



WILD  
RICE

**YOU ARE HERE**

**LEARNING RESOURCE PACK**

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# ABOUT THE PLAY

## Synopsis

This is where you are always home. This is where you are never home.

Pooja Nansi was born in India and came to Singapore at the age of one. Her story and her history bear the weight of travellers past – from her parents’ decision to settle in another country, to her grandparents’ border-crossing romance. Her answer to the question, “Are you Singaporean?”, is infinitely complicated. After all, where and how do you even begin to testify on behalf of the ghosts in your blood? And how do you speak when you do?

Through a heartfelt, humorous mix of her trademark poetry and storytelling, Pooja attempts to find a place for her family’s messy sprawl of stories in orderly Singapore. *You Are Here* transforms faded family photos, snatches of song, hazy childhood memories, and even the tiniest daily microaggressions, into a meditation on migration, love and the pleasures and anxieties of belonging. As Pooja soon discovers, a map doesn’t provide you with answers – it only suggests where you should begin.

***You Are Here*** was first performed to great acclaim as part of Checkpoint Theatre’s *What I Love About You Is Your Attitude Problem* in November 2015. Thereafter, it was staged at Kalaa Utsavam – Indian Festival of Arts in 2016. This production has been reimagined and updated in collaboration with award-winning theatre director Edith Podesta.



# Creative & Production Team

## Cast

Pooja Nansi

## Creative Team

Playwright **Pooja Nansi**

Director **Edith Podesta**

Dramaturg **Joel Tan**

Lighting Designer **Wild Rice Technical Team**

Sound Designer **Ramesh Krishnan**

Multimedia Designer **Mervin Wong**

## Production Team

Producer **Koh Bee Bee**

Production Manager **Melissa Teoh**

Technical Manager **David Sagaya**

Production Assistant **Angela Ee**

Stage Manager **Marilyn Chew**

Assistant Stage Manager **Anne Lee**

Technicians **Ahmad Hafriz Bin Berkath, Muhammad Azhar Bin Azman &**

**Sim Khet Kheng**

Dresser **Tiffany Chai**

## Biographies



### **POOJA NANSI** – Playwright & Performer

Pooja's third and latest collection of poetry, *We Make Spaces Divine*, was published in January 2021. Her key performance work includes *Thick Beats for Good Girls*, which explored the intersections between feminism, identity and hip hop. She was a recipient of the National Arts Council Young Artist Award in 2016. She is also the co-founder of Other Tongues, a literary festival of minority voices, and is the current festival director of the Singapore Writers Festival.

### **Where did your ancestors come from?**

*Various parts of India*

### **Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?**

*My parents*

### **Why did they come to Singapore?**

*My father found a job that brought him here on a professional contract.*







### **EDITH PODESTA** – Director

An award-winning theatre-maker, choreographer and actor, Edith studied Acting and Movement Studies at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Arts, and holds a Master of Fine Arts from LASALLE College of the Arts. She wrote, directed and starred in *BITCH: The Origin of the Female Species* (M1 Fringe Festival) and *Leda and the Rage* (The Esplanade), which were both named Production of the Year at the Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards. Edith is currently Associate Artistic Director of Young & Wild, a division of Wild Rice. For eight years, she served as Programme Leader of the B.A. (Hons) Acting course at LASALLE.

#### **Where did your ancestors come from?**

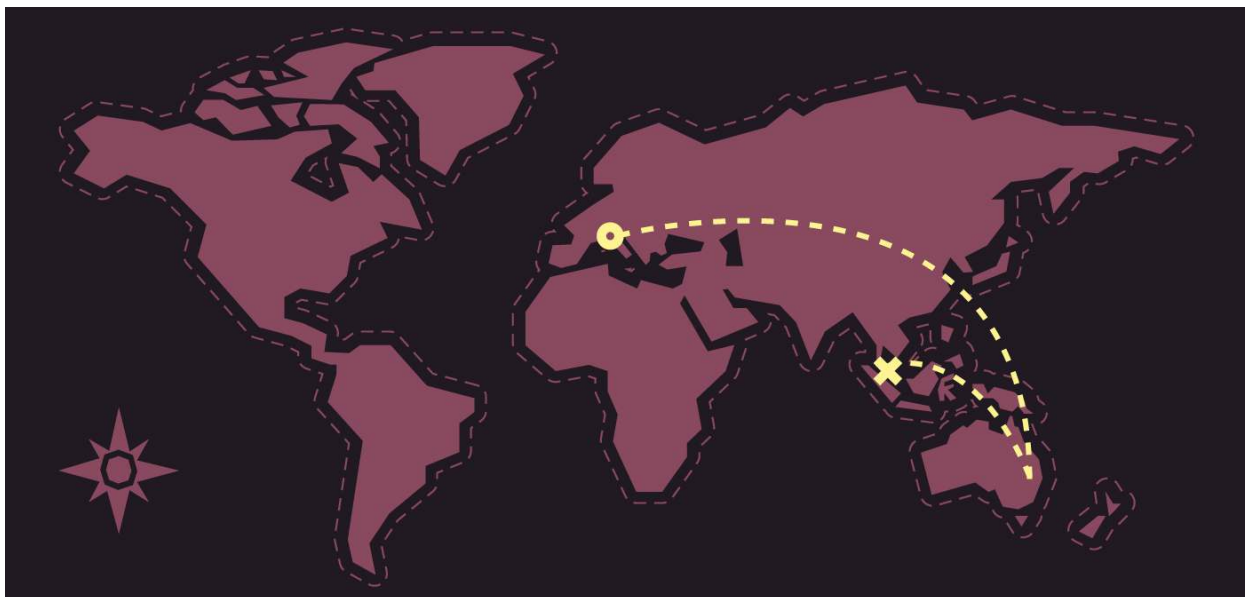
*John Podesta emigrated to Australia from Genoa, Italy, establishing an ice cream company in Sydney in 1880.*

#### **Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?**

*I am!*

#### **Why did you come to Singapore?**

*I was already interested in the region's traditional theatrical art forms, so I was happy to come teach at what's now known as the Intercultural Theatre Institute.*





**JOEL TAN** – Dramaturg

Joel's plays, which include *Mosaic*, *Tango* and *The Way We Go*, have received acclaim for their incisive and lyrical interrogation of life in Singapore and beyond. He also works in creative non-fiction, film and audio.

**Where did your ancestors come from?**

*Hainan Island, China*

**Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?**

*All of my grandparents were migrants to Singapore.*

**Why did they come to Singapore?**

*To escape poverty.*







**RAMESH KRISHAN** – Sound Designer

Ramesh's career as a sound designer began in 2004, when he collaborated on Marseilles-based artist Mathieu Briand's *Derrière Le Monde Flottant* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Lyon. In 2009, he took on *Quest for Immortality* and *Singapore 1960*, exhibitions held at the National Museum of Singapore, for which he created original compositions by re-arranging historical recordings into experimental soundscapes. Ramesh received the President's Design Award in 2010 for his work on *Quest for Immortality*.

**Where did your ancestors come from?**

Goa, Western India, and Bawean, East Java

**Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?**

My grandparents on both sides!

**Why did they come to Singapore?**

For better opportunities and a fresh start.





**MERVIN WONG** – Multimedia Designer

Mervin is a composer, new media and sound artist, and multimedia designer. His studio, Theemptybluesky Productions, specialises in the end-to-end production and design of remarkable experiences. Mervin's alternate identity is the electronic producer, PLANESWALKER, whose recent credits include a commissioned performance as part of the Singapore International Festival of Arts' Sound Social Series (2020), as well as *Grains*, a sound installation that was part of the Shifting Between group exhibition for Singapore Art Week 2021.

**Where did your ancestors come from?**

*Guangzhou, China*

**Who is the first person from your family that settled in Singapore?**

*As far as I know, my maternal grandmother.*

**Why did they come to Singapore?**

*To seek out a better life.*



# INTERVIEWS

## Here and Now with Pooja Nansi

By Shawne Wang

*We chat with poet, playwright and performer Pooja Nansi about digging into her family archives for **You Are Here** - her tender, illuminating solo show about what it means to find a place to call home.*



### **What inspired you to write *You Are Here*?**

*You Are Here* is a project that came out of me trying to make sense of who I am and where I feel like I belong. I'm a child of immigrants; I was born in India and only arrived in Singapore at the age of one, when my parents decided to settle in another country. I've grown up here, listening to them always reminiscing about "home". At the same time, I've heard so many stories about my grandparents and great-grandparents.

In 2015, when I did my writing residency at NTU, it afforded me the time and resources to travel and conduct oral interviews with family members and dig into their personal family archives. It made me realise there were extraordinary stories there, within otherwise ordinary lives, that deserved to be documented and honoured.

*“People often think poetry only happens on a page. But my practice has always been in performance poetry, and I have always thought of words as living things that carry energy.”*

**As a poet, you also tell stories through the poetry you write. Why did you decide to create *You Are Here* as a piece of theatre? What is it about the medium that helps you tell the story you want to tell?**

People often think poetry only happens on a page. But my practice has always been in performance poetry, and I have always thought of words as living things that carry energy. For me, these were stories that needed to be shared. And so much of these memories lie in sensory objects, like photographs and songs, that a performance piece allowed me to explore these mediums.

**How has the play evolved since you first came up with the original concept?**

The show is different every time I perform it, because I find myself in a new place each time. Since the last time I performed it four years ago, I've become a mother, which makes me look at the women who mothered me in a new light. I've also learnt to navigate the challenges of encountering this city in my body – as a minority woman – differently than I would have in my younger years. All of that makes me look at the material through a different lens, and that's why the stories land differently for me each time as well, even though I have told them so many times!





**Pooja performing *You Are Here* at The Esplanade in 2016**

**Tell us about the evolution of *You Are Here* - how, where and when did this show encounter its first audiences?**

The first incarnation of the show was actually in 2015 at the Singapore Writers Festival. As mentioned, it coincided with my residency at NTU. So, a lot of the writing and research happened before that iteration, which was actually just a pretty simple presentation with readings and PowerPoint slides. I was working with my friend and collaborator, Joel Tan, on the dramaturgy of the piece.

Subsequent iterations at Esplanade Studios RAW and Kalaa Utsavam involved thinking about how we could harness the possibilities of a theatre space for the show. We also took the show to the Queensland Poetry Festival in 2016, which presented us the challenge of contextualising details that were so uniquely Singaporean for an international audience.

## **How will you be updating this play for this new production with Wild Rice?**

In this iteration with Wild Rice, I'm so happy to continue to have Joel on board to help me re-examine the writing and text, and add to it elements that feel urgent for where I am at in my life. Working with this current creative team – especially Edith [Podesta, director], Ramesh [Krishnan, sound designer] and Mervin [Wong, multimedia designer] – feels like a real gift too, because each of them has been so intuitive about the intention behind my writing and all of their work adds a layer of meaning to the text I could never have achieved on my own.

## **Does performing come naturally to you? What are the most challenging and rewarding aspects of performing a show, as opposed to writing it?**

I don't know if performing is natural to anybody. Performance, by its definition, is artifice. But using words to connect to audiences and readers is what my practice is about. Writing is a solitary process. You make sense of complicated things, put them on a page and you're done. When you need to be the conduit of those emotions for an audience, you need to relive the intention behind all of those words and feel those feelings in your whole body. That can take its toll but it also constantly reminds you of the beautiful complexity of life.

## **The concepts of 'home' and discovering where you belong lie at the heart of *You Are Here*. What does 'home' mean to you?**

Hah. I wrote a show about it. It runs from 22nd April to 2nd May at Wild Rice. Come watch it. 😊



## Home Is Where The Heart Is for Edith Podesta

By Shawne Wang

*You Are Here resonates with director Edith Podesta in more ways than one - she's been in Singapore since 2006, and has called it home ever since. We chat with her about her own migration story, and what inspires her about the show.*



### **How does Pooja Nansi's *You Are Here* excite and inspire you?**

The reason why I love *You Are Here* is because it's so deeply personal and deeply specific that it forces me to reflect on my own experiences. I'm always constantly reminded of my own parents. My own grandparents. My own origin stories.

There's also a deep undercurrent of love for Singapore and a deep undercurrent of concern for the future. You know - how do we tell who we are and who our families are to our children and our children's children? And who are we within that family tree? What makes a family? What makes a home?

I'm always forced in a really beautiful way to question what makes Singapore home - what makes Singapore special? I've been working on this show for more than a month, and I'm still thinking about the answers to these questions!

## **Can you share your own story of how you came to live and work in Singapore?**

I came to Singapore in 2006 because I was extremely interested in Asian traditional theatrical art forms. At the time, I came here to work with what is now known as ITI (Intercultural Theatre Institute) as their movement lecturer.

I stayed because I absolutely adored the theatre industry here. I could see so many different shows, so many different genres, different aspects, different viewpoints of the world, and in so many different languages as well, every single weekend. I really did a deep dive and, after six months here, I fell in love. It's like Singapore became my boyfriend and I didn't want to leave!

*"Home is where the heart is. I stay here because my friends are here. I stay here because I'm still so very passionate about the work that Singaporean artists do. So there's a lot of heart here."*

## **Would you call Singapore home?**

Home is where the heart is. I stay here because my friends are here. I stay here because I'm still so very passionate about the work that Singaporean artists do. So there's a lot of heart here. I do miss my parents, who come over to Singapore quite often – it's like Singapore is their second home as well. But yeah, I feel very much at home here and I do love it.

## **Which aspect of the show particularly resonates with you?**

The women are very strong in this piece – Pooja's mother, her grandmothers and Pooja herself. And I really adore certain sections because they talk openly about what it is to be a woman in Singapore. So we find out where Pooja gets her strength from and that it runs in the family, which excites me a lot. I really do adore listening to her stories because it reminds me about how strong the women in my family are.



**What's it been like working with Pooja on this show?**

I love Pooja and it's so much fun to work with her! She's a poet, so you feel like you're sitting with greatness, I suppose, when you're rehearsing. We have a lot of laughs during rehearsal, so it's been really great!

**What do you hope audiences will take away from *You Are Here*?**

It's a real gift to the audience, I think, to spend an hour with this deeply personal story and reflect on your own experience. There are openings for that all the way through the show. It's funny, but it's very deeply resonant. Yes, I laugh, but there are times when I remember my own family, when I remember my own home. And there are also really sparks of joy in it as well.

So, yeah, come along. It's going to be great!

# DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

## General Discussion Points

1. What do you think are the main themes of the play?
2. What do you think are some of the reasons someone would choose to migrate to another country?
3. If given the chance to migrate overseas, would you do so?
4. Do you consider Singapore your home? Why or why not?
5. Do you know where your family – your grandparents, great-grandparents, ancestors – were originally from? Are you interested to visit their hometown(s)?
6. Was there any moment in the play that stood out for you? Why did it do so?
7. Which part(s) of the performance were you most affected/excited by?
8. Think about how this play was staged - the set, props, lighting, sound, costumes and multimedia. What effect did these elements have on your experience of the show?

# Themes and Issues: Migration & Identity

## Discussion Prompts

1. "Singapore is a melting pot of cultures." What are your views on this statement?
2. Do you think it is important for us to retain our traditional customs and practices? Why or why not?
3. In your opinion, what are some of the factors one has to consider when deciding whether or not to move to another country?

### Key Ideas

#### **Migration**

The movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location.

#### **Immigration**

The act of someone coming to live in a different country.

#### **Immigrant**

A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

#### **Race**

A division of people, most typically based on having different distinct physical characteristics.

#### **Ethnicity**

A social group that has a common and distinctive culture, language, tradition, heritage and the like.

#### **Religion**

A particular system of faith and worship, most typically in belief and worship of a god or gods.

#### **Nationality**

Denotes where a person was born. This is different from *citizenship*, which is dependent on the state of which one is a citizen. For example, a Malaysian national can have American citizenship.

**Diversity**

The practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations and so on.

**Culture**

The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. This can be thought of not just in terms of nationality (e.g. Singaporean culture), but also in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and class.

**Melting Pot**

A metaphor used when referring to a society where many different types of people, styles, customs, practices and cultures mix together and are assimilated into a cohesive whole.

**Identity**

The qualities, beliefs, personalities, looks and/or expressions that make up a person (self-identity) or group (particular social category or social group).

**Heritage**

Features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, food or even buildings, which were created in the past and still have historical importance.

**Multiculturalism**

The presence of, or support for the presence of, several distinct cultural or ethnic groups within a society.

**Discrimination**

The unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups because of certain characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

**Cultural Sensitivity**

Being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value – positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong.

**Privilege**

Privilege is defined as a special right, an advantage granted only to some (a particular person or a group).

**Tradition**

A long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another.



**Social Problem**

Any condition or behaviour that has negative consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognised as a condition or behaviour that needs to be addressed.

**Displacement**

The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes, particularly as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

**Asylum Seeker**

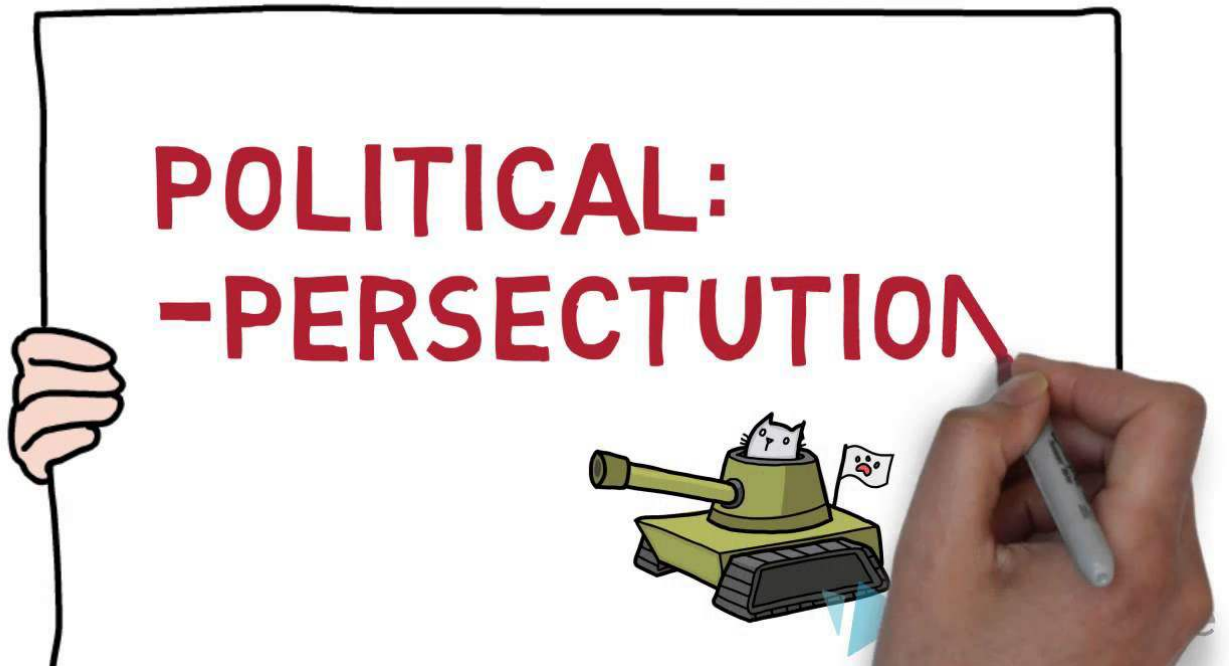
A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another country.

## Suggested Activities

### Watch & Discuss: Why do People Migrate?

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another with intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily, at a new location.

There are many reasons why people would migrate. Watch the video to find out more about the different reasons.



### Possible Discussion Prompts

- Can you recall the different reasons people migrate?
- Is migration permanent or temporary?
- Should people not stay in their own country?
- What are the pros and cons of migrating?
- What are some of the challenges people who are migrating could face?

## **Activity: What's in a Name?**

Our names are the words or set of words that we are known by. They are typically given to us by our parents or relatives, and they usually have links to our ancestry, culture or heritage. Our names form the basis of our identities.

In a class, ask the students to say their names, one by one, and ask them to share one thing about each of their names. They can share and talk about their first, middle or last name.

Some possible discussion points include the following:

- What does your name mean?
- Do you know the origins of your name?
- Is your name associated with a particular language, culture or heritage?
- Are you named after someone?
- Who gave you your name?

## **Extension Activity: What's in a Name?**

Our names are part of our identities and, as Singapore is home to people from all corners of the world, some may have names that are less commonly known. However, it is still important for us to learn and pronounce people's names correctly.

The following article, "What's In A Name?" – published in *What's Up*, a monthly newspaper for students – shares stories of people who have experienced casual racism when people get their names wrong and what that experience feels like.

Link: <https://more.whatsup.sg/whats-in-a-name/>

Discuss with the class any learning points or takeaways after reading the article.

## **Discussion Prompts**

1. How do you think these people feel when others constantly get their names wrong?
2. Is it important to learn how to pronounce people's names accurately?
3. Is it appropriate to give someone a nickname if it is difficult to pronounce their names?
4. Are there any names that are less commonly known, but which you know and can pronounce? How did you learn to pronounce this name?

## Activity: Tracing our Ancestry

Our ancestors originated from different countries, and moved to Singapore for one reason or another. Find out more about your ancestry by doing some research – start by asking your parents or your grandparents. Your paternal and maternal ancestors may have different reasons for coming to Singapore – try to find out more from both sides of your family!

Question	Answer
<b>Where did you ancestors come from?</b>	
<b>Who is the first person in your family that settled in Singapore?</b>	
<b>Why did they come to Singapore?</b>	

After finding out where their ancestors came from, students can share their findings with the class.

## Discussion: What Makes Singapore Home for You?

There are many different reasons why we would identify a place as a home. What are some of the reasons that make Singapore home for you?

Encourage your students to be honest – it could be family, friends, food, architecture, the languages we speak, the art we create, or the fact that Changi Airport is ranked as one of the world best's airports!

These are personal reasons, and will vary for each individual.

## Read & Discuss: Get Used to People's Different Appearances

People from different parts of the world look different. You might be able to recognise people as coming from a particular country or region based on their looks. However, nowadays, with global migration and increasingly porous borders, you can find people of varying races, ethnicities, backgrounds and nationalities living in the same country and the same town.

Your next-door neighbour might look very different from you as a result of their ethnicity, but both of you may be born in the same country.

At times, people who are minorities in a country may face discrimination because they look different from the majority group. In the show, Pooja mentions that she has received comments such as, *"Indian girl can be very pretty – you know or not, girl?"*, and *"But you're not 'pure Indian' Indian, right? You look so pretty."*

Read the article below, "Get Used To People's Different Appearances", which shares three individuals' experiences of discrimination based on the way they look.

Link: <https://more.whatsup.sg/get-used-to-peoples-different-appearances/>

Discuss with the class any learning points or takeaways after reading the article.

### Discussion Prompts - What You Can Do

In groups, the students can discuss the different suggestions provided within the article when it comes to 'what you can do'.

The article suggests: "Ban racial discrimination amongst your friends."

- What stops us from speaking up when we see racial discrimination?
- How can we become more aware about racial discrimination?
- How would you speak with a friend if you feel that they are being disrespectful of someone else?

## Discussion: Culture and Traditions in Singapore

Singapore is a country made up of people from many different countries – some of us were born here, while some of us moved here. More likely than not, your ancestors came and settled in Singapore, bringing along their practices, cultures and traditions that continue to be practised today.

Read The Straits Times article below, *'Singapore's approach to diversity has created a distinctive identity across ethnic groups: PM Lee Hsien Loong'*, by Nur Asyiqin Mohammad Salleh. In this article, PM Lee talks about how Singapore is not a melting pot, but rather a place where each race is encouraged to preserve its unique culture and traditions.

Link:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/singapolitics/pm-whether-chinese-malay-or-indian-a-singaporean-can-spot-a-fellow-citizen>

### Discussion Prompts

1. How have you been encouraged to preserve your own cultures and traditions? Do you have any examples of this?
2. Have you ever visited the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, the Indian Heritage Centre and/or the Malay Heritage Centre? What do you think are the roles of these sites in preserving cultural identity?
3. In the article, PM Lee said that, 'Our aim is integration, not assimilation.' What is the difference between 'integration' and 'assimilation'?



### Activity: Preservation of Culture

A culture comprises ideas, customs and social behaviour, and it can also be considered in terms of the race, religion and/or ethnicity of a particular group of people or a society.

When people migrate, they bring their cultural beliefs and practices with them. These practices are part of one's culture, and can be preserved in both tangible and intangible forms. This happens in small ways, such as the ways in which we address our elders or the festivals we celebrate.

In the table below, we list down the key agents in the preservation and promulgation of culture and traditions. Can you provide some examples of how they do so?

Government	Community	Family	Individual
<i>e.g. Conservation of buildings</i>	<i>e.g. Celebration of festivals</i>	<i>e.g. Rituals and customs practiced</i>	<i>e.g. Learning languages or dialects of elders</i>

# Themes and Issues: Family

## Discussion Prompts

1. "Parents are a child's first and most important teacher." What are your views on this statement?
2. Many women now hold full-time jobs. However, a considerable part of the household and caregiving duties still seem to rest on their shoulders. Why do you think this is so? What effect does this have on women at the workplace?
3. Do you agree with the statement, "Parents should always put their children first"? Why?

### **Key Ideas**

#### **Family**

A group of people typically related by blood, marriage or law (i.e. adoption).

#### **Community**

A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.

#### **Household**

A group of individuals living under one roof.

#### **Care-giver**

Someone who provides direct care, typically for children, older people, or those who are ill.

#### **Childhood**

The period of being a child, ranging from birth to adolescence.

#### **Marriage**

The legally recognised union of two people as partners in a relationship, which establishes rights and obligations between them.

#### **Patriarch**

A man who is the head of a family.

#### **Matriarch**

A woman who is the head of a family.

**Nuclear Family**

A basic social unit comprising a father, mother and their children.

**Extended Family**

A family that extends beyond the nuclear family to include grandparents and other relatives.

**Mature**

A word used to describe a person having reached a stage of mental or emotional development characteristic of an adult.

**Adoption**

The action of legally taking another's child and bringing it up as one's own.

**Influence**

The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something.

**Family Values**

Traditional or cultural values about the structure and norms of families. Parents are often regarded as the ones who are responsible for the transmission of such values to their children.

**Gender Roles**

The behaviours, values, and attitudes that a society considers appropriate for each gender.

**Social Norms / Social Expectations**

In a particular community, a set of unspoken rules that guide the behaviour of its members.

**Conformity**

Behaviour that follows the usual standards that are expected by/of a group or society.

**Selflessness**

Being concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than one's own.

**Double Day, Double Shift, Double Duty or Second Shift**

Additional unpaid domestic labour, such as child-rearing, household chores and caring for the elderly, on top of holding a full-time job.

## Suggested Activities

### Activity: Family Tree

In Singapore, many of us live only with our immediate family members. We often only meet our extended family members at major holidays and events. Get the class to draw their family trees. How detailed can they make these family trees? How do they address each member of their family? How far back can they trace their family roots?

### Activity: Family Stories

Stories can help us learn about our history, who we are, our family and where they came from, and much more. Family stories provide us with roots, companionship and a sense of belonging.

Instruct your students to do this activity with one (or more) of their family members, and to share these stories with their classmates in future discussion sessions.

### Memory Maps

Recalling locations can be the best way to tap into our memories.

1. Draw a map of:
  - your favourite spot where you played as a child
  - your childhood home
  - your school
2. Tell a story about the site and share it with one another.
3. Optional follow-up activity: Create a family memory scrapbook of different maps and their accompanying stories. Make sure to mark which family member belongs to each map!

In class, the students can share their family members' as well as their own memory maps, and the stories accompanying them.

## Activity: A Survey of Households

In the show, Pooja shared the story of her grandmother, Padma, and how Padma took care of her parents – feeding them and even managing their last rites. She said, *“In the end... it is your daughters who will take care of you”*.

This trend of women serving as primary caregivers has continued till the present day – even though we now live in a time when women hold full-time jobs as well.

In this activity, instruct your students to list the various responsibilities and chores within a home. Next, ask the class if the chore is mostly done by the men or women in their households. Record your findings in a table, such as in the example below:

Responsibility / Chore	Mostly done by the men in the household	Mostly done by the women in the household
Making sure there are meals for the family		
Laundry		
Ironing		

Talk about the results. What do these results show? Do you think the results are a fair division of labour in your household? Think of the idea of the ‘Double Day’:

### Double Day, Double Shift, Double Duty or Second Shift

Additional unpaid domestic labour, such as child-rearing, household chores and caring for the elderly, on top of holding a full-time job.

In a family with two working parents, why do you think the majority of household and caring responsibilities tend to fall upon the women?

## **Class Project: Collected Family Recipes**

In the show, Pooja shared that, when her parents first came to Singapore in 1983, it was near impossible to find the kind of food they would eat at home anywhere outside, aside from two restaurants in Serangoon Road.

Nowadays, in Singapore, you can find many different types of cuisine at hawker centres and restaurants, making it easier to sample food that originated from other countries.

Some may argue that the most authentic food is cooked at home – especially when family recipes have been passed down from generation to generation.

Get to know the different foods that your friends eat at home. Compile a 'Collected Family Recipes' as a class. You may wish to include photographs in your collection. Refer to the following table as a guide for your recipes.

**Recipe Name**

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**Written by**

---

**Ingredients**

---

**Steps**

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**My Favourite Memory of this Dish**

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## Writing Poetry

In this section, we will share with you some information about how you can start writing your own poems!

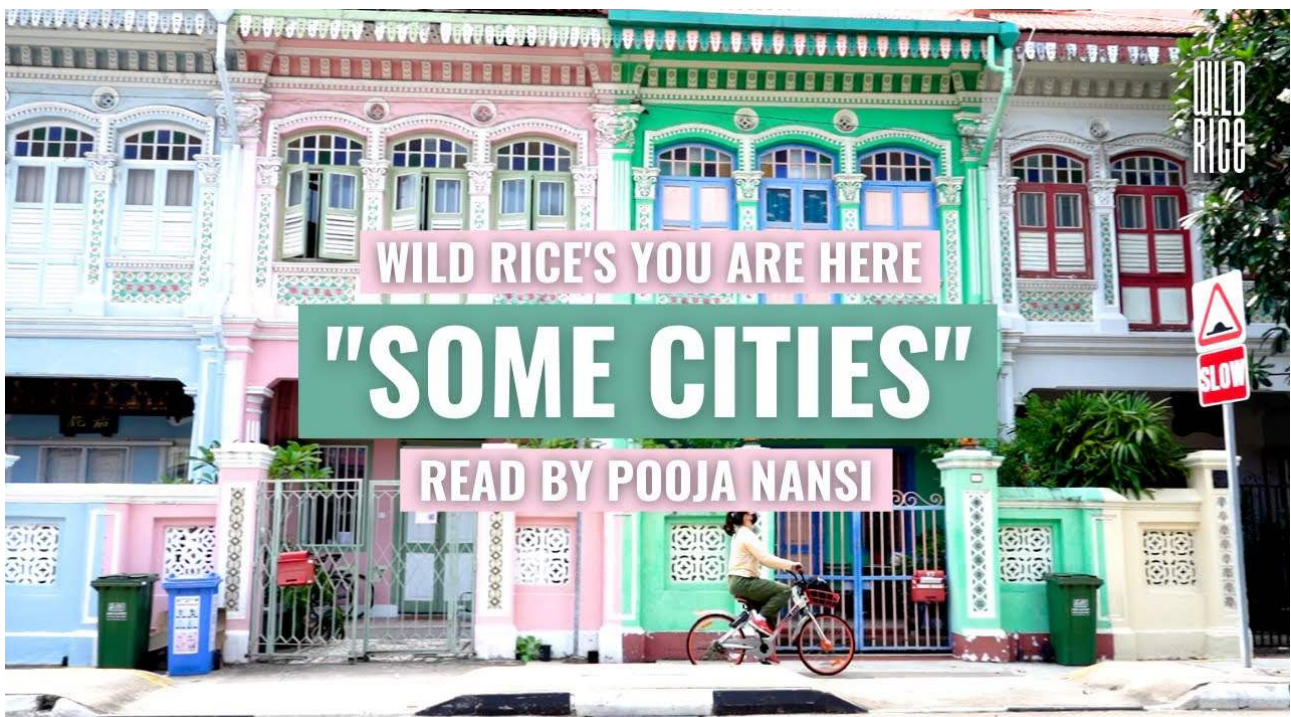
A poem is a piece of writing that expresses thoughts, ideas and feelings, usually with a rhyme and rhythm scheme (though these are not strictly necessary). Poems are typically written in verses rather than paragraphs.

Writing a poem for the first time may feel frightening – but also freeing. Follow the steps we list out below, and you'll be ready to start writing your very own poem that expresses your thoughts, feelings and/or ideas!

Before we begin, let's take a look at one of the poems that Pooja wrote and which was part of *You Are Here* – "*Some Cities*".

You will find the poem on the next page. You can also watch the video below, which features Pooja reading her own poem.

*"Some Cities"* from Pooja Nansi's *You Are Here*



Click on the image above to play the video!

## **Some Cities** from Pooja Nansi's "You Are Here"

*Some cities you visit, and some you inhabit. In some cities, the road names roll off your tongue. Joo Chiat, Koon Seng, Duku Road. Google Maps shows you the route without the short cuts you know from habit. In some cities, you know where a half pint of beer costs five dollars, know it is next to the dodgy KTV lounge with the tinted doors you have always been curious to be on the other side of. In some cities, you walk without navigation, without worry, you know the night will end with a two dollar fifty cent bowl of wanton mee, know you will get a soup spoon of black sauce and chilli, know you will shovel with chopsticks into your mouth, know when the auntie from China lands it on your table to say Xie Xie Ni. Some cities feel something like relief. Some cities are absorbed in your imprint. Some cities are where the answers should have been.*

Before we get started, it's useful to know that not all poetry is the same – there are many different types, and knowing the different types and their various forms will help you as you start to write your own poem.

### Types of poetry:

- **Narrative:** A form of poetry that tells a story. It may include additional elements such as characters and narration. This form of poetry does not need to rhyme.
- **Lyrical:** A form of poetry that expresses personal emotions and/or feelings. It's typically written in the first person.

Some forms of poetry include:

- *Sonnet* – A one-stanza, rhyming poem of 14 lines.
- *Haiku* – A type of poetry originally from Japan. It consists of 3 lines wherein the first line is 5 syllables long, the middle is 7 syllables, and the last is 5 syllables.
- *Acrostic* – A poem where the first letter of each line spells a word or message that fits with the theme of the poem or exposes a deeper meaning.
- *Epic* – A lengthy narrative poem detailing the extraordinary feats and adventures of characters from the past.
- *Free Verse* – This type of poem doesn't follow any rules – it may not have any rhyme or rhythm, and the author is free to shape the poem however they wish.

“My advice: Figure out what questions really bother you on a daily basis. Use those as a starting point. Try your hand at writing a poem to answer those questions for yourself... and see what happens!”



Here are some steps to help you get started with writing your own poem:

### **Step 1: Choose a subject**

Choose a subject before you start, so you can pinpoint the focus of your poem. It could be an emotion, a person, a place, a feeling, a time etc – it can be real or fictional.

### **Step 2: Brainstorm your ideas**

Start by writing down all the words that come to mind when you think of your subject. Imagine what other people, animals or objects may see or feel, and what their perspectives might be. Tune in to your various senses and see what comes to mind about your subject.

### **Step 3: Choose a format for your poem**

If you would like to write a particular form of poetry, find out more about its style and rules. Otherwise, try writing a free-verse poem - being free of the rules can be a great way to start.

### **Step 4: Write one line**

It can be the title, the opening line or even the last line of your poem. Have a look at it, and think about how it fits your idea and your chosen subject.

### **Step 5: Write the rest of it**

If you wrote your first line, add the lines after. If you started with the last line, work backwards. Think about including feelings, imagery or even a metaphor. Don't worry about the format; if you decide to change it after, you can do so!

### **Step 5.5: Take a break if you want, and come back to your poem with fresh eyes!**

### **Step 6: Edit!**

You might love what you wrote the first time, or you might want to make changes. You might even want to share it with someone and get their thoughts on it before editing it.

Remember: a poem is an expression of your thoughts, ideas and feelings. When you read your poem, and you feel good about it, it's done.

Your poem may not be perfect, but poetry, like any other skill, takes time to practice, refine and develop. The important thing is that you started and you tried!

# SUGGESTED BOOKS

This section contains links and information to additional resources that you can use to supplement the students' learning.

## Pooja Nansi's Collections of Poems

### ***We Make Spaces Divine* (2021)**

The poems in this collection take you through cities in bodies that don't quite belong. They speak through moments in migration, music, film and pop culture; and are acts of resistance, renewal and reclamation. They are poems that make shrines of grimy corners, dancing till the sun comes up and laughing in the face of anyone who says they cannot take up space.

### ***Love is an Empty Barstool* (2013)**

The poems in this collection are best read with a glass of single malt but they work equally well in a quiet place at twilight. Test on a small area first - especially if you are in possession of a broken (or breaking) heart, and see your bartender immediately if side effects persist.

### ***Stiletto Scars* (2007)**

Born in Gujarat, India, Pooja Nansi has lived in Singapore since she was one and a half. Her first book explores tradition, family, discrimination and her identity as a woman in the rapidly changing Southeast Asian society. The result of her emotional recollection is a book that melds seamlessly the lighter, more casual themes with darker ones that confront shamelessly her emotional, physical, social and sensual discoveries.

## Books Co-Authored or Co-Edited by Pooja Nansi

### ***SingPoWriMo 2014: The Anthology* (2014)**

By Ann Ang, Joshua Ip and Pooja Nansi

Write one poem a day for thirty days in the cruel month of April - that was the challenge thrown open to the wilderness of the interwebz. This anthology brings together the best of the hundreds of poems that were submitted, from verses written in response to fiendish "include-all-these-six-words-in-your-poem" challenges, to impromptu poems written on whim. In the spirit of the democratic process of poetry, we feature first-time poets beside established ones, and blackout poems besides long-forgotten such as the liwuli.

***A Painless Approach to Singaporean Poetry*** (2014)

Edited by Pooja Nansi and Erin Woodford

This guide, written by teachers for teachers, presents a painless and flexible approach to designing a unit around teaching Singaporean poetry in a way that is tailored to your own classroom. You will find a detailed guide to each poem and suggestions for how to teach them thematically or by difficulty level, or even for the specific purpose of helping your students understand a particular poetic device - this allows you to choose the approach which works best for your classroom. And since we understand the daily grind of being a teacher, we also provided ready-to-use lesson plans and guides for your convenience. Ultimately, we all want our students to see that poetry isn't scary or unapproachable. The easiest way to understand anything is to begin with what we know and, because many of the poems in this guide deal with a world that is familiar, they also provide an accessible launch pad from which students and teachers can explore poems from many other parts of the world together.

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