

The search for our National Symbols

“The Search for Our National Symbols” is a virtual Escape Room that takes the player back to Singapore in 1959. In this game, the player has to help a police inspector find three missing national symbols by looking around the scenes of the page (by dragging with your mouse or finger) and then tapping on “information spot” icons to solve puzzles about the cultural heritage sites.

Particularities

The game takes place completely online with you as the only player helping the inspector.

At the start, you find yourself in front of a historical building. Only by reading clues on the page about the building can you solve the first puzzle and then enter inside.

The key concepts are:

- Using your mouse to explore the setting and clicking on the information spots to read cultural heritage information that serve as clues to enigmas.
- Individual gameplay without any time constraints, so no need to coordinate with other players and the pace of the game depends on you.

The game is not set in one building, but instead takes you to a different cultural heritage site for each missing national symbol that you find (you will explore several rooms at the cultural heritage sites).

Why is it relevant to teach languages

Language learning and Cultural Heritage are intertwined – in order for students to better understand the language they are learning, they need to become familiar with the cultural context underlying it. Familiarizing themselves with cultural elements of another language also promotes better oral expression as educators can encourage students to compare and contrast with aspects of their own cultures.

- **The role of the Game Master:** The police inspector plays the role of Game Master, but the player does not see him in the game. Instead, he communicates by using narration on the information spots to disclose clues to advance the game, and he provides hints when the player is stuck.
- **Focus on cultural heritage:** This Escape Room teaches the player about cultural heritage sites and national symbols. Therefore, the scenario, enigmas and overall setting use cultural heritage elements (appropriate vocabulary, themes, characters...) to set the context and further the story.
- **Use of different media:** The escape room uses historical photographs, musical compositions, paintings and other visual and auditory resources to immerse the player in the setting and complement the theme.
- **Spotlight on pedagogical goals:** Solving the enigmas in this Escape Room entails finding three national symbols. For every missing national symbol that's been discovered, the game takes you to a separate page in order to provide a detailed visual and textual explanation on the cultural significance of each symbol. This ensures that the player can have a better grasp of the intended learning objectives.

Resource

Preservation of Sites and Monuments - National Heritage Board Singapore (2020) The Search for Our National Symbols. Available at: <http://psmnhb.com/escape/>.