



The Singapore Story (Student Edition): Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew

Lee Kuan Yew

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Specially tailored edition to complement the study of Singapore's history. This student edition of The Singapore Story is a shortened version of the original edition of The Singapore Story, the first volume of Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs published in 2008. It covers all the significant moments in the life of Singapore's first prime minister, in his own words, and dispenses with passages that do not directly concern Singapore

The Singapore Story (Student Edition): Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew Details

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Lee Kuan Yew

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Hadrian says

This is the first of two volumes of memoirs by Lee Kuan Yew, prime minister of Singapore for 30 years, and its most influential leader. It is not without reason that he titles his memoir *The Singapore Story*.

His prose is disciplined and workmanlike, and he prefers stating facts over reminiscence. He passes over his very British early education, his childhood in Singapore, and even over the incredible brutality of the Japanese occupation with crisp mechanical description. He goes to work on the black market with astonishing discipline, almost casually describing how he escaped several massacres.

After finishing his law degree with top marks, he describes his early forays into politics, and the founding of the People's Action Party, which has had a majority since 1959. He describes his political machinations with astonishing detail and candor, and is an adept judge of character. His description of urban politics, with mass mobilization campaigns, coalition building, and multi-lingual speeches and coalitions, is fascinating.

His first aim, after British decolonization, was to unite Singapore with Malaysia. He speaks very favorably of "The Tunku" Abdul Rahman, but less so of the more local politicians. After tense and uneasy relationship, the union broke down after only two years, and Singapore was to be expelled from Malaysia, with the British soon leaving, and the once-supportive Communists planning an all-out uprising.

The second volume, which I'm going to reread soon, covers the period of Singapore's independence and its economic transformation - arguably the inspiration for significant portions of Deng Xiaoping's system of reforms in China over the last quarter of the 20th century - and we know how those went, and how Singapore is now.

An interesting view into East Asian politics.

Huong Man says

M?t cu?n h?i ký ??y ??, chi ti?t qua các th?i k? c?a v? th? t??ng danh ti?ng. Tr??c ?ây mình có nghe nhi?u v? Lý Quang Di?u trong th?i k? xây d?ng Singapore, cu?n sách này l?i ??a ??n m?t chân dung v? th? l?nh trong th?i k? tranh ??u cho ??c l?p c?a ??o qu?c này. Vì nh?ng giai ?o?n ?? c?p ??n trong sách khá là r?i ren c?ng thêm bói c?nh chính tr? và nh?ng nhân v?t liên quan thau ??i liên t?c nên c?n s? t?p trung và liên k?t các s?

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Abdullah Alqasir says

[illegible]

Caleb Liu says

He is too fascinating a man, and has left far too large an imprint on modern Singapore history for this to be an uninteresting book. Having lived through many of the climactic moments surrounding the foundation of the modern Singapore state, this first volume of memoirs would have value in itself as a historical account of what happened. Still, one gets the sense in reading this of a didactic lecturer not seeking justification - he never has felt the need - but closer to that of a stern father instructing his wayward children. One gets the sense that the events, his personal image and everything else is presented through a very particular and finely polished patina. This is sad, as all too often, what lies beneath is far more interesting.

anna b says

I'm a 3rd generation Singaporean and have great reverence for LKY (I've work on a small project directly involved with him and partly also due to the propaganda in school.) Hence, I find it hard to reconcile the fact that my grandparents disliked him and my parents (and their siblings) find him bearable. This book is a candid memoir of his early life as well as his political journey which led to the separation of Singapore and Malaysia. I got to know LKY better and the reason why some may dislike him - my grandparents came from China and had immediate families in Malaysia. My parents and their generation are the products of those seeking the Singapore (then, Nanyang) dream and are a part of the progress of the country.

Right at the beginning of the book, he has proved himself to be an elitist, a belief I abhor but have to accept as it helped in Singapore's progress then. He did so much dirty politicking that if it were not for Singapore, it will make me really dislike him. He is also extremely aggressive. All these attributes were good for Singapore then, it is the now that the Singapore government has to mull over - what sort of man will it take to lead Singapore to her next course? A man like him worked for Singapore 50 years ago and totally worth the ministerial-level salary we paid him. As an educated Singapore leading a comfortable life, I owed what I have today to him.

The first part of the book ends with the climax of separation and I can't wait to read the next part which I can relate more to. I dropped a star as there are still many difficult words in the book despite him advocating the

use of simple English. Oh well, he was a lawyer!

Edited to add: I get a deeper knowledge of history of Singapore and the Malays of the region, the political sentiments between Singapore and her immediate neighbours. A must-read for all Singaporeans.

Ahmed Sobieh says

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Catherine Mustread says

More than I wanted to know (or could ever remember) about Singapore's independence and political beginnings.

Andrew says

Unfortunately I was unable to finish this book and thus my review remains incomplete.

This autobiography was a fascinating view into a bygone era: the decline of Britain's empire and the struggle of Asian colonies for independence and against the spread of Communism. It's difficult to truly understand the significance of the twin challenges of Imperialism and Communism, so far removed are we from those times.

Lee accomplishes three things here: he states his principles, he tells the story of his own life, and he tells the story of Singapore.

The first task is somewhat awkwardly done in this format; I got the sense that Lee couldn't help slipping in strongly held views, but doesn't spend much time justifying them. He nails his flag to the mast against soft punishments and cites his experiences in the Japanese occupation as being formative of his understanding of human nature but doesn't expound. Lee is deliberate in his mentions on race but doesn't argue his views at any length. I was intrigued in particular by his Left-leanings and departure from Fabian Socialism and wanted to know more, but Lee merely dismisses the issue with a minor comment about how he disliked their views on education.

Lee's actions earlier in his life often seem at odds with his later actions, but little time is spent in reflection. He describes his use of the media to fight issues when he had no chance on the legal merits but doesn't reconcile this with his later use of litigation and legal controls against political discussion. The young Lee Kuan Yew unquestioningly participates in extensive industrial action but there is no discussion of it as something other than a political tool.

Lee lambasts the Straits Times for receiving editorial direction against his party, but has no problem with it receiving direction in his favour. He accuses the newspaper of subversion, then when he wins power claims the flight of its staff demonstrates their unwillingness to live under the policies they advocated. Lee vociferously denounces foreign ownership of the press, but his censure is more than a little self-serving.

For an autobiography, I had incredible trouble engaging with Lee's emotional life. He's a merciless rationalist, reeling off incidents and ideas, piercing assessments of people, brilliant political tactics and analysis, remaining emotionally detached throughout. Lee bluntly repudiates youthful ideologies and sharply criticises his own legal cases: he thought this once, but it is wrong and stupid; he successfully defended someone who should have been convicted by applying media pressure - and that is all. There's no sense of ruefulness or regret, no self-doubt. It's all black-and-white.

Most tellingly Lee's romance with his eventual wife is described in the starkest of terms: she is described in terms of her background and education, her most prominent attributes commitment and intelligence. I'm a poor romantic, but the matter-of-fact tone permeating this tome felt immensely jarring here. Their association seemed like a business transaction, and I couldn't help but wonder about what Lee and his fiancée were feeling at the time, what they spoke about, and how they spent those days together.

Throughout the book Lee describes very precisely his political tactics, how he intended to appear to different parties, and the efforts he went to to manage his public image (appearing sorrowful rather than angry, appealing to workers without spooking the middle-class). The narrative covers what appears to be the establishment of Lee's reputation rather than the illumination of his character. He is persistently concerned by appearances and means and does not discuss values or goals. Lee single-mindedly pursues the independence of Singapore over many years but doesn't explain why this is so important to him. He describes the arguments he made in different fora, but not his own personal reasons.

The book begins in media res when Lee announces Singapore's independence, betraying his allies with backroom dealings, crying on camera. Given book's clinical tone and focus on image management, I struggled to believe that this abundance of emotion was genuine, and not artifice designed to attract the sympathies of the audience and dramatise the prologue.

Lee's autobiography is most successful portraying the political struggles of Singapore's early years from the midst of the action. Defeating the erratic David Marshall, using and opposing the unions, allying and then clashing with the powerful Communists, meeting the mysterious Plenipotentiary, fortifying the party against infiltration, employing one opponent to fight another - it's gripping, high-stakes, means-justifies-the-ends political action. Lee has penetrating insight into the schemes and stratagems of the political game, and readily guides the reader through the labyrinth of manipulation.

Until I read this book I had no idea how divorced the Chinese community of Singapore was to the English-educated society, or how powerful, well-organised and legitimate the Communists were in the region. As a senior member of government Lee the author has access to the investigations British Special Branch performed on him so many years ago - I found this quite amusing.

The writing is technically very workmanlike - recitations of detail that struggle to be evocative.

Other political biographies are bland, self-justifying pieces designed to elevate the politician's image for posterity. Lee Kuan Yew eschews this dissemblance, telling it like he sees it, revealing exactly how he made his decisions. While there may be flaws in his arguments and views, I got the sense that they were truly his.

Hussain Buhlaigah says

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Maxim says

Overrated book, i think, but still very interesting, since the author was leader of Singapore for almost half a century. His comments on politics and economics are often very smart and interesting to read, as well as his comments on many famous politicians, but at times are boring and superficial (or maybe it is just eastern politeness). The book is worth to read for everybody who is interested in history, politics and economic policy.

kewan alghofaily says

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## Mohamad Dahrouj says

## Asmaa says

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