

# Cultural Diversity in Singapore Instructions and Answers for Teachers

- Venue: Heritage Gardens (Indian, Chinese and Malay Garden)
- Estimated duration to complete all questions: 1.5 hours

### Level / Subject:

- Lower Secondary (Social Studies, Normal Technical): Living in a Multicultural Society
- Upper Secondary (Social Studies, Express & Normal Academic): Living in a Diverse Society

### Learning Objectives:

- Describe the different uses and significance of plants amongst the main ethnic groups in Singapore
- Share experiences of living in a multicultural society
- Communicate ways to promote understanding and harmonious living



**GROUP ACTIVITY 1: SAME PLANT, DIFFERENT USES (45 mins or 15 mins per garden)**

(a) List the factors that shape identity and contribute to a diverse society.

**Answer: Nationality, race and ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status**

(b) Our forefathers, though from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds, lived in close proximity to one another. This brought about a sense of community and contributed to the multicultural society we now live in today, in Singapore.

At the Heritage Gardens, there are some plants that are common across the different ethnic groups in Singapore. Describe their uses and / or significance to each of the groups indicated in the table. Explore the Indian, Chinese and Malay Garden to find out more!

**Answers:**

Uses and / or Significance of the <u>Lotus</u> to:	
The Indians	The Chinese
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolises purity in Hinduism and Buddhism</li> <li>• The root is sliced and served in curries</li> <li>• The leaves are offered to the Hindu gods</li> <li>• The flowers are worshipped as a goddess in Hinduism (the flowers are often associated with <i>Lakshmi</i>, the goddess of wealth and good fortune)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Symbolises purity and integrity</li> </ul> <p><u>Additional facts not stated in the Information Panels:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leaves, seeds and roots are consumed as food</li> </ul>
Uses and / or Significance of the <u>Coconut</u> to:	
The Indians	The Malays
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A popular ingredient in food e.g. found in curries and desserts</li> <li>• Broken at temples to symbolise the breaking of the human ego</li> <li>• Offered to deities for the fulfilment of wishes</li> <li>• The fruit is worshipped as a family god (the three markings on the fruit often symbolise the three-eyed Hindu god, <i>Shiva</i>, or sometimes the three gods <i>Brahma</i>, <i>Vishnu</i> and <i>Mahesh</i>.)</li> <li>• The blossoms are hung over cribs as a charm</li> <li>• Given to the bridegroom at weddings to bring luck</li> <li>• The dried kernel (copra) is worn as garlands at ceremonies</li> <li>• The fruit is given as <i>Prasad</i> (sacred food) which represents blessings</li> <li>• Much-used in traditional medicine; said to restore hair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A popular ingredient in food e.g. found in <i>Nasi Lemak</i>, drinks and desserts</li> </ul> <p><u>Additional facts not stated in the Information Panels:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The juice is a thirst-quencher</li> <li>• The fronds (leaves) are used as a fuel</li> </ul>
Uses and / or Significance of the <u>Bamboo</u> to:	
The Malays	The Chinese

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stems are used as a building material for making the walls and floors of traditional <i>kampong</i> houses</li> </ul> <p><u>Additional facts not stated in the Information Panels:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The stems are used for making furniture, musical instruments, toothpicks, satay sticks, handicrafts, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symbolises flexibility, strength, resilience and humility</li> <li>Nodes of the Bamboo are called <i>jie</i> or integrity.</li> <li>Painted as one of the "Three Friends of Winter" to inspire endurance under adverse conditions as it is evergreen</li> <li>Painted as one of the "Four Gentlemen of Flowers" symbolising gentlemanly ideals and the summer season.</li> </ul> <p><u>Additional facts not stated in the Information Panels:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bamboo shoots are eaten as food</li> <li>The leaves are used to wrap rice dumplings</li> <li>The stems are used as a building material, and for making utensils, musical instruments, paper, clothing, etc.</li> <li>Grown in gardens or displayed in homes and office buildings as decoration</li> </ul>
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**GROUP ACTIVITY 2: LIVING IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (10 mins)**

In your groups, share about a cultural experience that you appreciated or a misconception that you encountered in your interaction with another Singaporean of a different ethnic group.

**Note to Teacher:**

Allow the students to interact and share their experiences with one another. Remind them to be objective, and not offensive or judgemental during their sharing. They should be sensitive to the feelings of others from a different ethnic group, and respect the diverse perspectives and opinions that may be shared.

**GROUP ACTIVITY 3: HARMONY IN DIVERSITY (35 mins)**

(a) With diversity comes an exchange of cultural practices, ideas, skills and experiences. Food is often an area that demonstrates how these exchanges can have a positive effect and thereby encourage harmony.

In your groups, discuss any Singaporean dish that has evolved or is a result of cultural exchange.

Name of Dish:
Ingredients:
Origin(s):

Adaptation(s):

Answers: Accept any reasonable answer. Examples are -

Name: Fish Head Curry

- Ingredients: Curry spices (such as cumin, turmeric, coriander, chilli, mustard seeds, cinnamon, etc.), ginger, garlic, onion, coconut milk, tomato, lady's finger, eggplant, Red Snapper head
- Origin(s): Introduced by the Indians, and adapted to suit the taste of the Chinese
- Adaptation(s): Spices and cooking methods are the same as that of the traditional South Indian fish curry. However, fish head is used instead, as the inventor of this dish, an Indian, noticed that the Chinese view fish head as a delicacy. It is now served in Indian, Chinese, Malay and even Peranakan restaurants.

Name: *Nasi Lemak*

- Ingredients: Rice steamed in coconut milk and pandan leaves; original side dishes are fried fish (*ikan selar kuning*), anchovies (*ikan bilis*), water spinach (*kangkong*) and *sambal* chilli paste, all wrapped in a banana leaf
- Origin(s): Introduced by the Malays, traditionally as an economical breakfast
- Adaptations: Adapted by the Chinese to include many other side dishes that may also be non-halal e.g. fish cake, deep fried bean curd, curry vegetables, luncheon meat, etc. It can be sold all throughout the day at Malay and Chinese food stalls.

(b) In your groups, organise a school or community activity / event that could encourage interaction between the different ethnic groups in Singapore. This activity / event should promote understanding and harmonious living amongst the groups involved. Present your ideas to the class using the table below as a guide.

Name of Activity / Event:	
Objective(s) of Activity / Event:	
Target Audience:	
Venue:	
Programme Brief:	

Suggestion to Teacher:

You may complete this question as a post-visit activity. Set aside some time for the students to critique each other's work.

Note to Teacher:

For more on cultural diversity in Singapore, check out these Secondary School programmes:

- My Singapore, My Home
- TREES: Our Natural Heritage
- There was a Time