

The Fall of Singapore

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity56>

Engage

Why was Singapore considered essential for Australia's security in WWII?

- Click on the URL above to open the Story Map (with built-in interactive maps). A Map journal will open and provide a summary of the map. Scroll down to get started.
- Read through the historical context. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- Scroll down to *Source 1: He's Coming South*. Read the context provided for the propaganda poster titled *He's Coming South*. Then, answer the questions below.
- ? Who does the figure in the propaganda poster represent? Refer to **two (2) pieces of evidence** from the poster to support your response. *[The figure in the propaganda poster represents the Japanese. This is evident as he is (1) emerging from the north, where Japan is located, (2) is depicted in front of the Japanese flag and rising sun, and (3) his skin tone and eye shape is representative of his race.]*
- ? What was the portrayed threat of the Japanese in this poster? Refer to the size and facial expression of the figure to support your response. *[The propaganda poster depicts the Japanese threat as significant. This is reinforced by the immense size of the figure, which could refer to the large Japanese army. Furthermore, because of his size, he is able to take large strides, which may represent Japan's rapid policy of expansion. Lastly, his facial expression is fierce and determined, reinforcing the aggressive expansion policy and single-minded determination the Japanese appeared to have.]*
- ? Explain what is most likely meant by each of the terms, 'fight', 'work' or 'perish'. *[The propaganda poster is expressing an urgent ultimatum to Australians on the Homefront. It is calling on able-bodied men to 'fight' by enlisting into the army and calling others in society to 'work' to directly support the war effort i.e. working in munitions factories. The ultimatum is made clear with the last word, 'perish', which suggests that if Australians don't respond to the call, they will succumb to the threat of the Japanese.]*

Download student worksheet [here](#).

Time

60 minutes

Activity

Investigate factors that led to the Allied defeat at Singapore.

Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Understand the perceived significance of Singapore to Australia's security in WWII
- Identify factors that contributed to the defeat of the Allied forces at Singapore
- Examine and analyse sources

ACARA Curriculum Link

[Year 10 History: World War II \(1939-45\)](#)

[ACDSEH108](#) | [ACDSEH109](#) |
[ACDSEH110](#) | [ACHHS182](#) |
[ACHHS187](#) | [ACHHS190](#)

Teacher Feedback:

To share your feedback on this, or any Spatial Activity, please contact education@esriaustralia.com.au

Explore

Why was Singapore deemed 'impenetrable' by the Allied forces?

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Singapore's defences* and read the information. Stop to discuss as necessary.
- ➔ Engage with the map by clicking on the 'Legend' in the top-right corner to see what the different colours represent. You can click and drag to change the map extent and zoom in and out with the + and – icons.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Monstrous 15-inch guns* and read the information. Explore the diagram to further understand how the 15-inch guns were operated.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Singapore – protected from naval threats* and read the information.
- ➔ Engage with the map by clicking on the 'Legend' in the top-right corner to see what the different colours represent.
- ? Are there any weaknesses you can identify in the Allied defences? Explain your answer. [*Whilst the Allied defences were prepared for any naval attack,s they seem ill-equipped to deal with threats from the North – the Malay Peninsula. This is evident because their large gun batteries only covered the East, West and South sides of the Island. Furthermore, the British naval base did not occupy significant forces.*]

Explain

What factors contributed to Allied defeat and Japanese victory in the Battle of Singapore?

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *The Battle of Singapore commences* and read the information. Take notes if necessary. Stop to discuss as needed.
- ➔ Engage with the map by clicking on the 'Legend' in the top-right corner to see what the different colours represent. Click and drag to change the map extent. Use the + and – icons to zoom in and out.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Allied forces retreat* and read the information. Take notes if necessary. Stop to discuss as needed.
- ➔ Engage with the map by clicking on the 'Legend' in the top-right corner to see what the different colours represent.

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Allied forces pushed back to the city of Singapore* and read the information. Take notes if necessary. Stop to discuss as needed.
- ➔ Engage with the map by clicking on the 'Legend' in the top-right corner to see what the different colours represent.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Allied forces surrender* and read the information. Take notes if necessary. Stop to discuss as needed.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *A disaster for Britain and Australia* and read the information. Take notes if necessary. Stop to discuss as needed.
- ? What are two reasons that would lead Winston Churchill to make such a definitive statement? *[Churchill referred to the defeat as the 'largest capitulation in British history' as the Allied forces were completely outmaneuvered by the Japanese at every turn, leading to unconditional surrender in 7 days. Such a statement may have also been based on racial stereotypes that were more prevalent at the time; the belief that white races were superior, and other races inferior, was common.]*
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading *Recalling information* and respond to the comprehension questions.
- ? Why did the British believe Singapore to be impregnable? *[The British believed Singapore to be impregnable due to its powerful naval defences - the gun batteries positioned on the east, south and west sides of the island.]*
- ? What were the names of the British and Australian prime ministers at the time? *[The British prime minister was Winston Churchill and the Australian prime minister was John Curtin.]*
- ? Identify at least four (4) reasons that contributed to Japanese victory and Allied defeat at Singapore? *[Reasons that contributed to Japanese victory and Allied defeat include: superior tactics of the Japanese; weaknesses in the plans of the Allied defences; experienced and battle-hardened Japanese troops versus inexperienced and untested Allied troops; Japanese aircraft and bombers were able to dominate the skies and freely bomb Allied forces; the Allies lacked key supplies – water, food, ammunition, fuel.]*
- ? Who was in charge of the Allied forces at Singapore and why was he forced to agree to terms of unconditional surrender? *[The commander of the Allied forces in Singapore was Lieutenant-General Percival and he was forced to agree to terms of unconditional surrender as the Japanese had the ability to annihilate what was left of the Allied forces after pushing them back to the city of Singapore with no way of retreating or escaping. Control of the skies meant that the Japanese would have*

been able to continue to decimate the Allied forces, and innocent civilians, in the city.]

- ? How many Australian soldiers were taken prisoner upon the unconditional surrender of the Allied forces? *[Over 15,000 Australian soldiers were taken prisoner upon surrendering to the Japanese.]*

Extend

How would the fall of Singapore impact Australia's actions as the war progressed?

- Scroll to the heading titled *Source 2: Newspaper article*. Read the context for the source and then answer the questions.
- ? Initially, Australia had entered World War II largely due to its ties with Britain, the mother country, rather than out of any direct need. According to Prime Minister John Curtin, what implications did the fall of Singapore have for Australians? *[The fall of Singapore meant that Australia's participation in WWII was no longer out of obligation to the mother country. Japanese victory at Singapore, and their southward expansion, was now perceived to directly threaten Australia's borders.]*
- ? What evidence exists in the newspaper article that suggests that a looming change in Australia's international relationships was imminent? *[The article states that, 'H.R. Knickerbocker, famous war correspondent, now in Australia, also sent a special message to...the United States, asking that they send to Australia, more planes, more men, and more material, immediately.' This suggests that Australia would look to the US for aid, rather than Britain, moving forward.]*
- ? What did Curtin mean by his statement, 'Our honeymoon has finished'? *[Curtin's statement is essentially telling Australia that it is time to wake up to the reality of the situation. As the article elaborates, the time for sport and leisure activities must now give way to war duties and responsibilities.]*
- OPTIONAL: By scrolling down to the next section, there are three YouTube links, which belong to a 3-part series, containing colour footage and narration of the Battle and Fall of Singapore.

Next Steps:

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