

Handout 1: Understanding Themes

ACTIVITY 1A: Text-to-self Connections

In this activity, we will draw connections from the text to our personal lives. Each of the two poets considers a place where memories of lived experiences and social histories are at risk of being left behind in the wake of urban development.

In pairs, groups or whole-class discussions, discuss the following two questions:

1. What is one place in Singapore that holds significant memories for you/your family that is now drastically changed / replaced / removed altogether?
2. What is one aspect of this place and its memories for your/your family which risks being forgotten if there were no records of them?

ACTIVITY 1B: Understanding Themes

Having discussed your personal experiences, now consider the following short write-up on the two related themes of **social history** and **urban development** which will be the focus of our lesson:

Social history can be defined as an area of history that focuses on the lived experiences of people and the interaction of different groups in society, rather than major political events.

In Singapore literature, writers have been concerned about what has been lost in the name of urban development as Singapore transformed from an undeveloped third-world country to a modern first-world city.

This is because many changes involved the complete removal and rebuilding of places which disrupted the lives of many people and their communities. Without any records, these memories and ways of life risk being lost, forgotten and unknown to future generations.

As such, many writers have been interested in capturing the social histories of places and communities which have been disrupted and affected by the process of urban development in Singapore's modernisation.