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The Japanese occupied Singapore in World War II from 1942 to 1945. Singapore was renamed Syonan—to which means "Island of the Light of the South".

The Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) committed atrocities against the common people. Banana money was issued as their main currency. Sweet potatoes and yam became staple food as they were cheaper than rice. To remove Western influence, schools were set up to teach the people the Japanese language.

On 15 August, Japan announced its surrender after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Singapore was officially returned to British colonial rule on 12 September 1945.

