

the past in the presentation



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**UNIT THREE: THE PAST IN THE PRSSENT**

“Why do people describe the Khmer Rouge years as a time of genocide?” Rathana asked Dr Chenda. “Because they killed so many people,” Dr Chenda replied. “Even now, more than twenty years later, I still have nightmares about that hell. I hear the screams of people who were taken away and beaten with sticks before they died, because that’s what was happening all the time. It wasn’t unusual. Sometime I’m the person selected and waiting to be killed.” Various people told Rathana about their experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime, but it wasn’t easy for her to imagine what it really must have been like. “I want to know about the Khmer Rouge regime, but if I were you, I wouldn’t want to talk about it,” Rathana told Dr Chenda. “I know what you mean,” said Dr Chenda. “but unless we understand the past, we won’t understand the present.” Rathana felt somewhat confused. “Does that mean that knowing about the past is the same as understanding it. I mean, why were all those people killed?’? well, reasons have been given, but I know what you mean, “Dr Chenda answerd. “I feel the same way sometimes. Perhaps some things really are impossible to understand, but generally I do think that the more you know, the more you can understand. And I believe that’s important, because when we’re trying to understand all those things that have happened, however terrible, we’re probably also trying to understand ourselves.”