

Cambodian American Studies Model Curriculum
California Department of Education
Music, Memory, and Power in the Life of Arn Chorn-Pond
Grades 11–12

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Lesson Title: Music, Memory, and Power in the Life of Arn Chorn-Pond

Area of Study: Genocide in Cambodia

Compelling Question: What were the conditions, development, and lasting effects of the genocide in Cambodia?

Lesson Question (Supporting Question):

- How does music serve as a repository for human experience and memory?
- In what ways can music help human beings to overcome trauma (whether as performers or listeners)?

Lesson Objective: Students will learn about the history and impact of the Cambodian genocide in general, and the experiences of musician, activist, and survivor Arn Chorn-Pond in particular. In doing so, they will consider how musical activities (including performing and listening) can aid in processes of remembrance and healing.

Lesson Materials:

Supplies:

Videos:

- *CLA's Story: The Development of the Arts Over the Past 30 Years*
- *Never Fall Down: Cambodian Living Arts*
- *Arn Chorn Pond – Everyone has a Story*
- *Music Saved My Life, Arn Chorn-Pond Ugly history: The Khmer Rouge murders - Timothy Williams*

Readings:

- *Oral History*
- *Cambodia profile - Timeline*
- *Everyone Has a Story: Genocide and Mass Violence*
- *Genocide in Cambodia*. Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
- *History*
- *Memory*

Handouts:

- Link to handouts: <https://ucdavis.box.com/s/0ny47d1xjvt61t5jqzjl3wipruca0j8f>

Standards Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy 11–12 RI7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy 11–12 W9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

Lesson Assessment:

- I. Students will write or record a one-page reflective essay that includes answers to the following questions. Alternatively, these questions can be written on posters around the room and students will write their responses on a sticky note and place it on the poster.
 - What specific moments in Arn’s speech had the greatest emotional impact on you?
 - How was musical performance connected to both trauma and survival for Arn Chorn-Pond during the period of Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1979)?
 - What was your initial response to Arn’s flute playing at the beginning of the video?
 - How did your understanding of this performance change once he explained the meanings and context of that song?
 - How did his final performance on the flute contrast with his performance at the beginning?
 - Why do you think that he cried in that final performance?
 - What were some of the difficulties that Arn faced as a newly arrived immigrant to the United States?
 - How does Arn Chorn-Pond’s present-day activism involve music?
 - What is Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) and how has their mission changed over time?

- o How is CLA working to preserve existing cultural traditions and also allow space for new voices and creations?

Suggested Amount of Time: One to two 55 minute class periods

Lesson Background:

Students should have a basic understanding of Cambodian history and the genocide. A brief animated video https://www.ted.com/talks/timothy_williams_ugly_history_cambodian_genocide (of 6 minutes and 15 seconds) from TED-Ed can help to provide this background information. The instructor may consult with this timeline <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13006828> of key events in Cambodia's recent history. Another useful video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v68NMMvc63U> (7 minutes and 39 seconds) introduces a summary of Arn Chorn-Pond's memoir of surviving the Cambodian genocide, entitled *Never Fall Down* (2012, HarperCollins). The teacher may consider assigning portions of this book for reading assignments. It is worth noting that *Never Fall Down* is extremely powerful, but also graphic in its descriptions of myriad forms of violence.

This lesson contains content that may be sensitive for some students. Teachers should exercise discretion in evaluating whether the resources are suitable for their class and provide a content warning to their students at the beginning of the lesson.

Lesson Procedures:

- I. The teacher will begin by asking the class about memory.
 - What is memory? How is it transmitted?
 - Can you think of any written testimonies based on memory that are used to inform our understanding of history (including historical events and periods)?
 - o Notes for Instructor: Some notable examples include *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Arn Chorn-Pond's *Never Fall Down*, and memoirs or autobiographies more broadly.
 - How are the memories of everyday people and communities preserved and passed onto future generations? (Examples may include rituals, songs, recipes, quilts, traditions, books, or artwork.)
 - Teacher may decide to explain the following terms in order to enhance comprehension and quality of discussion:
 - o Memory: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/memory>
 - o History: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/history>
 - o Oral History: <https://dictionary.apa.org/oral-history>

- II. Begin by having students organize a playlist of at least three songs on a digital platform as they relate to the questions below (e.g. YouTube, Spotify). Next, the teacher will ask students to answer the questions in writing. These questions center on how music can be connected to memories (or commemoration) and processes of healing (or reconciliation):
- Do you have any memories that are connected to specific songs?
 - If so, what is the song, and what are the memories that are linked to this music?
 1. How did these memories become associated with this piece of music?
 2. How does it feel when you return to this song as a listener?
 - Are you familiar with any songs that preserve memories in your family or community? (Examples may include anything from popular recorded music to sacred pieces or even songs invented at home with friends and family)
 - Are there any pieces of music that have helped you to deal with loss or overcome difficult times in your life?

Notes for Instructor

Students will likely choose listening examples that evoke moods and communicate messages not only through instrumental sounds, but also lyrics or poetry. The teacher may need to explain how instrumentals, or musical pieces without lyrics, are often more difficult to decipher in terms of the overall message. This is due to the fact that language allows us to communicate directly and in a fashion that is familiar. Instrumental music, on the other hand, is generally more open to interpretation. These distinctions will be important when the class watches the video (2015) of Arn Chorn-Pond's performances on the flute that bookend his speech (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crv9Bre_T2g from 0:20-1:26 and 14:37-15:50) in part V of the lesson (see below).

It will also be important to discuss the multiple possibilities for song interpretation, especially as they relate to social context. For example, a student may have mournful feelings and memories that are connected to a song that, on the face, is considered to be happy or cheerful. These possibilities are indicative of the potential for original interpretation on the part of the listener. While songs rooted in ritual are usually performed in specific settings, popular music is heard in countless situations and social contexts.

- III. Next, the teacher will ask students to engage in small group discussions based on their written responses to the questions. First, using the "The Human Emotions Chart" handout, the teacher can ask how different pieces of music make each student feel.

Naturally, they can choose multiple feelings—including different emotions based on distinct parts of the song.

- IV. The teacher will ask the students to share their answers to the questions as a class. Each group may choose to appoint a speaker to summarize their responses and discussions.
- V. The teacher will play the video entitled “Music Saved My Life, Arn Chorn-Pond,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crv9Bre_T2g which lasts just under 16 minutes, followed by the video, “CLA's Story: The Development of the Arts Over the Past 30 Years,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oT_cSPBq2Vc which lasts 3 minutes.

Notes for Instructor

The first piece that Chorn-Pond plays receives a great deal of applause (at 0:47) before he explains that this song, which originally described killing, was used as propaganda to indoctrinate Cambodian youth into supporting the Khmer Rouge. Music is often assumed to be a wholly positive force. This first listening example, however, illustrates how music is a tool that can also be used for terrible and destructive purposes as well, including war and social control.

- VI. Students will write or record a one-page reflective essay that includes answers to the following questions. Alternatively, these questions can be written on posters around the room and students will write their responses on a sticky note and place it on the poster.
- What specific moments in Arn’s speech had the greatest emotional impact on you?
 - How was musical performance connected to both trauma and survival for Arn Chorn-Pond during the period of Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1979)?
 - What was your initial response to Arn’s flute playing at the beginning of the video?
 - How did your understanding of this performance change once he explained the meanings and context of that song?
 - How did his final performance on the flute contrast with his performance at the beginning?
 - Why do you think that he cried in that final performance?
 - What were some of the difficulties that Arn faced as a newly arrived immigrant to the United States?
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- What is Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) and how has their mission changed over time?
 - How is CLA working to preserve existing cultural traditions and also allow space for new voices and creations?

Scaffolding:

- **Engagement:** Consider the following method to support with lesson engagement:
 - Display the goal in multiple ways
 - Encourage and support opportunities for peer interactions and supports (e.g., peer-tutors)
- **Representation:** Consider the following method to support with multiple means of representation:
 - Chunk information into smaller elements
- **Action and Expression:** Consider the following method to support
 - Use story webs, outlining tools, or concept mapping tools

For additional ideas to support your students, check out the UDL Guidelines at CAST (2018) <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.

Multilingual Learner Supports:

- **Emerging:** Consider the following method to support with emerging students:
 - Speaking: Elicit choral responses
 - After reading a shared text, students work with teacher guidance, to retell a familiar story using props and visuals. Teacher encourages the use of transition words as the story retelling progresses. Teacher solicits student responses.
- **Expanding:** Consider the following method to support with expanding students:
 - Speaking: Repeat and expand student responses in a collaborative dialogue
 - In partner and group discussions, students use conversation moves to extend academic talk. Conversation moves help students add to or challenge what a partner says, question, clarify, paraphrase, support thinking with examples, synthesize conversation points, etc.

- **Bridging:** Consider the following method to support with bridging students:
 - Speaking: Require full sentence responses by asking open ended questions
 - In response to a prompt, the teacher offers a sentence frame orally and/or in writing to support expression of student thinking. Frames are adjusted based upon specific grammatical structure, key vocabulary, content learning, and language proficiency level descriptors, etc. Frames are a temporary scaffold that require modification.

For additional guidance around scaffolding for multilingual learners, please consult the following resources:

- *English Learner Toolkit of Strategies*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/ujkdc2xp1dqjzrlq55czph50c3sq1ngu>
- *Providing Appropriate Scaffolding*
<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-to-olkit/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>
- *Strategies for ELD*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/dcp15ymah51uwizpmmt2vys5zr2r5reu>
- *ELA / ELD Framework*
<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-framework>
- *California ELD Standards*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/vqn43cd632z22p8mfzn2h7pntc71kb02>

Enrichment Opportunities:

1. Students can also explore the ongoing work and impact of Cambodian Living Arts by watching a short documentary (10 minutes) by Neang Kavich entitled *Dare to Dream*, which is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2DIHMuZXCw>
This short film explores the lives and work of four Cambodian artists, including an apsara dancer who asserts “Without the arts, we don’t know who we are.” The instructor may ask students how the arts inform who we are as individuals, and as members of larger communities.
2. Students may also explore the music video, “Time to Rise.” In 2021, Cambodian hip-hop artist VannDa released this music video, which features the renowned singer and chapei player Kong Nay. This music video unites modern and traditional representations and expressions of Khmer culture in dynamic and provocative ways. The video has garnered over 119 million views (as of January 2024). The music video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvje5oblLw>.

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