

**Using Role Play to Interpret
Historical Evidence in the Context of
Singapore's Political Development after WWII**

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OVERVIEW

1. Challenges with Chapter 6
2. Benefits of Roleplay
3. Implementation Process
4. Outcomes + Students' Responses
5. Difficulties and Moving Forward
6. FAQs

TB
Information
/ facts/
sources

ROLEPLAY



Historical
Understanding

- Construction of meaningful historical narratives
- Understanding multiple perspectives

Evidence



1. CHALLENGES WITH
CHAPTER 6

“Content heavy”

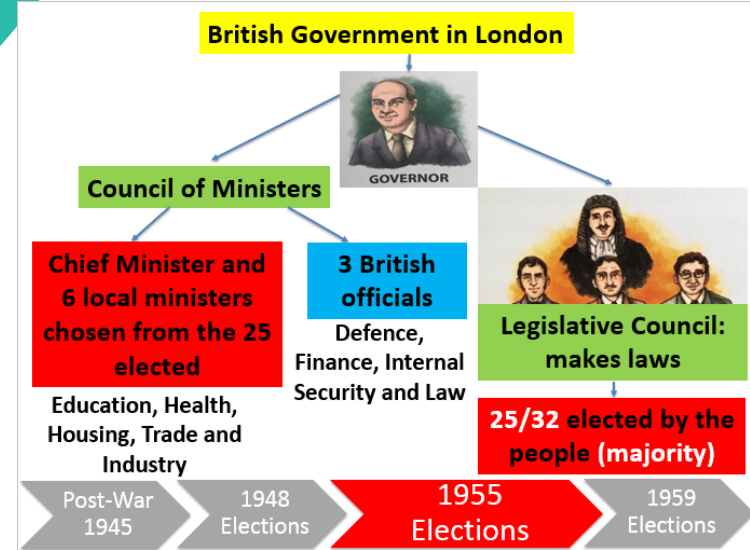
“Boring”

“Complex: Multiple players and events”



“Unrelatable”

“Historical narrative not clear from TB”





*Role-play encourages students to analyse events and characters, interpret evidences and reconstruct historical events and characters
(Khan, 2001)*

2. Benefits of Role Play

BENEFITS OF ROLEPLAY

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Effective as a means to help students comprehend **abstract concepts** (Towill, 1997)

Analysis of sources used to drive comprehension of abstract concepts

Think critically about past events (Foster, 1999)

Students analyse **evidence** in order to construct meaningful historical narratives.

Contextualises information (Alkin, 2002)

Evidence must be understood in context, especially to understand multiple perspectives

BENEFITS OF ROLEPLAY

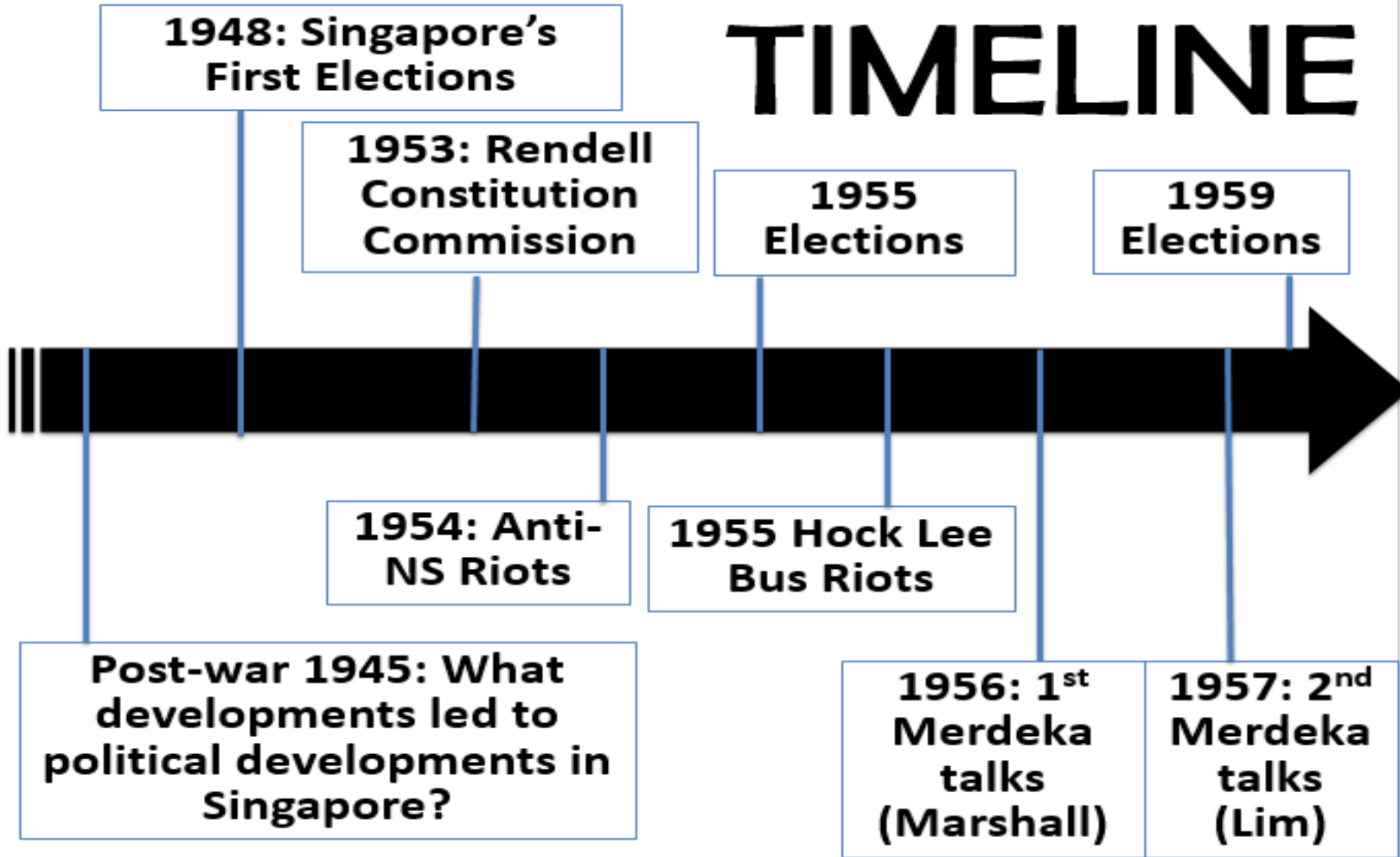
THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Considerations Outlined by TLG

Design process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role-play applied in a complementary and consistent approach, students remain in-character across entire series of lessons• Evidence supports role-play
Participants to take roles	Every student to have a role: classroom as a microcosm reflecting variety of people's aspirations
Stimulate environment	Pictures, re-enactments, voting exercises, coffeeshop talk (Using historical evidence)
Provide facts and information	Evidence-based roleplay: Authentic sources (videos, newspaper articles, pictures), PPT slides, character cards, SBQ practices, election pamphlets, voting slips

3. Implementation Process

TIMELINE



OVERVIEW OF LESSONS

Across the Sec 2 Cohort, Express and NA
Two 35-mins lessons a week

Week	Lesson Topic	Lesson Materials
1	Introduction to Character Cards and Political Developments in Singapore	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT slides + Video2. Worksheet (what motivated political change?)3. Character Cards
2	1948 Elections + Rendell Constitution Commission and Anti-National Service Riots	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT Slides2. Overview of elections in Singapore3. Script for Chinese Medium School Students4. Newspaper article inference questions
3 & 4	1955 Elections	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT Slides + Video2. 1955 Elections pamphlets3. 1955 voting slips
5	Labour Front Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT Slides + Video2. David Marshall SBQ
6	Communist Threat + 1959 Elections	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT Slides + Video
7	Merger and Separation ("Flipped Classroom")	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. PPT Slides2. Diary Entry

MEET THE CHARACTERS!



Name: Tan Eng Joo

Age: 40 years old

Occupation: Businessman

Race: Chinese

Highest Education:
University degree



You are an English-speaking, highly educated businessman. Before the war, you had a lot of business dealings with the British. Life was rather smooth sailing.

Your children all attend English medium schools and your family have adopted English ways of dressing, customs and past-times.



POSTWAR 1945



**“What is your
greatest
worry/
concern now?”**

**Analysing
evidence
through
multiple
perspectives**

POSTWAR 1945

Sample of students' response (Tan Eng Joo, Businessman affiliated to British)

Chapter 6: What aspirations did the people have for Singapore after 1945?
Lesson 1: What motivated political change in Singapore?

What motivated political change in Singapore?

Factor

How does this affect you?

Students see that characters react to different events according to their needs
→ Mindful to consider author of the source and author's motive when analysing evidence themselves

1948 ELECTIONS

So is any one of your characters thinking of voting?



Post-War
1945

1948
Elections

1955
Elections

1959
Elections



Mirza Abdul
Majid



Nazir Ahmad
Mallal



Tan Chye
Cheng



1948 Elections: Teacher asks those who want to vote to stand; Teacher goes around the class instructing characters to sit because they cannot vote; only British subjects allowed to vote

Learning Content: Voting not compulsory, registration not automatic, not all were eligible to vote

1948 ELECTIONS

So is any one of your characters thinking of voting?



Post-War
1945

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Elections

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Elections



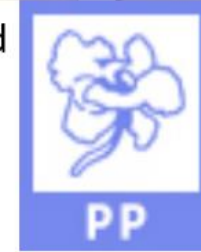
Mirza Abdul
Majid



Nazir Ahmad
Mallal



Tan Chye
Cheng



Students questioned about feelings towards 1948 elections → unfair → Need for Rendel Constitution (greater voting rights)

Students understand links between events and political developments otherwise taught in isolation



Video

The Straits Times

14 May 1954

BOYS BATTLE POLICE 26 injured in street clashes

Girls join in protest on call-up

FIVE HUNDRED Chinese schoolboys and girls demonstrating against National Service clashed twice with the Singapore Police yesterday as they tried to march on Government House.

A police sergeant is in hospital with a suspected fracture of the skull received when he was hit by a flying stone. Six more policemen got slight stab wounds, but were not kept in hospital.

About 20 schoolchildren, some of them girls, were injured in struggles—first in Clemenceau Avenue and later in Penang Road.

Police arrested 44 boys and a girl. She was released on arrival at the Central

ANTI-NS RIOTS

Police watch while boys hold meeting

Later last night about 1,000 schoolboys locked themselves in the Chung Cheng High School in Goodman Road to hold a meeting. Police stood by to watch for any further trouble.

The boys posted sentries at all the entrances and refused to allow anyone to enter.

The sentries—young girls in pig tails and boys in singlets and shorts—had orders to stop outsiders from entering. Only certain pupils, those on errands for the rest, were allowed to leave.

Parents and relatives who had come for their children were allowed brief interviews through the school gates.

The sentries kept assuring worried mothers who remained outside for hours not to worry.

"Go back and sleep," said one of the sentries, a bespectacled boy. "Your children are all right and

Yesterday afternoon, the boys and girls, some of them as young as 12 years old, came mainly from the Chung Cheng High School. They were joined later by others from the Chinese High School in Bukit Timah Road.

Youths not wearing any school uniforms were also seen demonstrating with them.

Both schools recently sent petitions to the Government asking for exemption from National Service. On Wednesday the Officer Administering the Government, Mr. W. A. C. Goode, agreed to meet a delegation of eight.

At 2 p.m. yesterday 17 lorries loaded with boys and girls left the school in Goodman Road. They went through the town to Fort Canning Road, where they were diverted by police into Clemenceau Avenue.

- Active participation
- Analysing Evidence in context
- Incorporation of skills practice (SBQ) into the lesson plan

1955 ELECTIONS

WHAT IS
VOTING?

WHAT IS
VOTING?

1955 Elections Voting Slip

Draw an X in the box next to the party of your choice.



PP
Progressive Party

Character's Name:

What are the reasons why your character

Providing justification: Students make use of evidence to justify their choices

Persuading and sharing perspectives: Students share different characters' point of view

Tangible: Students learn that people's aspirations shaped political developments



Video

1:07: “You all got write in (as) your character or not??”

Students take responsibility for their character’s role and functions (Jones, 1982)

-To ensure that their perspectives are accurately and adequately represented, students have to evaluate and synthesise evidence



1:08 / 1:45





**LABOUR FRONT
(LF)**

Reasons for supporting the LF

- 'The LF cares about the rights of the workers. The background of the members are from trade unions.'
- 'The SPP wants gradual self-government but the LF wants immediate self-government. The PAP wants immediate independence, but Singapore may not be able to survive'.

Post-War
1945

1948
Elections

1955
Elections

1959
Elections

HOW DID YOUR CLASS VOTE?



8 votes

**Did the PAP
really win in 1955?**



14 votes (35%)

PEOPLE'S ACTION
PARTY (PAP)

18 votes (45%)

Post-War
1945

1948
Elections

1955
Elections

1959
Elections

LF GOVERNMENT

Source A: A bibliography account of David Marshall's term as Chief Minister of Singapore, published in 1965

Marshall's argument with *Nicoll at the start of his term was infamous. The British did not give Marshall a proper office at the Parliament House. Outraged, Marshall threatened to set up a chair and table under the old apple tree at Empress Place. The British hurriedly created a makeshift ***cubby-hole" under the staircase, an office not more than 4 by 3 metres, with one lamp, one table, two chairs and one calendar. He used this space, working in full view of all who walked past for about a month until a proper room was prepared for him.

*Nicoll was the British governor of Singapore

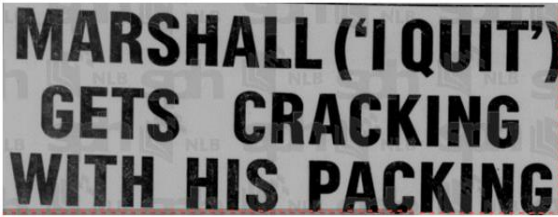
**A cubby-hole is a cramped space, usually for children to play in

Source B: An adapted excerpt about the Merdeka talks taken from the book 'Leaders of Singapore', published in 1996

The Merdeka talks returned in failure. Demands for full internal self-government were refused. The British felt that the Labour Front government was too weak, and the communist elements in Singapore too powerful. "We do not intend that Singapore should become an outpost of communist China and in fact, a colony of Beijing," the British warned. They wanted a strong, stable government to protect British economic and defence interest, and keep Singapore out of Communist hands.

Source C: Marshall's speech to Singaporeans before the Merdeka talks, published in The Straits Times, 14 April 1956

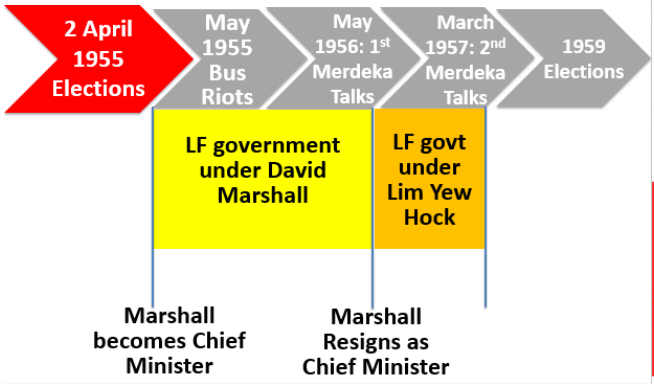
Singapore is ready for self-government. Britain wants Singapore as a defence base. We agree. Britain wants Singapore as a prosperous free port. This is the destiny we seek. Britain wants to keep Singapore free from the deadly clutches of communism. We are of the same mind. We shall convince them that you can kill communism with truth, you cannot kill it with bullets.



The Straits Times Headlines, 27 May 1956

Complete the SBQ to find out:
Why did the British refuse to grant Singapore internal self-government under David Marshall?

Why did David Marshall resign as Chief Minister?
Why was he unsuccessful at the 1st Merdeka Talks?



Linking events and people:

Marshall's personality + Hock Lee Bus Riots → Failure at Merdeka Talks + Resignation → Lim's tough stance towards trade unions/communist → LF loss in 1959 elections

Historical Context important to interpreting evidence

1959 ELECTIONS

Lim Yew Hock moved quickly to try and **suppress the communists**. He **banished** two Chung Cheng High School Teachers and **dissolved the Chinese Middle School Students' Union**. Lim's government confirmed its reputation for toughness in its handling of the Chinese Middle School riots in October 1956. **Teargas and helicopters** were brought in and many key pro-communist union leaders in the PAP **were detained under the Public Security Act**. But in doing so, he **alienated a large portion of the Chinese-speaking electorate**.

The Straits Time, 1 Dec 1984

Why did Lim have to suppress the communist?
How would you feel if you were Soh Loh Boon or Jamit Singh?
How do you think this affected LF in the next elections?

- Questioning evidence to get students to think critically
- Getting students to think from the perspective of their characters

1959 ELECTIONS

Students to refer to character cards.

Students are to sit if PAP's goals positively affect their character.

1. Possibly: May Oehlers, Soh Loh Boon, Mohammed Tahir, Siti Nordiana
2. Jamit Singh, Chen Ah Koon
3. Mohammed Tahir, Siti Nordiana
4. Possibly: Soh Loh Boon, Jamit Singh, Tan Eng Joo
5. Tan Chong Tee

Most if not all students should be seated at the end

PAP's campaign messages in 1959

1. To build more schools
2. To build a strong and united trade union movement
3. To carry out a low-cost housing programme
4. To raise the status of women and introduce a women's charter
5. To promote industrial development and set up an Economic Development Board
6. Independence through merger with Malaya

-People's Aspirations/ Character's perspectives

-Learning Content: PAP's campaign messages appealed to the mass base- reason why it was successful in the 1959 elections

The background features a central teal-colored band with white text. Above and below this band are abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green and teal, creating a layered, mountain-like effect.

4. Outcomes and Students' Responses

OUTCOMES

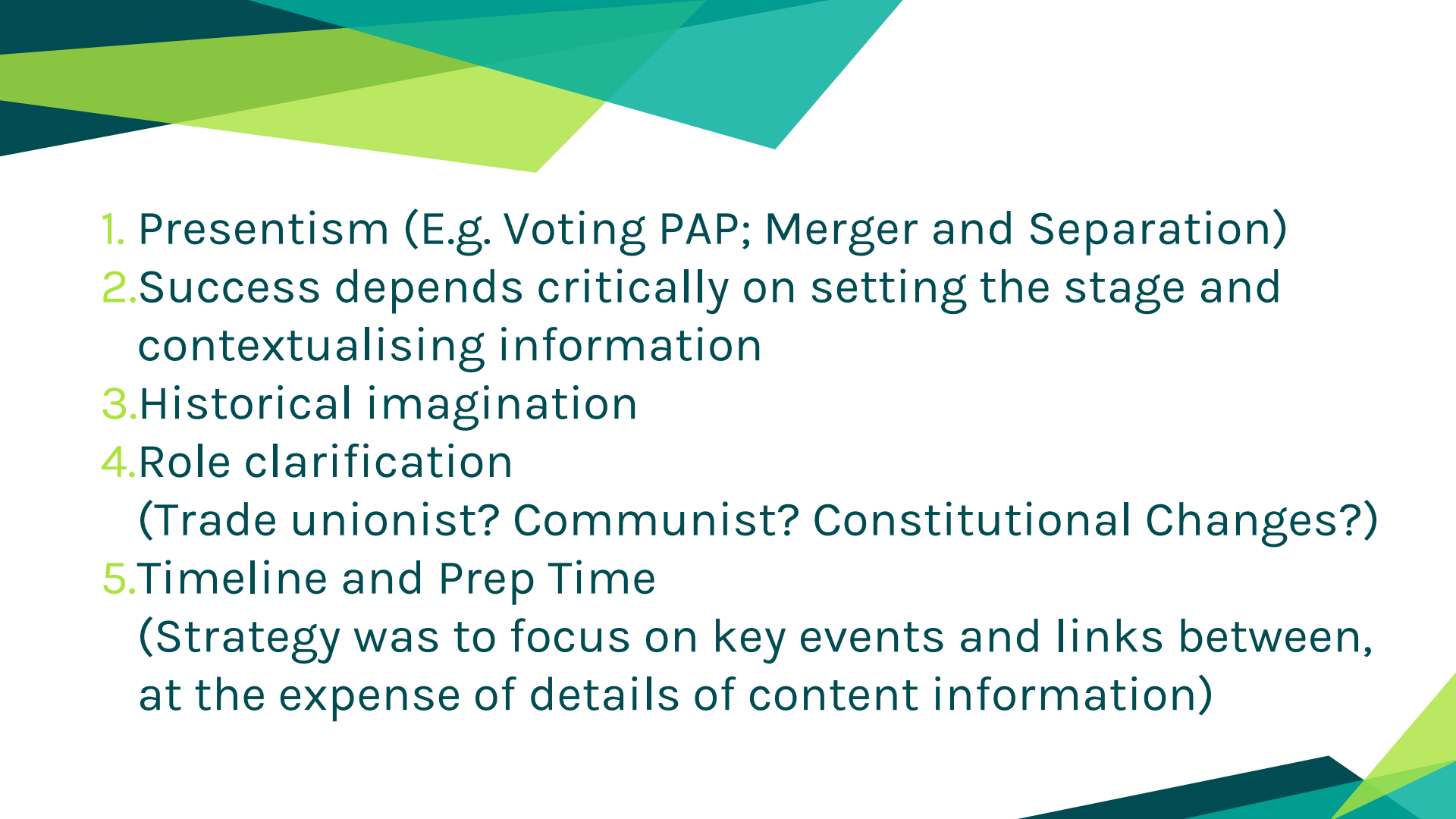
1. Deepened understanding of evidence: Need to consider Historical context, origin, purpose
2. Big picture of how different aspirations interact and collectively shape Singapore's political development
3. Promotes reflective thinking disposition through questions
4. Increased interest and participation in History lessons
5. Promotes reflective thinking disposition through questions
6. Developed empathy through taking on/sharing perspectives

STUDENT RESPONSES

- ◆ “It was very enriching as we got to see real artefacts and it made me more curious”
- ◆ “It helped me think deeper into the different groups of people and how they might have felt, thus empathising with them and understanding why they took certain actions”
- ◆ “I like how the lessons were hands-on like voting and role play”
- ◆ “Sometimes I was confused about the actual facts because I was thinking about how my character felt”
- ◆ “We could only stick to one character”
- ◆ “We are not focused on writing exam questions”

The background features a central teal-colored band with white text. Above and below this band are abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green, creating a layered, mountain-like effect.

5. Difficulties and Moving Forward

- 
1. Presentism (E.g. Voting PAP; Merger and Separation)
 2. Success depends critically on setting the stage and contextualising information
 3. Historical imagination
 4. Role clarification
(Trade unionist? Communist? Constitutional Changes?)
 5. Timeline and Prep Time
(Strategy was to focus on key events and links between, at the expense of details of content information)



Thank You!
Any questions?