

## Write A Life Story

*An activity of "The Teochew boy who became Singapore's king of paint".*

Goh Cheng Liang started life poor but, through grit and determination, he became one of the richest men in Singapore. He was also a caring boss to his employees and gave back to society generously. To learn more, read "The Teochew boy who became Singapore's king of paint" (pages 16-17, *What's Up* September 2025). His life story is an inspiring one.

A. Trace Mr Goh's life story. Write numbers 1 to 10 to arrange the following sentences in chronological order. The first one is done for you.

In 1942, when Mr Goh Cheng Liang was 15, the Japanese invaded Singapore. His father lost his job and struggled to feed the family.	<b>1</b>
Next, he worked hard for four-and-a-half years in a hardware shop.	
Cheng Liang did whatever he could to help. He did all kinds of odd jobs to earn money.	
He then tried running a small aerated-water stall, but the business failed.	
To keep up the momentum, he launched paint-making factories in Singapore and Malaysia which produced affordable and good-quality paints.	
In 1974, he set up Wuthelam Holdings.	
He started collecting old and discarded paint, then recycled and sold it. He named it "Pigeon Brand Paint". Sales were very good.	
He founded the Goh Foundation in 1995. In 2020, Wuthelam Holdings bought over Nippon Paint Holdings and became its main owner.	
Cheng Liang died at the age of 98 in August 2025 and is survived by three children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.	
Years later, he became the Singapore distributor for Nippon Paint.	

B. Interview an older family member or friend about his or her life story. Take notes or do a recording (*with their permission*). Fill in the table.

Tips for doing life-story interviews:

- Start with easy questions such as “Where were you born?” or “How many brothers and sisters do you have?”
- Ask open-ended questions such as, “How was your childhood like?”, “Tell me more about...”, “What happened during...”, “How did you feel when...”.
- Recounting life events may cause your interviewee to become emotional. Take a break when that happens. Do not do the interview if the person doesn’t want to.

### Basic details for life story

Name:	Family ( <i>parents, siblings, etc</i> ):
Date & place of birth:	
Childhood and Education:	
Work:	
One big life event:	
Another big life event:	
Values and Beliefs:	

- C. Encourage the person to share memories of everyday life over the years. When you think you have enough content, compose the life story.
- D. Ask your interviewee to read your draft to make sure it is accurate. Invite your interviewee to check your draft and suggest edits. Then, finalise the life story.
- E. With the permission of your interviewee, tell the story to the class. Give a written copy to your interviewee as a keepsake.