discuss the following:

- In this activity, "monochromatic" and "kaleidoscopic" are used metaphorically. What do they mean to you when they are used in this way?
- What are some pros and cons of living in a monochromatic society?
- What are some pros and cons of living in a kaleidoscopic society?
- Were there times when you felt lonely when you were monochromatic? Were there 2 moments when you could have lived better when you were kaleidoscopic?
- Our society has both — monochromatic and kaleidoscopic — some aspects and what aspects? If an individual would you like to be monochromatic and what other parts would you prefer to be kaleidoscopic?

ACTIVITY 3 Flowers that Bite

Lesson objective: To take a closer look at compliments that insult at the same time.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in tables that require students to observe compliments (from illustrations, articles and real life) which can be insulting, and reflect on why they are nasty and how they can be rephrased to sound like genuine compliments.
- Create a gift card with a compliment for a friend, using the given template.

WHAT'S UP Name _____ Date _____

Flowers that Bite
a compliment that can sting

Sometimes when someone compliments us, it can feel strange if you assume a mean like sneering. Flowers that bite "It's actually taken a close look at such compliments."

1) Go to <http://www.whatsup.sg> and read "The three compliments or insults". Study the illustrations that accompany the article.

Like a compliment that is lurking at the edge of the insult, the insult has some sugar that looks like pretty and nice. Read these and explain why you feel the same. Be honest to share the pain.

Example of a compliment with a bite	Why it's so
a.	
b.	
c.	

2) List two examples from the article — or from real life — where a compliment attacked the person receiving it. Explain why the compliment was insulting. Rephrase it with better words that do not "bite".

Insulting Compliment	Why it is insulting	How I would rephrase it
a.		
b.		

3) Write a flower compliment to a friend in the middle of the Missing Flower template below. Colour and decorate the flower.

4) Cut out your flower, fill along the dotted lines, and present the flower with folded gift tags to a friend. Ask your friend what it means. The flower will be especially there to remind you to re-act.

ACTIVITY 4 Funny, Not Mean

Lesson objective: To empathise with a victim of insulting jokes, and to not make jokes that will put people down.

Students are asked to:

- Answer questions that analyse the illustrations in the article "Racial jokes: 'But they are cool with it!'".
- Colour appropriate responses that a victim can respond with to overcome the problem and emotions. When correctly coloured, a hidden shape is revealed.
- Write a happy joke that does not put down anyone.
- Illustrate the joke using edible (and sweet) items.
- Gift the joke platter to someone.

WHAT'S UP Name _____ Date _____

Funny, Not Mean
a collection of responses to racism

1) Read the article "Racial jokes: 'But they're cool with it!'". Look at the picture at the start of the article. Describe what you think is happening in the picture.

2) The victim seems to be smiling. How do you think he really feels? Explain.

3) What should you do if you see a victim of "insulting jokes"? Label all the responses you think are appropriate to reveal a hidden shape.

Put eyes away from the offender.	Give the offender a tight slap.	Laugh along even though it hurts.	Wink, wink, scratch your head at the offender.
Stand up for yourself.	Smile in response to "That's not funny" or "That's racist".	Stop words that mean "That's not funny" or "That's racist".	Change the subject or do something else.
Blame yourself.	There have you find.	Agree with the offender.	Remember yourself.
Take revenge on the offender.	Be quiet or even worse.	Agree with the offender.	Blame, ignore or walk away.
		Agree with the offender.	Blame yourself.

THE HIDDEN SHAPE IS:

4) Find a joke that does not put anyone down. Write the joke below.

5) Show your joke to a paper plate, using edible items. As far as possible, include something sweet — such as sugar, peanut butter, marshmallows, chocolate — to make the joke platter. Plan the design by drawing it out first.

6) Show your paper plate and the joke with a friend, explain what you learn from the joke, and write about it.

Enjoy and stay sweet!

ACTIVITY 5 How Are We Alike?

Lesson objective: To focus on our similarities instead of differences.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in a table that requires students to observe similarities among very different and unrelated objects they find around them.
- Answer questions that get students to reflect on similarities with someone who seems very different in real life (real-life application), and how these similarities are strengths which can help them grow.
- Create an artwork using two different materials that usually do not go together to illustrate that despite differences, they can still “gel”.

The worksheet is titled "How Are We Alike?" and includes the following sections:

- Introduction:** A paragraph explaining the purpose of the activity, which is to focus on similarities rather than differences.
- Task 1:** A table with two columns: "Objects" and "Similarities among all objects in each group". The table has four rows for different groups of objects.
- Task 2:** A question asking students to think of someone very different from them and to list similarities between them.
- Task 3:** A question asking students to think of two different materials that usually don't go together and to create an artwork illustrating that they can still "gel".

ACTIVITY 6 In Another's Shoes

Lesson objective: To practice perspective-taking in relation to the impact of the way questions are worded.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in speech bubbles after observing the characters' facial expressions and thinking from their perspectives.
- Answer questions that require students to step into the shoes of those asking insensitive questions.
- Draw what the student imagines is an object's hidden side, and then compare it with the actual hidden side. This is followed by reflecting on action that can be taken (ask, not assume) for better communication and understanding among friends.

The worksheet is titled "In Another's Shoes" and includes the following sections:

- Introduction:** A paragraph explaining the purpose of the activity, which is to practice perspective-taking.
- Task 1:** A drawing of a colorful scene with several characters. Each character has a speech bubble next to them for students to write in.
- Task 2:** A question asking students to think of an object and to draw what they imagine is its hidden side.
- Task 3:** A question asking students to think of a person and to draw what they imagine is their hidden side.

ACTIVITY 7

Love in Any Language

Lesson objective: To become more aware of how language can be used to connect with or alienate others.

Students are asked to:

- Listen to a song, *Love in Any Language*.
- Answer questions that get students to reflect on the song lyrics and pick out ways in which language is used to divide or unite people.
- Draw a picture that depicts two different things being connected.
- List ways to connect with a friend or person who speaks a different language.

ACTIVITY 8

Are We Really Friends?

Lesson objectives: To identify the qualities of a true friend, and to experience the value of putting thoughts into words.

Students are asked to:

- Answer questions that reflect on what it means to be a good friend.
- Insert “√” for character traits of a good friend, and “X” for those of a bad friend.
- Write a letter to a friend who has hurt the student, using a pseudonym.
- Reflect on what it felt like to write the letter even though it was not given to the friend.

ACTIVITY 9

Seeing You Seeing Me

Lesson objective: To see value in learning more about friends' worlds.

Students are asked to:

- Describe characteristics of their family e.g. things they do, food they eat, and so on.
- Write a journal entry that requires students to step into the shoes of a guest (friend of another race) arriving at their home.
- Draw what they think their home looks like from another's perspective.
- Reflect on the visitor's perceptions. Apply the same to the perceptions of a friend from another ethnicity, and ethnic community as a whole, encouraging "seeking to understand".

ACTIVITY 10

Switching Lenses

Lesson objective: To explore observing our world through different lenses.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in a table after observing for some physical traits of people at a public space in the neighbourhood for 30 minutes.
- Give an oral presentation in class about the diversity that was observed.

Observed by	Physical Characteristics
1. gender	_____
2. age	_____
3. body type	_____
4. hair colour	_____
5. eye colour	_____

ACTIVITY 11 Welcoming Differences

Lesson objective: To empathise with friends who have been excluded and to think of ways to help everyone feel included.

Students are asked to:

- Answer questions that analyse some hurtful actions (i.e. imitating accents, excluding someone), and the emotions involved.
- Draw branches with leaves for ideas to help someone feel included.

WHAT'S UP Name: _____
Class: _____ This: _____

Welcoming Differences

Illustration: A group of diverse people in a colorful, abstract setting.

This illustration shows a group from a story about loving differences. To find out more about the article "Helping Someone Feel Included" go to: <http://www.ck12.org/Helping-Someone-Feel-Included/>

1) In the article, the writer mentions it is important to welcome our academic values, including, research, creative, artistic, and play in order to become "smarter" and to enjoy themselves.

2) Think of a hurtful action. Why do you think the character described in a story may have to act?

3) Describe an occasion where you or someone else was excluded from a gathering (party, class, etc.).

Did you do (or see some one) do?

Let's think of ways to help everyone feel included.

Think the way shown in the story, draw branches with leaves for every idea you can think of to help someone feel included. The first one has been done for you. Draw the rest as you think of ideas.

Illustration: A tree with a person sitting on a branch. A thought bubble says "Help them feel included".

Helping Someone Feel Included

ACTIVITY 12 Your Name is Beautiful!

Lesson objective: To appreciate the beauty of everyone's names.

Students are asked to:

- Fill in a table that require students to find out the meaning of their classmates' names.
- Brainstorm for activities that will help them explore the variety of names people have, encouraging them to try them and appreciate the names.

WHAT'S UP Name: _____
Class: _____ This: _____

Your Name is Beautiful!

Illustration: A baby.

When a baby is born, one of the most exciting decisions is what to name her. There are all sorts of naming traditions that families follow. Names also have meanings that are often really interesting.

It is a pity then that kids sometimes get teased because of their names. Read "What's in a Name?" for other ways in which names are not always what we think they should be. You will find the article online at <http://www.ck12.org/What's-in-a-Name/>. Then complete this worksheet.

1) Approach eight classmates whose names sound 'beautiful' to you. Fill in the following table to learn more about the names. If anyone does not know the origin and meaning of his or her name, do an internet search to get the answers. Remember to share your findings with the person.

Name	Origin	Meaning
Example: Kim	Hebrew	Top of light
My name:		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

2) Reflect on what this activity demonstrated. Can you think of other activities that might help kids appreciate the wonderful variety of names people have? Use together with your friends and discuss as well!

SECTION 4

Curtains Up!

A whole-class drama project

Lesson objective: To apply perspective-taking and solution-seeking skills.

This activity gets students to revisit the stories on casual racism, step into the shoes of the characters, and make visual presentations through one-act plays.

The guiding questions in the handouts enable the groups to reflect upon the actions and emotions of the characters in the scenes.

Through the group discussion and instruction to ensure a happy ending, students explore how to be better friends. The reflection at the end of all seven presentations helps the students to crystalise their learning points.

- PowerPoint slides explain the activity and expectations in detail to students.
- Every group selects a different article and presents a one-act play based on it. Individualised instructions are provided as handouts for each of the seven groups. Remind students to be sensitive to one another and respect each other as they work in their groups. Encourage them to apply what they have learnt, to become a kinder and more caring person. Ground rule: Every play must end with all characters wanting to help reduce casual racism. That means, every character gains from the experience.
- After the performances, students reflect on their experiences as they prepared and performed their plays, and watched the other groups' plays. Guiding questions are provided.



SECTION 5

“My Commitment”

A pledge for students

Lesson objective: To help internalise the principles of human dignity and worth for all.

This pledge is presented as a small poster that every student can take home.

The words

As it serves as the culminating exercise in this series, the pledge is based on the learning points from the articles and activities of the Stories of Casual Racism. It is a commitment to try one’s best to get rid of racial discrimination. The text assures students that it is all right to not get it right every time and that they can ask adults for help when situations are too hard to handle.



The illustration

All the characters are from the articles about casual racism. Here they are shown as one community rather than as minority-majority groups.

How to use the pledge card

1. Schedule this exercise only after the students have read the articles and done the activities selected for them.
2. Download the PDF file from ideas.whatsup.sg and print on A4 paper a copy for every student. Consider having one for yourself to show your class that their teacher is making this commitment too.
3. Project the image on your classroom/virtual screen. To warm up, ask the students whether they recognise the characters in the illustration. Point out that they are all now working together as one community. Then, run through the key points.

Explain that this is one way that children can contribute to Singapore’s commitment to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). As part of the ICERD, countries are committed to pursuing a policy of eliminating racial discrimination. It is one of the nine core international conventions on human rights by the UN. Singapore’s ratification of the ICERD in 2017 is an affirmation of our longstanding approach to fostering racial harmony in Singapore and our commitment to combat racial discrimination.
4. Give your students time to read the text and think about what it means in their lives. You may wish to give them the opportunity for small-group discussions as well.
5. Invite your students to make this commitment but only if they sincerely wish to. Stress that every student has the option of not signing the poster or signing it later when he/she is ready to do so. No student should feel pressured to comply — let your students know that you will not be asking them whether they signed their posters.
6. Regardless of whether they made the commitment, ask your students to keep their pledge posters carefully as a reminder of the Stories of Casual Racism.

SECTION 6

Frequently Asked Questions

Casual racism is a topic that is not often discussed in class. It is understandable that some teachers may have concerns about the impact of these stories and activities on their students. Browsing through these responses to teachers' questions may be helpful.

When should I use these stories and activities?

You may use them at any time of the year. They lend themselves well to English Language and CCE lessons. They are also suitable for National Education on Total Defence Day, Racial Harmony Day and National Day. While it is best for your students to read all the articles, you may wish to select and assign only those activities that are suitable for your class.

Will some of my students feel very uncomfortable?

Teachers know that it is impossible to predict with 100% accuracy what students' responses will be. These stories may make some of your students feel uncomfortable. Children from minority races may feel embarrassed by the anecdotes. Some from the majority race may feel like they are being blamed. Our team has tried to reduce the likelihood of such possibilities by using inclusive language and artwork throughout.

In rare instances, an anecdote may be painful to a student who has been in a similar situation. This may be so even for those who were only observers. We trust that teachers will be alert to signs of distress and follow up appropriately.

Do remind your students that these stories and activities are to help everyone be kinder and more caring to one another. With greater awareness, each one can then choose to express empathy and respect, and be a better friend to others.

Shouldn't there be more tips on how victims of racism should stand up for themselves?

There are gentle suggestions for victims. But, we do not ask children to take matters into their own hands by confronting racist people. This follows good practice guidelines for child professionals — instead of expecting kids to stand up to bullies, we encourage them to confide in a trustworthy adult (and go on telling adults until one helps them).

With casual racism, it is more complex because the hurtful words and actions were not meant to be mean. Our approach here is to give all children — victims, observers, and offenders — the chance to develop healthy relationship skills that enable them to play fair and be caring to everyone.

Won't the anecdotes plant ideas into my students' heads, leading to copy-cat behaviour?

That is indeed a risk we have to be mindful of. Unfortunately, there is no definite way to teach kids how to deal with or avoid problems and dangers — whether it is self-harm, casual racism, bullying, harassment, screen violence, or fake news — without talking about them.

We can't wait until they have already run into these minefields, as that would be too late. What we can do is make sure we talk about them in a way that equips them with a better understanding about rights and wrongs. When we do this, the benefits of educating kids about such issues will far outweigh the remote chance of copycat behaviour. These resources are sensitively crafted along these lines.

Where can I get more help to be better equipped to use these resources?

If you would like to have more guidance or consultation about the use of these resources, please contact us at editors@whatsup.sg.

Thank You

This series was made possible by the contributions and support of many people. We would like to thank our interviewees who shared their stories with us, and the teachers who served as our sounding boards. We are also grateful to the reviewers, both internal and external, who helped to fine-tune this set of resources. Finally, a big thank you to the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth for its sponsorship, encouragement and guidance.

The *What's Up* team
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