

Cambodian Genocide

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Coping with Genocide in Cambodia

In the 1970s, the Vietnam War spilled into Cambodia. Rebel Khmer Rouge forces, led by a man named Pol Pot, took power and set out to establish a classless, agrarian society. One out of every four Cambodians died under the terrifying rule of the Khmer Rouge. In reference to this genocide, Cambodian prime minister Hun Sen has said, "We should dig a hole and bury the past." Prach Ly, a young Cambodian American living in Los Angeles, disagrees, and he's using his rap music to tell the world what happened in Cambodia so that history won't repeat itself.

To introduce students to this dark chapter in Cambodian history, show them where Cambodia is on a map, then play "Power, Territory and Rice"

(pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/cambodia/ly.html) from *Dalama: The Education of the Lost Chapter*, Prach Ly's yet-to-be-released album. Allow students to read the lyrics of the song while it is played. (Print the Web page with the lyrics and pass it out to students, or use a computer projector to present the lyrics to the classroom.)

Prach Ly

Prach Ly is a 23-year-old Cambodian-American rapper from Long Beach, California. He cut his first CD, *Dalama: The End'n' Is Just the Beginn'n'*, in his parents' garage. He didn't have a mixing board—he used a karaoke machine and sampled sound bites from old Khmer Rouge propaganda speeches to create what he calls an "autobiography," reciting stories he'd heard from his refugee family to deliver a blistering history lesson about Cambodia's genocide.

He did the artwork himself, made about a thousand CDs, and passed it around to friends during Cambodian New Year 2000. Somehow a copy found its way to Cambodia, then onto Phnom Penh radio, then into the country's booming bootleg business, where Prach's music was copied and distributed, without attribution, under the title Khmer Rouge Rap. A year ago, an Asiaweek reporter tracked Prach Ly down to let him know his album was No. 1 in Cambodia: He'd become the first hip-hop star of a country he hadn't seen since he was a toddler.

“Power, Territory, and Rice” Lyrics

Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge were back up by the Viet Cong
 And the North Vietnamese.
 They were sent out to purify the Khmer race,
 By creating a classless society.
 They rose to power by taking over rural provinces.
 By recruiting soldiers, poor illiterate peasants.
 By the time Pol Pot took the capital Phnom Penh.
 His military had reached over thirty thousand.
 They emptied cities, bomb banks, and cleared out prisons.
 Separated families, eliminated private property, and outlawed religions.
 There was no warning shot, what's told was never twice.
 It was total chaos, they destroy all aspects of social and cultural life.
 Soldiers demanded that all families pack up small supplies, of food and clothes.
 They were told, "they'll be back in due time."
 To leave their homes and march out of time in a single file line.
 They said that: "The United States was going to bomb Phnom Penh's heart."
 But it was a lie, it was more like a dying death march.
 It's about POWER, TERRITORY, and RICE,
 And of course that comes with a hefty price.
 Wherever there's WAR there's always sacrifice,
 And it's usually the innocent who lose their life.
 They target all intellectuals, survivors,
 Prisoners often ditch their eye glasses,
 Teachers try to pass as taxi drivers.
 No one was told who was running the country but ah,
 Only that those in power call "Angka."
 Children's was brainwashed into believing in them,
 They was taught that: "there's no such thing as parents."
 At camps, most execution occurred at night.
 Soldiers awoke prisoners suspected of any crimes.
 And quietly lead them into the fields or forests,
 Ordered them to dig their own grave those who mark for death.
 They're either stab, beaten or bury alive to save bullets. "This ain't no b*** s***.
 In the next four years, the horror of the killing fields rise,
 With almost everyone in the country force to grow rice.
 It was a tragedy base in part of the mistaken idea it seem,
 They thought that the ancient reservoirs was a giant rice growing machines.
 It's about POWER, TERRITORY, and RICE,
 And of course that comes with a hefty price.
 Whenever there WAR, there always sacrifice,
 And it's usually the innocent who lose their life.

“Resurrec” Lyrics

I love my land to death,
 A child of the Killing Fields.
 NorthstarResurrec,
 Generation X what’s next?
 It’s time for us to heal.
 We’ve been suffering for decades, decades of genocide.
 annihilation of generations,
 A ‘demon-stration’ on Khmer.
 Now why do we do what we do?
 Like Hitlers to the Jews,
 Whites to the Blacks,
 They act like we (are) slaves.
 I rather be back where I was born,
 Then here confused and dazed.
 I love America... but anyways.

Discussion Questions

- What is the subject of the song?
- What images does the song describe?
- What do you think is the rapper's purpose in writing the song?
- How does the music affect the message of the song?

Next, expand student understanding of the rule of the Khmer Rouge by watching the story "Cambodia: Pol Pot's Shadow" (about 24 minutes long). Help students focus their viewing by asking them to take notes on the various ways in which Cambodians have coped with the memory of the mass killings.

After the video, ask students to write a journal entry about what they think should be done in order for Cambodians to feel justice and peace for the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. Would it be best for Cambodians to simply "dig a hole and bury the past," as suggested by the Cambodian prime minister? Why or why not?

If time permits, consider having students compare and contrast Cambodian reactions to genocide with those of the people in Rwanda, where approximately 800,000 people were slaughtered in 1994. The **FRONTLINE/World** Fellows story, "Rwanda: After the Genocide" (<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/rwanda1103/index.html>) provides background information on the conflict in Rwanda, as well as the perspectives of a perpetrator and a victim.

Additional resources on the genocide in Rwanda can be found at the **FRONTLINE** Web site feature, "Ghosts of Rwanda" (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/>).

Extensions

Expand class discussion on genocide by exploring these related **FRONTLINE/World** stories:

A Question of Genocide

Experience the refugee camps at the Chad/Sudan border in Summer 2004.

<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/elections/chad.sudan/index.html>

Dark Shadows: The Legacy of War in Serbia and Bosnia

(from FRONTLINE/World's 'Rough Cut' series)

Ten years after the genocidal Srebrenica massacre, find out what progress has been made in reforming the Serbian and Bosnian political systems and overcoming the deep ethnic divides between Serbs, Croats and Muslims. (July 2005)

http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/rough/2005/07/dark_shadows.html

Rwanda: After the Genocide

See how Rwanda is trying to heal itself after 800,000 people were slaughtered in just three months in 1994.

<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/rwanda1103/index.html>

Sudan: The Quick and the Terrible

Learn about the roots of what many consider to be genocide in the Darfur region of the Sudan.

<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/sudan/>

Relevant National Standards

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

- **United States History, Standard 27:** Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics
- **Level IV, Benchmark 2:** Understands the political elements of the Vietnam War (e.g., the constitutional issues involved in the Vietnam War, the legacy of the war)
- **World History, Standard 44:** Understands the search for community, stability and peace in an interdependent world
- **Language Arts, Standard 5:** Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
- **Level IV, Benchmark 4:** Understands writing techniques used to influence the reader and accomplish an author's purpose (e.g., organizational patterns, such as cause-and-effect or chronological order; imagery, personification, figures of speech, sounds in poetry; literary and technical language; formal and informal language; point of view; characterization; irony; narrator)

Cross-Curricular Activities

Consider building on the themes of the above activity by working with colleagues in other disciplines to conduct the following activities.

Protest Violence with Painting (Art)

Over the past 20 years, Sri Lanka has been the site of more suicide bombings than anywhere else in the world. To fight against the tendency for society to become desensitized by such violence, a group of local artists paint a colorful mural at each bombing site to serve as a memorial. Have students read the brief narrative and watch the slide show at Fighting Terror With Paint Brushes. (pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/srilanka/slideshow.html)

Ask students to consider these questions.

- What is the key message of the art of "road painters"?
- Who is the intended audience for this message?
- Will such street paintings have a positive impact? Why or why not?

Next, invite students to create their own painting to protest an act of violence.

Resources

Visit the "Sri Lanka: Living With Terror" (<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/srilanka/>) Web resources to see the slideshow, watch the full **FRONTLINE/World** television segment in streaming video, read a synopsis, follow the reporter's diary, or gather related links and facts: pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/srilanka/

Relevant National Standards

- **Visual Arts, Standard 3:** Knows a range of subject matter, symbols and potential ideas in the visual arts
- **Level IV, Benchmark 2:** Applies various subjects, symbols and ideas in one's artworks
- **Visual Arts, Standard 4:** Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- **Level IV, Benchmark 1:** Knows a variety of historical and cultural contexts regarding characteristics and purposes of works of art

Write About the Communist and Postcommunist Experience (English)

Show students the story "Romania: My Old Haunts" (pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/romania/).

Before viewing the short (18 minutes long) film, explain that Romania was ruled by communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu from 1965 until his execution in 1989. In the video, students will see and hear reporter Andrei Codrescu as he takes a personal journey back to his homeland to see how Romania is faring more than a decade after the fall of communism. Have students divide a sheet of paper in half and label one side "During Communist Rule" and the other side "After Communist Rule." Ask students to take notes while they watch, listening closely and making careful observations about life in Romania, both during communist rule and afterward. After viewing the piece, have the class discuss what they observed, then have students use their notes as a content source for writing a poem, drawing a political cartoon, creating a travel brochure or writing a comparison/contrast essay.

Resources

Visit the "Romania: My Old Haunts" Web resources to see the story in streaming video, read a synopsis of the story or interview with the reporter, or gather related links and facts:

pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/romania/

A transcript of the story is also available:

pbs.org/frontlineworld/about/episodes/102_transcript.html#romania

Relevant National Standards

- **Language Arts, Standard 1:** Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Write an Editorial on the Wall Being Built to Separate Jews and Arabs in Israel (English)

Ask students the purpose of building fences and walls. Begin the class discussion with backyard fences and walls, then move to those found throughout the community. And finally, discuss the purposes of large-scale political walls, for example, the Berlin Wall and the Great Wall of China. Are walls and fences to keep things out? to keep things in? both? What would happen if no fences or walls were put up in each of the circumstances discussed? On a blackboard or marker board that is visible to everyone, list some of the issues raised during the class discussion. Next, break students into seven groups and assign each group a different section of the Web-exclusive story "Israel: Tracing Borders" (pbs.org/frontlineworld/fellows/israel/).

Have all the groups read the introduction to the story, then have them read their assigned section. As they read, students should take notes on the purpose of Israel's Seam Line Project and on social, political and economic issues that the building of the wall raises. How do these issues compare with the list of issues made earlier?

Ask students to write a newspaper editorial that seeks to persuade readers either that the Seam Line Project will help ease tensions between Jews and Arabs or that the project will intensify these tensions. Editorials should be based on what students believe after learning and thinking about the issue, and should include specific evidence drawn from "Israel: Tracing Borders" to make the case.

Relevant National Standards

- **Language Arts, Standard 7:** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- **Levels III and IV, Benchmark 1:** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
- **Levels III and IV, Benchmark 2:** Knows the defining characteristics of a variety of informational texts