



One of the seven survivors of  
Tuol Sleng prison in Cambodia

*David A. Harvey/National Geographic/  
Getty Images*

# CAMBODIA:

## The Rise and Fall of the Khmer Rouge Regime

Guide to Resources

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for exploring these resources on the genocide in Cambodia (1975–79), arguably one of the most tragic episodes of 20<sup>th</sup> century Asian history. In learning about this issue, students will investigate the possible causes of the genocide; familiarize themselves with the victims and perpetrators (while also learning why it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line between the two); and reflect on why post-genocide reconciliation has been neither rapid nor straightforward.

These materials were designed for use in upper-level high school courses on 20<sup>th</sup> century world history, genocide, Asian Studies, or social justice. In the pages that follow, we provide a quick guide to the resources found at the Asia Pacific Curriculum website at <http://www.asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/rise-and-fall-khmer-rouge-regime>, in addition to other resources that you may find helpful.

We are grateful to **Dr. Eve Zucker**, a Cambodia expert and research affiliate with the Council on Southeast Asian Studies at Yale University, who authored the background reading and suggested some of the supplementary learning and teaching materials mentioned in the pages that follow. (Dr. Zucker is not responsible for the content found in the supplementary section on S-21 or the interview with Gordon Longmuir.)

We also thank **Mr. Gordon Longmuir**, Canada’s former Ambassador to Cambodia (1995–1999), who was generous in sharing his time and wisdom during two interviews that resulted in a supplement to the background reading.

Finally, we are especially grateful to **Mr. Graeme Stacey**, a social studies teacher at Kelowna Secondary School (BC), who provided overall guidance and advice on these resources and developed the activities and assessments options. Mr. Stacey has taught about the Cambodian genocide in his *Holocaust 12: A Blueprint for Modern Societal Tragedies (Genocide 12)* course for years. **Ms. Christine Paget**, a teacher at West Vancouver Secondary (BC), also provided extremely valuable and constructive feedback during the process of developing these materials.

We welcome your or your students’ questions and suggestions. We encourage you to contact us at [curriculum@asiapacific.ca](mailto:curriculum@asiapacific.ca).

Sincerely,

The Asia Pacific Curriculum Team  
February 2017

## GUIDE TO RESOURCES

### OVERVIEW

- Background reading of approximately 4,500 words, covering the pre-genocide period (1953–1975), the genocide years (1975–1979), and the post-genocide period (1979–present). It includes key words and concepts, as well as two short supplementary readings: a description of the secret Khmer Rouge prison named S-21, and an interview with Canada’s former Ambassador to Cambodia.
- The first half of the reading is displayed on the website. To access the full document, please download the PDF in the top-right corner of the Overview section.
- Clarification on number of deaths during the genocide: It is difficult to determine with precision how many people died during the period of Khmer Rouge rule. Some estimate the number to be 1.7 million, but others put the number between two and 2.5 million. In the background reading, we have used the figure of two million, which seems to be the most commonly accepted estimate. You may notice, however, that some of the media and other sources reference the higher or lower number.
- Number of deaths at S-21/Tuol Sleng prison: Here, too, the estimates vary. Some sources say 12,000, whereas others estimate the number of victims to be as many as 15,000. Most experts put the number safely at 14,000, which is the number we have used.
- Definition of genocide: For teachers using these resources as part of a course on genocide studies, the Cambodia case differs somewhat from other genocides in that while some of the victims were from ethnic or religious minorities (Vietnamese, Chinese, indigenous peoples, Cham Muslims), the majority of victims were from the dominant Khmer ethnic group. Sometimes, people use the term “auto-genocide” to describe this phenomenon. Activity #1 in the Assessment & Activities booklet gives students an opportunity to consider similarities and differences between Cambodia and other genocides.

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- Five teacher-designed and teacher-tested activities that can be used to assess comprehension and build and assess core competencies.
- Links to the BC curriculum core competencies have been noted.

### POWER POINT PRESENTATION

- These slides are meant to reinforce, but also add to, the information contained in the background reading.
- The slides are editable so that teachers can add or delete information; however, for any slides that contain images, we ask that you not remove any of the credits from the notes section. For copyright purposes, it is essential to include these.
- To play the videos found toward the end of the presentation, cut and paste the URL (which you will find in the notes section) into your browser.

#### MULTIMEDIA (SHORT VIDEOS)

- “Khmer Rouge survivor retraces her past,” *FT World Notebook* (5:50):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVP6vvBq-6g>  
(Cambodian-American returns to her home area in Cambodia)
- “I knew Pol Pot, Part I,” *Al Jazeera English* (11:07):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKVx2exYazQ>
- “I knew Pol Pot Part II,” *Al Jazeera English* (11:03):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9Lo1uZ5EZg>
- “Stories from Cambodia” (11:14):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVsSWsFHGQQ&feature=youtu.be>  
(story of a Chinese-Cambodian family that survived and re-settled in Canada)

#### IN THE NEWS

The **Obituaries** section give students a sense of the (comparatively) privileged backgrounds of the Khmer Rouge leaders. The *New York Times* obituary on Prince Norodom Sihanouk (the one non-Khmer Rouge leader included in this list) does an effective job of capturing the contradictions of his rule and his political chameleon-like nature.

- “Death of Pol Pot,” *New York Times*:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/17/world/death-pol-pot-pol-pot-brutal-dictator-who-forced-cambodians-killing-fields-dies.html>
- “Ieng Thirith: Scholar who became the highest-ranked woman in the Khmer Rouge,” *The Independent*: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/news/ieng-thirith-scholar-who-became-the-highest-ranked-woman-in-the-khmer-rouge-and-was-later-charged-10470049.html>
- Ta Mok, *The Guardian*:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jul/22/guardianobituaries.johnaglionby>
- “Ieng Sary Obituary,” *The Guardian*:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/14/ieng-sary>
- “Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodian leader through shifting alliances, dies at 89,” *New York Times*: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/15/world/asia/norodom-sihanouk-cambodian-leader-through-shifting-allegiances-dies-at-89.html>

The articles in the **Reconciliation and the International Tribunal** section tend toward taking a critical view of the process and its perceived shortcomings. The final two resources focus on different ways of healing, including a look at the role of “dark tourism” of the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Museum.

- “Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge trials are a shocking failure,” *TIME*:  
<http://time.com/6997/cambodias-khmer-rouge-trials-are-a-shocking-failure/>  
(includes video backgrounder)

- “Cambodia: Khmer Rouge convictions ‘too little, too late,’” *Human Rights Watch*: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/08/cambodia-khmer-rouge-convictions-too-little-too-late>
- (Video) “Khmer Rouge trial hears closing statements,” *AFP News* (2:29): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOS\\_uewro0U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOS_uewro0U)
- (Video) “Psychotherapy and Buddhism help heal Cambodia’s wounds,” *BBC* (2:55): <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29188641>
- “Can ‘dark tourism’ help Cambodia heal?” *The New Republic*: <https://newrepublic.com/article/136310/can-dark-tourism-help-cambodia-heal>

## OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES

### LESSON PLANS AND TEACHERS’ GUIDES

- “Exploring the evidence: The Holocaust, Cambodian genocide, and Canadian intervention,” Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, <http://www.mhmc.ca/en/pages/exploring-the-evidence>. Includes a 22-page Teachers Guide. See specifically Part 4, Activity 2 (“Historical Examination of the Cambodian Genocide”), as well as the Documents section on this page, specifically Appendix 14 (“History of the Cambodian Genocide”), Appendix 15 (“Glossary of the Cambodian Genocide”), and Appendix 18 (“Impediments to Canadian Intervention”).

### RECOMMENDED FILMS, DOCUMENTARIES, AND OTHER SHORT VIDEOS

- “*The Killing Fields*”: This 1984 film is the most well-known portrayal of the genocide, as told through the experiences of two journalists, Dith Pran from Cambodia and Sydney Schanberg of the *New York Times*. The [Curriculum Project](#) has also produced “The Killing Fields: Comprehension and Discussion Activities for the Movie,” available here: <http://curriculumproject.org/wp-content/uploads/The%20Killing%20Fields.pdf>. This resource includes worksheets, discussion questions, and plot summary of the film. The film is available for rent or purchase on iTunes, but is also frequently available through local libraries.
- “*Enemies of the People*”: A reporter with the *Phnom Penh Post* seeks answers to a question that turns out to be not so simple: *Why did you do it?* He interviews low-level Khmer Rouge soldiers and Nuon Chea, “Brother Number Two” in the Khmer Rouge hierarchy. The film’s official website can be found here: (<http://enemiesofthepeoplemovie.com/>), and can be purchased or rented through iTunes. PBS’s Point of View (POV) provides some related teaching materials at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/enemies/>.
- “*Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll*”: This film looks at the genocide years from a very different vantage point: the lives of Cambodia’s thriving rock and roll scene. The film spends much of the time profiling different waves of Western-inspired but thoroughly Cambodian rock stars in the years leading up to the genocide. The website, with trailer, can be found here: <http://www.dtifcambodia.com/>. This film can also be rented or purchased from iTunes.

- A shorter, and also music-related, profile is “They Will Kill You If You Cry.” It’s four minutes of Cambodian blues/folk music about the Khmer Rouge years. Unfortunately, there are no subtitles, but you can sample the music here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqsgx855Uhc>.

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