

## Words Matter: Oral Propaganda and the Cambodian Genocide



### GRADE LEVEL

9th - 12th grades

### DURATION

60 minutes (1 hour)

### Standards

CCSS, ISTE, NCTE

### SUBJECT AREA(S)

Media & Digital Literacy,  
History, English Language Arts,  
Ethics, Civics & Government,  
Social Studies, World History,  
Cambodian Genocide

### DIGITAL ACCESS

Registered IWitness educators  
can view and access this activity  
from the QR Code:



Register Here:

<https://iwitness.usc.edu/register>

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

The Cambodian Genocide was perpetrated by a communist regime known as the Khmer Rouge. During the Khmer Rouge's 45 months in power, they relied on oral propaganda to glorify the regime and unravel Cambodian society. The communist leadership wielded words like guns, which ultimately led to the murder of some 2 million Cambodians.

In this activity, students will examine how the Khmer Rouge used oral propaganda to achieve its genocidal aims and its impact on the Cambodian people. Students will analyze testimony from Cambodian survivors and draw connections between the slogans used by the Khmer Rouge and the experiences of the victims. By the end of this activity, students will reflect on the power of language by creating their own slogans aimed at protecting human rights.

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### ACCESS THIS ACTIVITY ON IWITNESS

This Information Quest is an IWitness digital activity that is standards-aligned and student-facing. Access this activity on the USC Shoah Foundation's no-cost educational platform, IWitness, from the QR code on the left or with the hyperlink provided here: [Words Matter: Oral Propaganda and the Cambodian Genocide](#).

Note: Registered IWitness educators can view and assign this activity to students in their IWitness Virtual Classroom and/or Google Classroom.

### LEARNING AIMS

As a result of completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Recognize the historical context of the Cambodian Genocide and the role the Khmer Rouge regime played in shaping daily life and controlling society
- Analyze how the Khmer Rouge used slogans and common sayings as tools of propaganda to promote obedience, instill fear, and reinforce the regime's ideology
- Evaluate the influence and power that language has to communicate values and influence behavior

### REQUIREMENTS

To complete this activity, students will need to:

- **Consider** how the Khmer Rouge manipulated slogans and common sayings to support an extremist communist agenda
- **Collect** significant words from testimony and draw connections between a survivor's experience and the oral propaganda used by the Khmer Rouge
- **Construct** a word cloud and reflect on the significance of your chosen words in the context of the Cambodian Genocide
- **Communicate** a reflection on the power and influence of language, and evaluate your classmates' work using IWitness