In my opinion, it is important to celebrate in 2019 for the 200 years from 1819 since 1819 is the start of the modern Singapore history. Though 1819 may seem insignificant from continuous rise and fall of history cycles, many of Singapore’s present success can be traced back to 1819 which is still meaningful to today’s society. Raffles may be challenged as being the founding figure of Singapore, but it is still worth to commemorate him as his contribution to Singapore was undeniable and priceless and still continued to affect Singapore’s current generation.

There is unreplaceable significance of year 1819 in terms of Singapore Story since Singapore Story started with British colonization which can be traced back to East India Company governance in 1819. First edition of the history started with the year from 1819 and PAP government set Singapore history in 1819. The Singapore Story aims to preserve the fact of history and raise an awareness of it in Singapore society and learn from the lessons of the past. Singapore Story explains how Singapore has survived and flourished through multiple periods of troubles and the basis of success originated from British governance from 1819. The multicultural aspect of Singapore Story also has evidence from 1819 where traders from around the world attracted by EIC to trade and merge in Singapore community. In order to implant the national identity through Singapore Story, it is thus important to celebrate 1819 as mark of 200 years.

In demographic point of view, it is commonly acknowledged that Singapore’s current and population mostly came to this strategic location only after the time of British colonization and revival in 1819, and the Chinese majority in Singapore at that time made Singapore stand out in Malay world. Most Singaporeans have their ancestors coming and living in Singapore after 1819. This is important as to celebrate in 2019 as 200 years from 1819 is to recognise Singaporeans’ family history and memory. This can cultivate a collective sense of belonging to this island since their family ancestors had lived in Singapore for a few generations starting from 1819. Thus it is important to celebrate 1819 because 1819, being the starting point, allows Singaporeans to trace their ancestors’ existence on this island.

In terms of economy, 1819 is also crucial to Singapore’s development. The free trade policy started in the governance of East India Company became the root of Singapore’s continuous prosperity until today, making it the international and regional trading hub. Singapore’s economy has far predefined at that time by transshipment trade, entrepot trade as well as the imports and exports for local necessities. Though Singapore was also trading hub in Temasek period or from 15th centuries to 17th centuries, the trade conducted at that time was too little in terms of volume. Starting from 1819, Singapore benefitted from external trading network provided by EIC to have a significant increase in trade volume, allowing it to prosper quickly. Singapore becomes strategic location not because of geometrical attributes or natural resources but how people such as Raffles and Lee Kwan Yew engineered it. Singapore government kept the business environment and policies created by Raffles such that Singapore continuously keeps the strategic location as economic hub in the region

In the longue duree aspect, 1819 is also significant in terms of being the key turning point in Singapore’s historical cycles. Throughout Singapore’s history, there are certain patterns and characteristics of rise and fall continuing to reoccur. In 700-year history cycles, Temasek period and the period of East India Company governance are considered as peaks which political, economic and social features quite close to the post-1965 Singapore according to Derek Heng. The year 1819, being the dividing line between the past Temasek era and the post-1965 Singapore, is important since it is the start of the modern Singapore history as well as the starting point of Singapore’s continuous success from 1819 until nowadays. However, critics may argue that in the longue duree viewpoint, this is just another case of rise and fall which does not have the utmost value to celebrate, but the fact that the rise after 1819 lasts until today is undeniable. Thus it still meaningful to remember this point in time where Singapore had its turning point and continued to succeed until today.

In military aspect, Singapore government often emphasizes that Singaporeans must not rely on others but defend ourselves. The idea of self-defending came after the British governance in 1819 and their withdrawal of army in 1971. Singapore has experienced disasters like Japanese Occupation and overcame the Malayan Communist Party’s insurrection and Indonesian with the British forces. It alerts Singapore to defend itself after the British withdrawal in 1971. In the longue duree aspect, the overall balance of power should also be considered during the time before 1819. In 14th century, Temasek was over-dependent on formidable local forces and declined duet to balance of power provided by Ming China to Melaka. Singapore needs to learn from the past experiences of predecessor hubs and condenses ideas about how to better survive under present circumstances. The opposing views come form the longue duree explanation that consider the folly of ignoring either maximum local effort or the overall balance of power and it builds a far-better basis for understanding the challenges and difficulties of defending a small strategic place in a region continuously experiencing the effects of global military power. This does not remove the military implication of 1819 in Singapore Story which aims to teach people to defend for themselves.

It is also important to consider whether it is necessary to celebrate in 2019 in terms of the significance of 2019 in Singapore history. To celebrate at this point-in-time does not mean that British rule and a migrant majority are decisive breaks from the past, but rather it is flipping a new page in the history. There is still link in history for the precolonial era. Though Singapore can commemorate the landing of Raffles in any year, but 2019 is rather comparatively more important as it serves as a proof of Raffles’ vision of this island after whole two centuries. This again shows Raffles’ importance to the destiny of Singapore in longue duree perspective. Some may challenge Raffles’ significance as founding figure but Raffles’ contribution of founding Singapore with town plan, free port, law and order actually built the basis of Singapore society in modern Singapore history. The 200-year timeline from 1819 to 2019 is thus the evidence of Raffles’ effort and vision and 2019 is thus a meaningful year to celebrate.

In conclusion, the year 1819 and the landing of Raffles have meaningful impact to Singapore’s history in terms of various economic, military and political implications in the Singapore Story and longue duree perspective. In 2019, it is 200 years from the landing of Raffles which mark the foresight of this great man after 200 years. In the long term, it is still beneficial to commemorate in 2019 for Raffles’ landing in 1819 as it will continue to inspire Singaporeans to not forget the past and work hard for the future success.