

Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:** Kindergarten Lesson on Ted Ngoy: The Donut King

GA Social Studies Standards

SSKG1 Describe the diversity of American culture by explaining the customs and celebrations of various families and communities.

SSKCG2 Describe examples of positive character traits exhibited by good citizens such as honesty, patriotism, courtesy, respect, pride, and self-control.

SSKE1 Describe the work that people do such as: police officer, fire fighter, soldier, mail carrier, farmer, doctor, teacher, etc.

Donuts are a classic breakfast treat enjoyed around the world. In Southern California, many donut shops use bright pink boxes and are owned by people who immigrated from Cambodia in Southeast Asia, and it's all because of a refugee named Ted Ngoy.

Ted, born Bun Tek Ngoy, arrived in Camp Pendleton in Southern California in May 1975 with his wife and three young children. The Ngoys, like many other Cambodians, arrived as refugees as a result of the Cambodian Civil War (1970-1975) between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Communist Party of Kampuchea, also known as the Khmer Rouge. During the Cambodian Civil War, horrific violence and bombing campaigns impacted the nation's citizens, leading 1 million Cambodians to seek refuge outside of the country; 100,000 Cambodians resettled as a result, with additional waves that followed after the Cambodian genocide from 1975-1979 and during the war with Vietnam from 1979-1991.

As part of the first wave of Cambodian immigrants to the United States, the Ngoys, like many other refugees, were sponsored by a church, which helped them find a home and paid Ted to work as a landscaper and custodian for \$500 a month. Eager to earn more money for his family, Ted asked the church administration for another job and began to work at a gas station. The gas station was located next to a donut shop, and one night a co-worker asked Ted if he would like a donut from the shop. Ted had never eaten a donut before, but it was love at first bite, and reminded him of noum kong, a Cambodian rice flour pastry.



In the days that followed, Ted watched the donut shop closely while he worked at the gas station. Eventually, he stopped by and spoke to the employees, who suggested he apply for a position. Ted became Winchell's Donuts' first-ever Southeast Asian trainee and learned all the aspects of running a donut shop, from making donuts to accounting. He managed his own store and hired his wife and children to run it, which allowed him to earn enough money to purchase his own store. By 1980, he owned 20 shops, called Christy's Donuts, and would own many more in the years to come. The white boxes that were commonly used for packaging were rather expensive, and Ted found that purchasing pink boxes was much cheaper, so pink boxes became a trademark of his shops.

As more Cambodian refugees arrived in Southern California, Ted hired and trained them to work in his donut shops and helped them lease their own stores. Today, 80% of Southern California's donut shops are Cambodian-owned and many Cambodian donut shops can be found across the U.S., packaging donuts in bright pink boxes all because of Ted.

Guiding Questions for Instruction:

1. How did Ted support his family in a new home?
2. How did Ted help other Cambodian refugees?
3. How can we remember Ted today?

There is a [children's book](#) about Ted Ngoy as well as his [autobiography](#) and a documentary.

Complete Article and Lesson Plan



Photo credit:

(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Ted Ngoy via BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-54546427>
2. Ted Ngoy via BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-54546427>
3. The Donut King, Greenwich Entertainment
4. The Donut King, Greenwich Entertainment



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