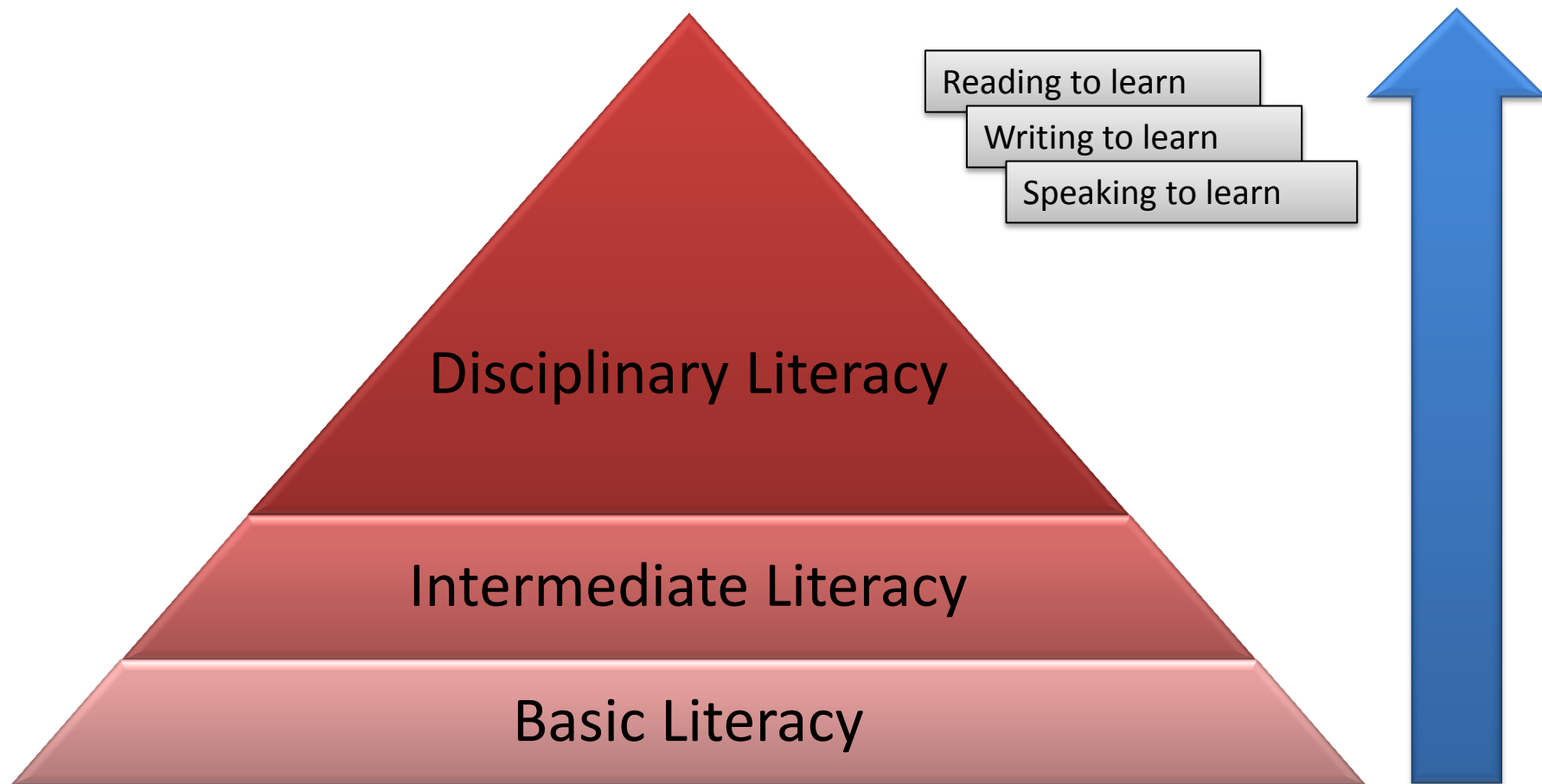


Scaffolding Inferential Understanding of Texts in Lower Secondary History

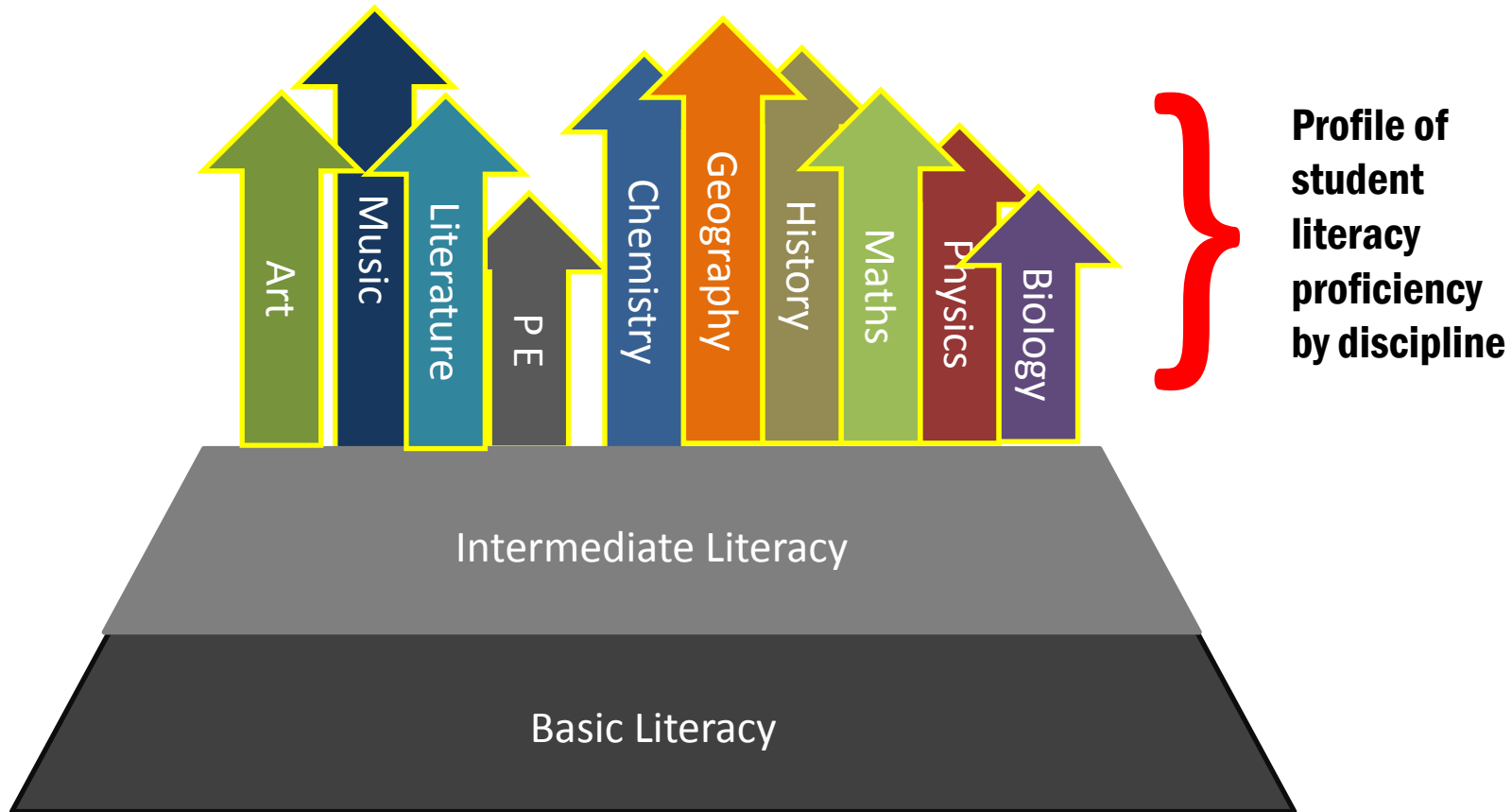
Rachel Lee, English Language Institute of Singapore
Nur Filzah, St Margaret's Secondary School



Literacy Progression



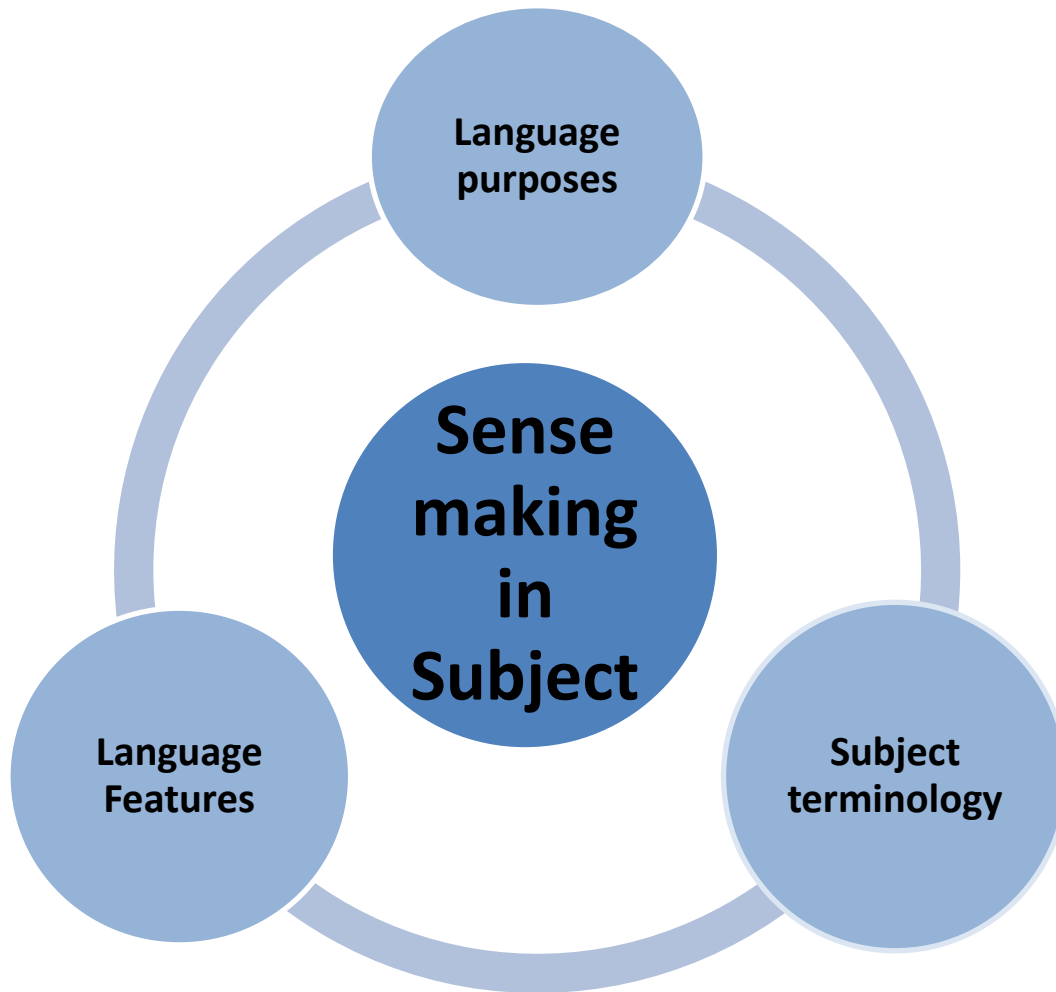
Subject Literacy



Subject Literacy

- Understanding how the “big ideas” of the discipline are organised and evaluated
- Thinking and reasoning in subject-specific ways
- Language becomes a tool for conceptualizing and linking big ideas of the discipline
- Teachers really have to help students need to develop subject literacy.

Subject Literacy



- Specific subject-language conventions
- Precision and accuracy of subject language
- Subject literacy practices

Scaffolding Historical Reasoning

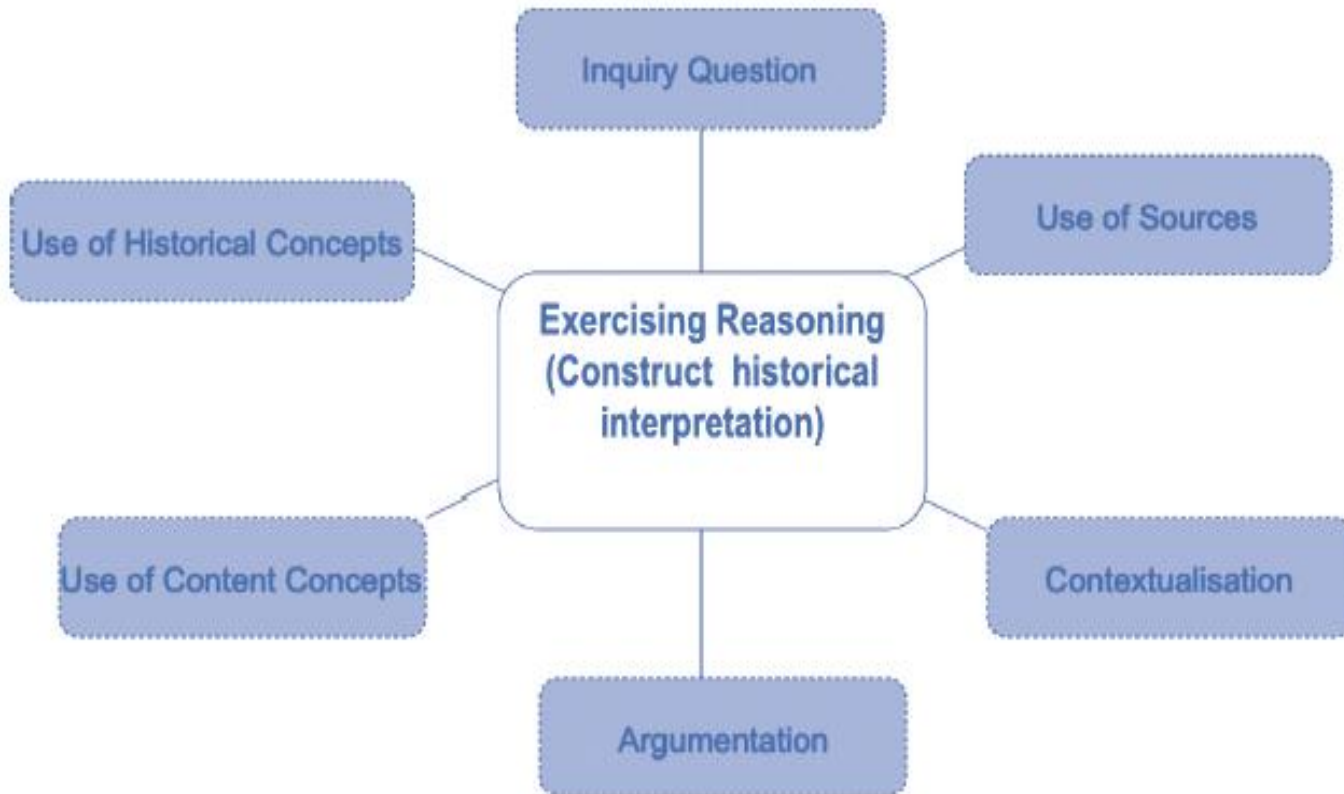
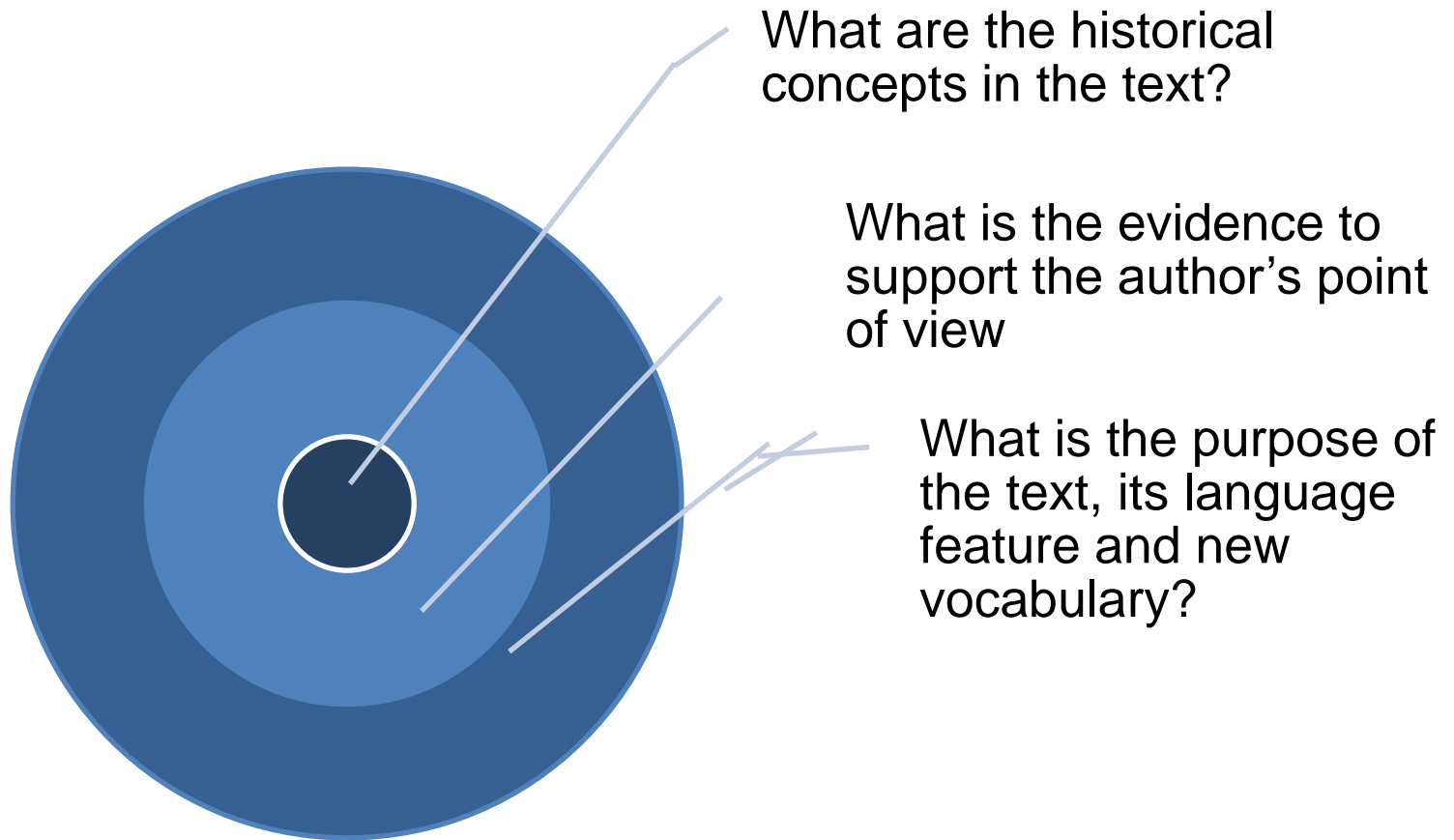


Diagram 2.3.6: Historical Reasoning

Language Purposes and Reasoning in History



Gilbertson, N. (2012). Literacy Acquisition Using Historical Methods and Content: Teaching Cause and Effect in History Text. *Social Studies Review*. P14-22.

The Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide

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Organisation of the guide:

- Analysis of each segment or paragraph of the text and its specific language features
- Think-aloud points for teachers to direct the student's focus of text
- Guiding questions to aid in the interpretation of the text
- Glossary

The Context

- Participants: 40 students, 1 teacher
- Class: Sec 1 N(A)
- Learning Ability: Mid to Low
- Procedures:
 1. Trialled page 320 of the Lower Sec Literacy Guide
 2. Evaluate effectiveness through teacher survey and student work

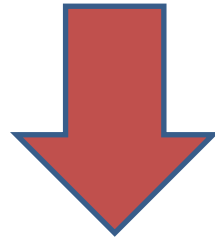
The Problem

- Nature of Texts in History textbooks:
 1. students have difficulty understanding historical meanings that are conveyed through history terminologies and long sentences.
 2. students find it difficult to evaluate information and hence are unable to analyse and form inferences.

The Intervention

Trialling of the Lower Secondary History Literacy Guide

- Lower Sec History Literacy Guide's "Scaffolding the Focus" of content to facilitate knowledge acquisition



Knowledge of content frames students' thinking process which builds up inferential skills

Teaching Content

- Topic: Singapore's Connections with the World
- Historical Content: Trade, Connections
- Skills: Comprehension, Inference
- Duration: 60 minutes
- Learning Outcomes:
infer and critically analyse on the importance of trade and connections

The Intervention: The Use of the Guide

Teacher Think-Aloud

These paragraphs depict the following ways in which Singapore developed after the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824:

- being able to carry out trade without interference from the Dutch
- its status as a free port
- its role as a British trading centre
- being an entrepot for goods from different parts of Asia
- acting as a political centre for the Straits Settlements
- increasing in its population size

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions to aid in the interpretation of the task are presented.

A) Scaffolding the focus of each paragraph:

The way Singapore developed as a British trading settlement following the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824

1. According to the first paragraph, what was the immediate result of the signing of the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824?

Singapore could then function and develop as a trading settlement without the Dutch interfering in Singapore.

2. According to the first paragraph, what was the benefit of Singapore being a “free port”?

Trade flourished because Singapore was a free port.

3. According to the second paragraph, how did Singapore develop as a British trading settlement?

3,000 ships called at Singapore’s harbour within the first 20 months of its founding as a British trading settlement.

The Intervention: The Use of the Guide

- Deconstruct historical content into bite-sized information that is easy to digest
 - Framing historical context through Questioning
 - 1. Teacher Think Aloud Strategy
 - 2. Questioning Strategy (5Ws 1H)
- Organise historical understanding in chronology
- Scaffolding focus of text to make inferences



PORSCHE



Framing Context through Questioning

- What do they have in common? (Comparison)
- Where can they all be found? (Activating Prior Knowledge)
- What do these items tell you about Singapore? (Inference)
- Why is it important to be connected/ to build relationships with other countries? (Reasoning)

Students' Answers

“Countries do not exist in isolation and need help from other countries to survive.”

“Countries can build economic, political and cultural connections.”

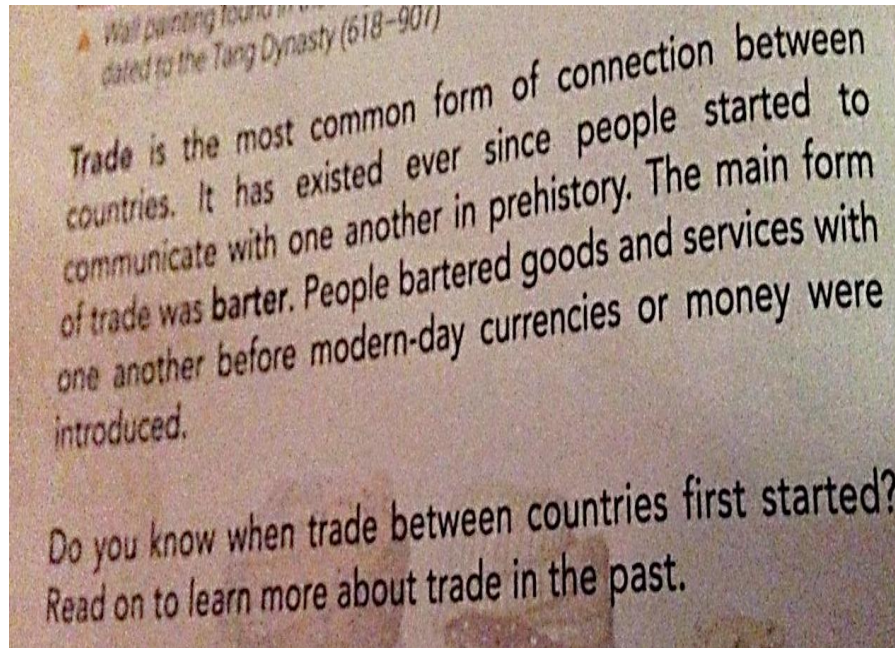
“Maintaining international relationships is an investment for a country's progress and survival in the world.”

Framing Context through Questioning

How did these connections begin?

- Students were asked to read their history textbooks and answer questions on their worksheets
- Questions were taken from OPAL and tweaked to scaffold the focus of the historical text

Scaffolding Historical Content



2 Singapore and Trade

At the beginning of the chapter, we inquired into when, why, what and how connections were made between Singapore and other countries. Was Singapore a trading port in its early past? Let us read on to find out.

In Chapter 1, you learnt that Singapore was referred to as *Dan Ma Xi* at the beginning of the 14th century. *Dan Ma Xi* is a Mandarin pronunciation of Temasek which means 'sea town' in Malay. Wang Dayuan mentioned that Temasek was a busy trading port in the 14th century.

However, Temasek declined at the end of the 14th century. From then on, Singapore came under the rule of the kingdom of Melaka, then it came under the Johor-Riau Sultanate, before coming under British rule in 1819.

Scaffolding Historical Content

In the past, people went on long, dangerous journeys to either visit religious places or look for new places to buy and sell goods.

They also travelled to discover new lands and unfamiliar people. They took ideas and inventions with them to the places they travelled to. When they returned, they took back new goods and stories of the new lands they had visited and people they had met.

- Why did people trade with one another?
- How did the long-distance journey feel like for the travellers?

Students' Comprehension of Texts

Group work

Section 1: Trade Across Time and Cultures

- a. What types of contact did people have with each other in the past?

→ physical contact

- b. What was the main form of connection then?

→ Trades

- c. Why did people trade with one another?

→ people visit religious places or look for new places to sell or buy goods.

- d. When was the first long-distance connection made?

→ around 3000 B.C.

- e. Who were the people involved?

Zhang Qian

→ Marco Polo

- f. How did the long-distance journey feel like for the travellers?

Group work

Section 1: Trade Across Time and Cultures

- a. What types of contact did people have with each other in the past?

physical contact

- b. What was the main form of connection then?

Trade was the main form of connection

- c. Why did people trade with one another?

the people lacked things that they needed and had to trade.

- d. When was the first long-distance connection made?

around 3000 B.C.

- e. Who were the people involved?

people from Mesopotamia and Indus Valley

- f. How did the long-distance journey feel like for the travellers?

tiring and very fearful. inaccurate

Students' Comprehension of Texts

Pair work

Section 2: Singapore and Trade

- a. In which period before 1819 was Singapore best known as a busy trading port?

14th Century

- b. Which two sources support the answer above?

pg 47 paragraph 2 of the last sentence from the text book.

Wang Dayuan

- c. Which port replaced Singapore as an important port in the Straits of Melaka?

part of ~~Melaka, Johor-Riau Sultanate~~
British (in 1819)

- d. With reference to question c above, which period of time did this happen in?

end of
~~1819 & 14th Century~~ - 1819

- e. Which kingdom was Singapore under when the British arrived in 1819?

~~The Melaka Kingdom~~
Johor-Riau Sultanate

- f. Is Singapore still a busy port today? Explain your view.

YES

Every since Singapore became independent in 1965. Since then, it's one of the busiest ports in

Pair work

Section 2: Singapore and Trade

- a. In which period before 1819 was Singapore best known as a busy trading port?

14th century

- b. Which two sources support the answer above?

→ Wang Dayuan account

→ Textbook

- c. Which port replaced Singapore as an important port in the Straits of Melaka?

part of ~~Melaka, Johor-Riau Sultanate~~
BRITISH (in 1819)

- d. With reference to question c above, which period of time did this happen in?

end of
~~1819 & 14th century~~

- e. Which kingdom was Singapore under when the British arrived in 1819?

Melaka

~~Johor-Riau~~

- f. Is Singapore still a busy port today? Explain your view.

Yes, it is busy since 1980s. Why?

Students' Inferencing

From your answers to the questions above, what do you understand about trade? *why!*

I can infer that ^{2d} trading ~~brings~~ ^{maintaining} ^{in 4th-10th} good ~~to~~ connection between countries. I know because Trading has allowed Singapore to ~~to~~ continue ^{to} connect with the region and world. This shows/means that trading brings connection between countries.

From your answers to the questions above, what do you understand about trade?

trades are important because we need strengthen our relationship and communication skills so that we could communicate better to the other countries making less misunderstandings. AS Singapore ships internationally
How did the answers above lead you to this conclusion?

From your answers to the questions above, what do you understand about trade?

I can infer that trading maintains ^{good} connections between countries. I know this because it has allowed Singapore to ~~continue~~ ^{2d} to connect ~~to~~ with the region and the world through trade. This shows / means trading bring good connections between countries.

The Teacher Survey

Reading and writing in a History classroom		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1)	I find the foregrounding of information on the nature (structure and key features) of History texts useful.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2)	The overviews of organisational and core language features of History texts have helped me in teaching reading skills required in History.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3)	The supporting scaffolds for interpreting and constructing different History texts are helpful for my students.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teaching Reading/Writing skills in a History classroom		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4)	I am more aware of the language features required in History texts for specific purposes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5)	The information on reading and interpreting historical sources has helped me support my students' learning.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6)	The scaffolding and guiding questions have helped my students understand and practise the core organisational and language features for writing in history.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Challenges

- Difficulty in understanding terminologies such as 'Johor-Riau Sultanate' and location of places such as Indus Valley and Mesopotamia
- Not all was able to infer the importance of trade

Suggested Improvements

- Introduce maps and familiarise students with geographical locations of significant countries

Suggested Improvements

Text	Literal	Inference/ Evaluative
<p>Refer to page 45 In the past, people went on long, dangerous journeys to either visit religious places or look for new places to buy and sell goods. They also travelled to discover new lands and unfamiliar people. They took ideas and inventions with them to the places they travelled to. When they returned, they took back new goods and stories of the new lands they had visited and people they had met.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How did the journey feel like for the travellers?2. What were they doing?3. What benefits did they receive from their journey?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you think they are willing to go through such hardships?2. Why were they willing?3. Why are these benefits useful?

Thank You

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