

First They Killed My Father

A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers
By Loung Ung

2010 BFVHS Literary Kick Off

Background Information, History, Questions, and Vocabulary

Background Information

On April 17, 1975, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge stormed into Phnom Penh and forced families at gunpoint to evacuate the city.

Loung's family like all other families is forced to move from city to city and live life on the run. Loung's family must conceal their identity; if the Khmer Rouge learns her father's identity, he will be killed.

For the next four years under the Khmer Rouge, there is the constant threat and state of fear, violence, hunger and suffering. Cambodia is like a prison; the citizens are forced to live in villages similar to labor camps. The family is determined to save the children and decides that the three oldest children must move out of the house to increase the chance of the family's survival.

Loung's mother informs the children, "If we stay together, we will die together".

Loung is separated from her family and forced to fight to survive. She is trained as a child soldier in a camp for orphans and her siblings are sent to labor camps. As you read you will learn about how Loung survived and where this experience eventually leads her. Told in a thoughtful and reflective manner, readers will find her story compelling and inspiring.

Biographical information sources:

<http://www.loungung.com/acorn.php?page=biography>
<http://www.creativewell.com/ung.html>
<http://www.andybrouwer.co.uk/lung.html>

Follow Loung Ung on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/people/Loung-Ung/579732510>

***Named one of the 2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners by the Young Adult Library Association**



Loung Ung - Author

Loung Ung was born in 1970 in Phnom Penh in a middle-class family; she was the sixth of seven children, and at the time of her birth her native country, Cambodia was engulfed in a civil war. Loung's mother was Chinese and her father was part Cambodian and part Chinese. He served as a high-ranking government official (military police captain).

Her memoir, *First They Killed My Father* has been published in eleven countries and translated into German, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, French, Spanish, Italian, Cambodian, and Japanese. Loung has been an active speaker on Cambodia, and an advocate about the dangers of landmines. She sits on the Advisory Board for the Cambodian Association of Chicago, and she has been featured in the New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Boston Globe and the London Sunday Times. She recently completed her second book, *Lucky Child: a Daughter of Cambodia Reunites with the Sister She Left Behind*.

Join the online discussion of "First They Killed My Father" at the website:

<http://literarykickoff.weebly.com>

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Cambodian History

Cambodia and Vietnam have shared geographic space and people for at least 4000 years. Even though little is known about the prehistory in the area of Cambodia, there is solid evidence of Mekong River habitation and a pottery tradition that goes back at least 6200 years. Early historic occupation of the area beginning in about the 1st century was about trade and commerce between Indians from the Bay of Bengal region and Chinese from the southern provinces of China. This marked the area now known as Cambodia with Hindu deities and Javanese Buddhist roots that later facilitated the rise of the Kingdom of Angkor. In 802 AD the ruler Jayavarman II declared himself a universal monarch and consolidated power in the area now known as Cambodia. His rule and that of those who followed over the next 300 years, created a nation/state that left a legacy of Southeast Asia's finest architecture. From 1219 to 1864 Cambodia's fortunes rose and fell with a variety of kings and conflicts with the Thais to the West and the Cham Kingdom to the East (Vietnam).

The country stabilized somewhat in 1864 with the signing of a treaty protectorate with the French and so became a third of French Indochina, along with Laos and Vietnam. French rule lasted until the Japanese defeat in 1945. Cambodia was then declared an autonomous French State, which lasted until the French defeat in Vietnam in 1954. In 1955 King Norodom Sihanouk consolidated power through parliamentary elections and maintained power until his exile to China in 1970 which also marks the beginning of the Cambodian civil war and the rise of the Khmer Rouge. On April 17, 1975 the Khmer Rouge won the civil war and evacuated the cities of Cambodia to institute a return to Year Zero and establish an agrarian classless society. This also marks the beginning of the "killing fields" era when more than 2 million Cambodians died either through execution, disease, or starvation. The government of Cambodia instigated many border clashes with Vietnam to its south and east, and in 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia and installed a new government leading to even greater chaos and more starvation. The Khmer Rouge retreated to the mountains of Western Cambodia and Thailand. Vietnam maintained control of Cambodia until 1989 when their own domestic problems forced their withdrawal. The Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1991, and supervised elections returned to Cambodia.

Important Dates in Cambodian History

AD 100	Indianization begins. The language religion and culture of India starts to take root in Cambodia.	1947	Provinces seized by the Thais during the war are returned.
802	Jayavarman II proclaims independence from Java, starting the Kingdom of Angkor.	1953	Cambodia becomes independent from the French.
889	Yasovarman I moves the capitol to Angkor.	1955	Free Elections.
1112	Suryavarman II commences the construction of Angkor Wat.	1969	President Nixon authorizes the secret bombing of Cambodia.
1177	The Chams sail up the Tonle Sap, defeat the Khmers, and occupy Angkor for 4 years.	1970	The Civil War begins.
1181	Jayavarman VII defeats the Chams and takes the throne.	1975	The Khmer Rouge win the civil war and begin the "Killing Fields".
1431	The Thais sack Angkor and kidnap most of the royal court.	1979	Vietnamese forces liberate Cambodia followed by famine.
1772	The Thais burn Phnom Penh to the ground.	1985	The Khmer Rouge retreat to Thailand.
1864	The French force King Norodom I to sign a treaty of protectorate.	1989	Vietnam withdraws.
1942	Japanese forces occupy Cambodia.	1991	Paris Peace Accords, elections return.
		2002	First ever local elections.

Cambodia Today

Population: 13.6 million Growth rate: 1.8% (2005 est.)

Capital: Phnom Penh

Location: Borders Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos

Area: 181,040 sq. km. (about the size of the state of Missouri or Washington)

Ethnic groups: Khmer 90%; Vietnamese 5%; Chinese 1%; Other 4% (Chams, Burmese, hill tribes)

Language: Khmer (official) 95%; French; English

Religion: Theravada Buddhist 95%; Other 5%

Life Expectancy at Birth: female 62 years; male 56 years (2005 est.)

Literacy: total 70%; female 60%; male 80% (2003)

GDP per capita: \$2,000 (purchasing power parity, 2004)

GDP growth: 5.4% (2004)

Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Economic system: market economy since 1989

Sources:

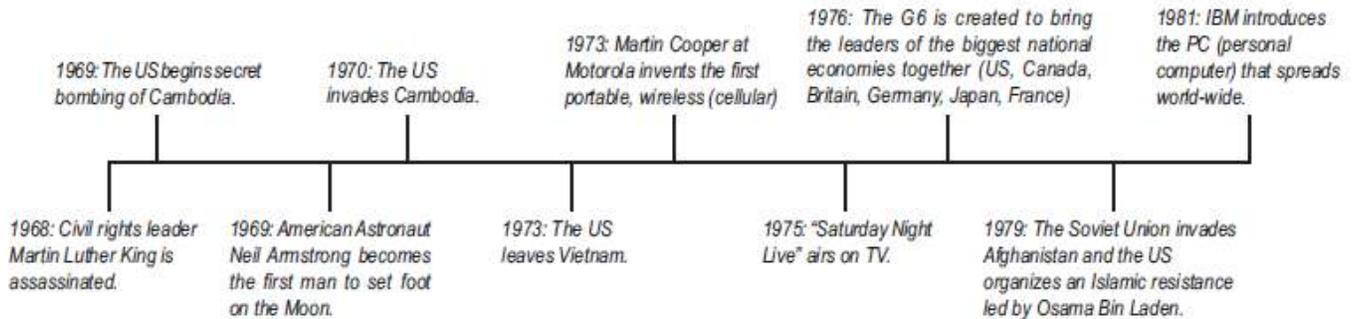
2005 Ray, Nick. "Lonely Planet, Cambodia" Lonely Planet Publications CIA World Factbook, U.S. Department of Commerce

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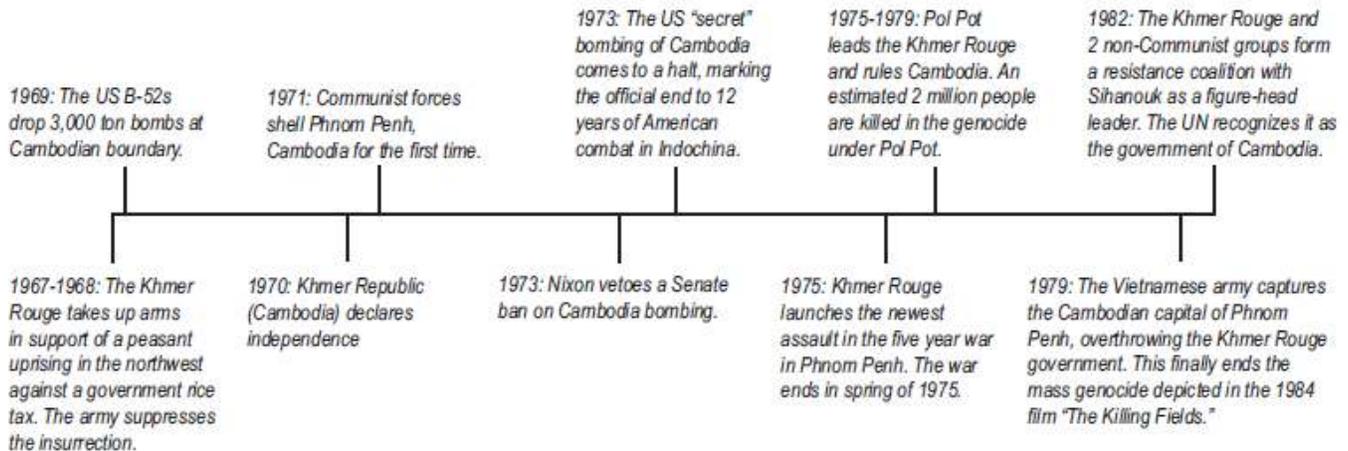
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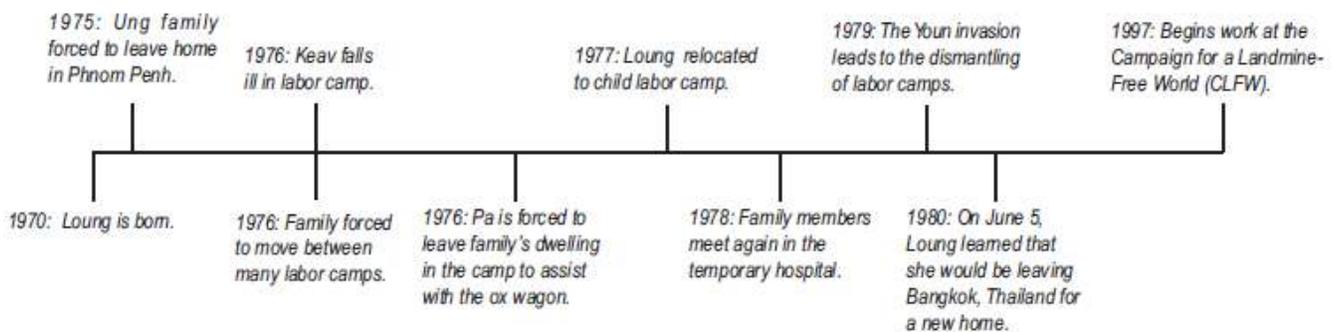
US Timeline (1968-1981)



Cambodian Timeline (1967-1982)



Loung's Life (1970-1997)



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General Questions for Discussion

1. What fundamental problems existed in the Khmer Rouge's plan that caused the destruction of so many lives? Were there any values that the Khmer Rouge claimed to hold that you share?
2. What impact did the narrator's child's voice have on your experience as a reader? How would you characterize the transformation that takes place in her narrative voice throughout the story?
3. How did it affect your reading of the book that you were aware of Loung's father's impending death long before her?
4. Would you describe Loung as a feminist? How did the experiences of the Ung family differ during the war because of gender?
5. What was your impression of the final separation, both geographic and cultural, that Loung had with her surviving family? Did you sympathize with her eventual desire to assimilate into American culture, or had you expected her to be more aggressive about pursuing her family relationships earlier on?
6. Loung saw herself as a "strong" person, as did many other people in the book, and was eventually drafted into a soldier training camp as a result. What are the qualities of a survivor? How does one reconcile compassion with a will to survive? What qualities enabled her gentle sister Chou to survive as well?
7. With armed struggle a reality of life for people all over the world both past and present, how does one draw the line as to which means are ethical and unethical for coping with it, such as the author's current campaign against the use of landmines? Are there other tools of war that you believe should be broadly banned?

Source:

http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides_F/first_they_killed_my_father1.asp

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Critical Reading Guide

Personal Reflection Questions

- How did it affect your reading of the book that you were aware of Loung's father's impending death long before she was?
- Do you believe that we (as humans) are naturally good? Why? Why not?
- What fundamental problems existed in the Khmer Rouge's plan that caused the destruction of so many lives? Were there any values that the Khmer Rouge claimed to hold that you share?

Literature

- What impact did the narrator's perspective have on your experience as a reader? How would you characterize the transformation that takes place in her narrative voice throughout the story?

Gender Studies

- Would you describe Loung as a feminist? How did the experiences of the Ung family differ during the war because of gender?
- How were gender roles depicted in the book? Did these roles change during the war?
- What challenges did the characters in the book face because of their gender?
- Examine the concept of beauty, as depicted in the book. How was the concept different between Cambodian and Vietnamese society? Which concept is most similar to the American concept of beauty?

Education

- How does the author's age and cognitive development affect the events depicted in the book?
- At the age of 5, Loung made the transition from living a middle class childhood to living in poverty. Considering poverty as a theme, how do you think school and education are different for American students living in poverty than for students living middle class lives?
- How does Loung's perception of herself change after her childhood experiences in Cambodia?
- How does Loung's cultural/ethnic identity develop as she moves through the book?

Mathematics

- Do you think it is possible to calculate the cost of war? What factors would go into calculating cost?
- Examine the cost of living in both the United States and in Cambodia during the period described in the book.

Sociology

- Are Americans like the base people? Explain.
- What was your impression of the final separation, both geographic and cultural, that Loung had with her surviving family? Did you sympathize with her eventual desire to assimilate into the new/dominant culture, or had you expected her to be more aggressive about pursuing her family relationships?
- What factors influenced societal hatred between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese?
- How can power facilitate corruption?
- Is it possible for a society to recover from war? How do people return to an original, uncorrupted state?

Nutrition

- Given Loung's daily work, how many calories should she have eaten to maintain her body weight?
- What are the long term effects of malnutrition on the human body?

Psychology

- What are the major emotions Loung experiences throughout the book?
- Cite an example of where Loung suppressed her feelings in the book.
- How do you think that Loung's experiences will affect her parenting style?

History

- How much did the American presence (or lack thereof) influence key events in this book?
- The concept of ethnic cleansing is not new. Do you believe that it is becoming more common, or do you believe that the media has enabled us to simply become more aware? Why?

Resources:

- 1) http://www.wsl.state.wy.us/crook/book_disc_group.htm#Tula%20Station%20by%20David%20Toscano
- 2) http://www.harperacademic.com/catalog/instructors_guide_xml.asp?isbn=0060931388
- 3) http://www.loungung.com/ung_books.php?book=FTKMF

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History

Discussion Questions:

1. Define the terms politicide and genocide. Are these terms interchangeable? Of the two, which most closely describes the events in Cambodia from 1975-1978? Are such terms synonymous with 'ethnic cleansing'? Explain your opinion.
2. What internal and external influences and factors led to the war in Cambodia?
3. How did this book increase your appreciation of civil rights and personal freedoms? Has this book changed your respect for the rule of law and due process? Explain how?
4. How has this book increased your understanding of the importance of effective governing? Explain why or why not?
5. What ideological rhetoric or process of indoctrination was used by the Khmer Rouge to try and give Cambodians a new sense of national identity? How did they blend Maoist Communism and Cambodian culture? Why did this regime detest Western influence and fear/loath the outside interlopers? Why was there such a fear of infiltration by the CIA, KGB or Vietnamese operatives?
6. Are there any similarities to be drawn between Andrew Jackson's Cherokee Removal, Adolf Hitler's Final Solution and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime? Explain.
7. Do you think Americans were oblivious or naive concerning the problems in Southeast Asia from 1975-1978? Research this question.
8. How did the war differ for families living in urban areas versus rural areas? Educated versus uneducated? Explain the different experiences during the war because of gender?
9. Explain the term 'assimilation'. Is this term often used in association with genocide and ethnic cleansing? Think of different periods in U.S./World History when the same practice was applied. Was resistance futile for the Ung family?
10. Explain the statement, "war turns men into ghastly agents of terror." Does this statement apply to the both the Khmer Rouge and the author? Explain your opinion.
11. Ultimately, Cambodia was liberated with the help and assistance of what nation? Explain using specific detail. Does this fact change your views on U.S. intervention or interference? Explain why?
12. What role, if any, do citizens of humanity and their governments have in trying to end violent regimes who commit acts of racial cleansing and genocide?

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13. Over the course of history, are civilians ever 'fair game' during a time of war? Explain.

14. Did the Khmer Rouge employ the same interrogation tactics as other rogue regimes or legitimate global powers? Did their method of division and terror mirror any of activities undertaken during the interrogations at Abu Graib and Guantanamo Bay? Is this methodology ever acceptable? Explain your opinion?

Political Science

Discussion Questions:

What is ethnic cleansing and genocide? Why does ethnic cleansing and genocide happen? How might genocide be prevented?

The concept of ethnic cleansing is not new. Do you believe that it is becoming more common, or do you believe that the media has enabled us to simply become more aware? Why?

Who are the Khmer Rouge? What fundamental problems existed in the Khmer Rouge's plan that caused the destruction of so many lives? Were there any values that the Khmer Rouge claimed to hold that you share?

Who was Pol Pot? How did he gain his political power?

Khmer Rouge, previously a weak guerrilla force run by disenfranchised leftist politicians, grew in the wake of the bombings, as each attack on Cambodian land legitimized their virulent hatred of Sihanouk. What country was responsible for the bombings? And what were the justifications for the action?

How much did the American presence (or lack thereof) influence key events in this book? What was the political/foreign policy role of the United States regarding Cambodia?

What are the challenges of justice related to convicting war criminals?

What does Ung's chapter "The Execution" tell us about the importance of justice? Was the execution just - why or why not, in your opinion?

What does Cousin Cheung's encounter with the soldiers who suspect her of being Khmer Rouge reveal about the political situation in Cambodia after the end of the war?

With armed struggle a reality of life for people all over the world both past and present, how does one draw the line as to which means are ethical and unethical for coping with it, such as the author's current campaign against the use of landmines? Are there other tools of war that you believe should be broadly banned?

How has the legacy of the Khmer Rouge shaped the country; its people and the political and economic institutions that govern Cambodia today?

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List four examples of ethnic cleansing that have occurred in the 19th-21st Centuries.

What influence or the lack thereof has the U.S. Government had regarding ethnic cleaning in Bosnia? Rwanda? Darfur?

Sociology

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify cultural elements throughout the book such as norms (folkways), values, beliefs, and symbols.
2. Define social institutions. What social institutions were altered or destroyed by the Khmer Rouge? For what purpose?
3. What do we learn about deviance as a social construct from the book? What types of behavior were defined as deviant by the Angkar? Why? What forms of social control did the Angkar use?
4. Give examples from the book of forced assimilation, expulsion, cultural genocide, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.
5. Describe the “ideal” society the Khmer Rouge claimed it wanted to create. Are there any values that the Khmer Rouge claimed to hold that you share?
6. In the new “classless” society, a system of stratification still existed. Explain and describe the structure of this stratification system. Include discussions of status value, base people, new people, how labor was divided, and how goods and resources were distributed.
7. Why did the Khmer Rouge consider people from the countryside to be model citizens? How did they see urban people?
8. What changes were made to the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in order to remove rank and status divisions? Give examples of language and dress norms.
9. Do you believe it is possible to have a classless society? Why or why not?
10. What was the significance of race/ethnicity throughout Ung’s story?
11. How are gender roles depicted in the book before and during the war? How did the experiences of the male and female Ung family members differ?
12. How does Ung’s perception of herself change throughout the story? How does her cultural/ethnic identity develop?

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13. Explain how Ung attempted to assimilate into American culture. How would you explain Ung's desire to assimilate into American culture and her disconnect from her family in Cambodia?
14. Using the sociological imagination, reflect on the similarities and differences in your childhood and that of Ung. How would your life, personality, choices, and beliefs be different if you were raised in a similar social situation as Ung?
15. Discuss how the Khmer Rouge trained children as soldiers. What methods were used to socialize the children as soldiers? Research other examples of the use of child soldiers in other parts of the world.
16. Research if the United States had any role in the Khmer Rouge's rise to power. What kinds of action did the U.S. government take before and during the Khmer Rouge Killing Fields campaign?
17. Research the Ottawa Treaty (also referred to as the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.) Explain the purpose of the treaty. What countries have signed the treaty? What is the U.S. position on the treaty?
18. Research the legal definition of "genocide." Did the Khmer Rouge commit genocide in Cambodia? What is "auto-genocide?" Have other Twentieth Century countries committed genocide? Which ones, when, and against whom?
19. Research recent news accounts to learn of the current situation regarding trials and punishment for those who took part in the Killing Fields. Should they be brought to trial? Why or why not?
20. Research the International Criminal Court (ICC). What is the United States position on ICC? Do you agree with this position? Why or why not?

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Exploring the text -Major Themes of the Book-

Pages 1 – 22 tell of Loung Ung's childhood memories of Phnom Penh.

Pages 23 – 213 tell of her family's experiences during the Khmer Rouge dictatorship.

Pages 214 – 272 are of Cambodia during the invasion by Vietnam.

Pages 283 – 303 relate how Loung was able to make her way from Cambodia, through Vietnam to Thailand, and finally to America.

Before the Khmer Rouge takeover:

- In the first two chapters Loung Ung describes herself as a child. What sort of a child was she?
- How many people are in Loung's family? Name them.
- What sort of a family are the Ungs? Are they very different to you? If you have brothers and sisters do they resemble the children in the Ung family?
- Would you have liked to have lived in the Phnom Penh Loung describes? Why?

Under the Khmer Rouge:

- Loung interprets the flight from the capital as she experienced it: "Yesterday I was playing hopscotch with my friends. Today we are running from soldiers with guns." What has happened? Does Loung understand why she and her family have been forced from their home? How does she react to the forced march?
- Loung's parents are questioned about what work they did before the takeover. Why do they lie and what were their real occupations?
- All the men who had registered for work were shot. Why?
- Loung is very happy when her family obtains a small pot of brown sugar. Why? How much of it does she eat?

Life in the country:

- What are "base people"? What is a "Khmer"? Are Loung and her family Khmer?
- "All remnants of past lives to be destroyed". What does this mean?
- The Khmer Rouge attempted to change the spoken language by banning words like Mr and Mrs, Sir and Lord, mother and father. Why did they do this?
- Under the Khmer Rouge all people are equal. Or are they? How many levels of society are there in the village? Discuss.
- Kim has made some new "friends" in the village. Who are these children? How do they treat Kim? Discuss.

Loung's family:

- Loung's sister Keav is separated from the family and sent to a labor camp. Loung says, "Now the joy of beauty is gone from her life." What was Keav's life like in Phnom Penh?
- Where is Keav when she dies? Are there any doctors in the hospital? Why not?

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- “Pa straightens his shoulders, and for the first time since the Khmer Rouge takeover, he stands tall.” Why has Loung’s father recovered his dignity?
- Kim is stealing corn to keep his family alive. In the fields the plants are heavy with corn. Loung imagines that her brother asks a question: “Why are the killers starving us when all this is available?” Is there an answer?

The family separates:

- Who are the “Youns”? What are they doing?
- The children’s mother turns them out of home. She says, “I don’t want you here. You are too much work for me! I want you to leave!” When this happens Loung’s blood “boils with resentment” towards her mother. Why has she acted this way? Do you think Loung’s attitude is justified? Imagine yourself in Loung’s position. How would you feel?
- Loung and her sister wish to join a children’s work camp. Why? What does “Met Bong” mean. At night Met Bong “educates” the children. How? What does she want the children to do?
- At a new camp site Loung Ung sees a young boy up a palm tree cutting fruit: “He smiles and waves to me, but the cleaver is still in his hand.” Is this the first time the author has noted a smile since the Khmer Rouge takeover? Is the image one of warmth and friendship or does the author wish to convey a warning?
- Who is Pol Pot? Why are children being forced into the army? What are the children being taught about their parents?

Orphans:

- In some parts of the book Loung Ung chooses to use *italics* to tell her story. Why does she do this?
- What has happened to Cambodia? What is the political discussion about?
- The family is reunited. How many family members set out on their journey in April 1975. How many of them are there now? What happened to Meng and Khoy?
- “Eight weeks, sixty days, 1,400 hours more, and she would have made it.” Loung describes herself as being angry and resentful towards her mother. Why?

Leaving Cambodia:

- When Loung is being smuggled by boat from Vietnam to Thailand another boat intercepts them. Their captain tells his passengers not to worry that “these are just friendly Thai fishermen.” What do they do to the passengers? What is taken from Loung?
- When did Loung Ung leave Thailand for America? What was her dream?

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After Reading the Book -Major Themes of the Book-

The Loung family:

Look at the family chart at the beginning of the book. What happened to each of the children? Write an entry on each person briefly noting what happened to them.

Culture:

- On page 8 Loung Ung is called “ugly” by adults. Why do they do this?
- Look at page 110. Birthdays in Cambodia are celebrated in a different way to those in America. Explain the differences. How old would you be in Cambodia? Do other people celebrate birthdays differently? Do you know of other cultures which do not celebrate birthdays?

Family:

- Loung, Kim and Chou find a “new family” (page 228), or do they? What is a foster family? Loung uses the expression (page 229) “a family of convenience”. What does she mean by this?
- Very quickly Loung’s attitude changes towards her new family. On page 240 she says that she hates them. Why?
- The children leave this family and (page 247) join another new family. Do these people treat them better? Is it really a new family for them? Discuss.

Revenge:

- The theme of revenge occurs throughout the book. Examples will be found on pages 143, 156, 168, 251, 277. In some of these Loung states that hatred is keeping her alive. How? Against whom does she wish to take revenge?
- Is the Angkar afraid of children? See page 159. Why?
- A brutal execution is described in the chapter called ‘the execution’ which begins on page 264. Does Loung experience any emotion? Is this revenge?
- Why did Loung Ung write this book? Is it her revenge? Discuss.

Hunger:

- Food and hunger are a constant theme throughout the book. Explain the role that food, or lack thereof, plays in the tactics of the Khmer Rouge and how Loung and her family try to survive.
- Eight grains of rice may be pasted to a piece of cardboard and passed around the class during this discussion.
- In several instances Loung steals food. See pages 118 and 203. Discuss her attitude to each incident.

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Study Questions for Each Chapter:

Chapter 1: Phnom Penh

1. How could you describe the relationship between Loung and her Ma and Pa?
2. How old is Loung? What kind of child is Loung? Describe her personality. Is this typical for a young Cambodian girl?
3. In the form of a picture or drawing, illustrate the setting. Include customs and aspects of Cambodian culture.
4. Draw map of southeast Asia with the following labeled on it:
 - Cambodia
 - Phnom Penh
 - Laos
 - Ho Chi Minh City
 - China
 - Bangkok
 - Vietnam
 - South China Sea
 - Thailand
 - Gulf of Thailand
5. Draw a map of Cambodia and label the following on it:
 - Siem Reap
 - Mekong River
 - Phnom Penh
 - Tonle Sap
 - Battambang
 - Angkor

Vocab: **sweltering** **congested** **stern**
 translucent **impurities** **elope**
 homely

Chapter 2: The Ung Family

1. What are Ma and Pa's jobs? How does Pa feel about his job?
2. In Cambodia, how do you distinguish between upper, middle and lower class families?

Vocab: **amenities** **impoverished** **makeshift**
 lackluster **facade** **juxtapose**
 havoc **conscript** **suave**

Chapter 3: Takeover

1. Something very important has taken place at the beginning of this chapter. What is it? What is the people's reaction?

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2. How would you describe the mood at the end of the chapter? Why is the mood so different from the beginning? What has caused the change?

Vocab: **cinched** **elation** **oblivious**
 jittery **monsoon** **jarring**
 stifling **riddled**

Chapter 4: Evacuation

1. What does Ma tell Loung to do with the money? What does this tell about the situation the Ung family is in?
2. The Ung family is forced to leave behind their truck and give up their watches to the Khmer Rouge guards. Symbolically, what are they leaving behind as they do this?

Vocab: **wince** **burrow** **disperse**
 encamp **delicacy** **silhouette**
 submission

Chapter 5: Seven-Day Walk

1. When the family arrived at the Kom Baul base, they stood in line with peasant families? Why was Pa afraid to declare his affiliation with the Lon Nol Democratic Government? What happened later to those who did?
2. Why is it significant that Loung dreams about a celebration in the color Red? What does red now symbolize?
3. Who does the Ung family meet on the road? What does Loung not quite understand about the family's situation?

Vocab: **monks** **quiver** **makeshift**
 comrade **curtly** **putrid**
 innards **prodding** **toddle**

Chapter 6: Krang Troup

1. Why is Loung unhappy with her new life in Krang Troup?
2. What sorts of luxuries does the government forbid?

Vocab: **obedient** **cadre** **sternness**
 prosper(ed) **cyclo** **monotony**
 thatched **rigidly**

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Chapter 7: Waiting station

1. Describe what Loung saw at the Waiting Station. How did the family leave so quickly?

Vocab: **admonishes** **tranquil** **rendezvous**
 fatigued **sarong** **clamber**

Chapter 8: Anlungthmor

1. What are the conditions of the new village?
2. How does the family fair once the rainy flood season comes?
3. Why does Pa say the family needs to leave the village?
4. In what way is the family's condition portrayed in the end of the chapter?
5. Describe the mood of Ung family.

Vocab: **jut** **searing** **remedies**
 congeal **scapegoat** **protrude**

Chapter 9: Ro Leap

1. Who do the Ung family meet when they get to this new village? What happens to them once the village chief comes?
2. Why is it ironic that there are no social divisions in communism, Cambodia's new government?
3. How is the family able to get more food than others? Would you allow someone in your family to make this sacrifice also?
4. What does the government believe about religion?

Vocab: **uncorrupted** **capitalists** **capitalism**
 communal **lurches** **sheared**
 emaciated **reap** **heinous**
 traversing

Chapter 10: Labor Camps

1. Why is it necessary for Khouy to marry at a young age? What is happening to the young girls in Ro Leap?
2. Where are Khouy and Meng sent? Where is Keav sent?
3. Why do the new people of the village starve while they are growing plenty of food? Where does the food go?

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Vocab: **skittish** **anguished** **contorted**
 convenience **sauntered** **distraught**
 gloat **avail** **incantation**

Chapter 11: New Year's

1. Compare and contrast Loung's sixth birthday with past birthday celebrations.
2. How is Loung's dream on New Year's Eve foreshadow what she does a night or so later?
3. What is the physical condition of Loung? Of the people of Ro Leap?

Vocab: **distorted** **porcelain** **urgency**
 gorge **relish** **grit**
 probe **ajar** **treason**
 amends

Chapter 12: Keav

1. What were the conditions that Keav had to work and live in?
2. What happened to Keav? How would you react if this were one of your family members?

Vocab: **envision** **bloated** **clenching**
 protruding **backbreaking** **dissipates**
 infirmity **contempt** **denigrated**
 makeshift **decrepit** **disproportional**
 dysentery **eternity** **profusely**
 headstrong **reincarnated** **temperamental**

Chapter 13: Pa

1. What happens to Pa?
2. How does Loung replace her father?
3. What is growing inside of Loung as a result of all the hardship and torment she has endured so far?
4. What small incident changes the way Loung views her mother?

Vocab: **impending** **rigid** **tousle**
 taunt **convulse** **gaunt**
 etch

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Chapter 14: Ma's Little Monkey

1. As the new head of the house, what does Kim do to prevent his family from starving to death? Is he always successful?
2. How does this event with Kim impact the growth of Loung's hatred of the Khmer, the soldiers, and Pot Pol?
3. Why might Loung describe Cambodian rain as a friend?

Vocab: **omnipotent** **moonbeams** **protruding**
 aroma **cringes** **avenge**
 lest

Chapter 15: Leaving Home

1. What is happening at Ro Leap that causes Ma to send Kim, Chou, and Loung away?
2. Describe the labor camp where Chou and Loung stay.
3. Why do the others hate Chou and Loung? How does each girl react to the taunts and hatred?

Vocab: **famine** **speculates** **endure**
 resentment **dispensable** **scorching**
 calluses **intimidating** **propaganda**
 adulation **liberator** **incubates**

Chapter 16: Child Soldiers

1. What "reward" has Loung earned for being a strong girl?
2. Describe what her new camp life is like. How would you feel if you were sent there, without your sister?
3. Why do the girls all avoid friendships?
4. How do changes in the war between the Youns and the Khmer Rouge affect the girls at the camp? How does it affect Loung specifically?

Vocab: **elation** **zealous** **sinewy**
 obligatory **furor** **infiltrated**
 depicting **inevitably**

Chapter 17: Gold for Chicken

1. How does Loung react to seeing Geak? Why does she feel such shame?
2. Why is the chapter called "Gold for Chicken"? Would you put others first as Ma does? Why or why not?

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Vocab: **writhing** **foothills** **brittle**
 pangs **shuddered** **brimming**
 frail

Chapter 18: The Last Gathering

1. In this chapter, almost the entire Ung family is reunited at the infirmary. Does it seem likely that this would happen to many families? Describe how you would feel if you had been separated and now were together again.

Vocab: **troupe** **bloated** **granulated**
 somberly **illuminated** **staggering**
 envision

Chapter 19: The Walls Crumble

1. Describe how Loung knows to go visit Ma and Geak. What is it that she knows?
2. What happens to Loung once she accepts what has taken place?
3. What might you do if you experienced this terror?

Vocab: **infirmary** **repetitive** **manifest**
 extrasensory **frantically** **palpitates**
 circulate **elicit** **recesses**
 puncture

Chapter 20: The Youn Invasion

1. What happens that allows Kim, Chou and Loung to be reunited?
2. Despite being together, why are the children so sad?
3. What does Loung learn about the war from the adults in the camp?

Vocab: **shrapnel** **debris** **engulf**
 scavenge **vehemently** **paranoid**
 implicit **labyrinth** **influx**

Chapter 21: The First Foster Family

1. What are the Ung children looking for? When they find it, what does Loung expect? What does she receive instead?
2. Describe what happens between Paof, the Youn soldier and Loung. Do you believe this happened to many young girls at the camp?

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3. What gives Loung the courage and strength to continue, knowing she is loved?

Vocab: **hyperventilate** **haze** **impending**
 lingering **surge** **quizzically**
 whimper **bewildered** **indignantly**

Chapter 22: Flying Bullets

1. What happens to the grandmother in this chapter?
2. Why is Loung not surprised that the family will not take care of them anymore?
3. Describe the Ung's new foster family. Do you believe they are better caretakers or not? Why or why not?
4. What is the physical condition of Kim, Chou and Loung?

Vocab: **frantically** **neglecting** **repetitive**
 briskly **dribble** **luscious**
 superstitious **mundane**

Chapter 23: Khmer Rouge Attack

1. What do Loung and Chou lose in the attack on the refugee village?
2. What is the condition of the village after the attack?
3. Near the end of the chapter, the Ung children finally find their brothers. How does this make Loung feel? How would you feel in this situation?

Vocab: **rhythmical** **shrilling** **engulfed**
 mortars **bayonet** **mutilated**
 maiming **wiry** **bleaker**
 transfixed **tattered**

Chapter 24: The Execution

1. Why does Loung feel she needs to attend the execution of the Khmer soldier?
2. Do you believe that in executing the soldier, the Cambodian people made up for all the pain, suffering, and torment they endured? Would you choose to participate in the execution?

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Vocab: **revenge** **scorching** **mutter**
 vengeful **bloodthirsty** **angular**
 seethe **devoid** **feasting**

Chapter 25: Back to Bat Deng

1. Should Loung expect to return to Bat Deng and her family and experience wealth and no more hardship?
2. Outline the course of events that brought Loung from Cambodia to Vietnam. How does Loung feel about leaving Chou and the others?

Vocab: **indoctrination** **resilient** **monetary**
 abettor

Chapter 26: From Cambodia to Vietnam

1. How does the destruction of Phnom Penh mirror the destruction Loung's and other Cambodian children's innocence?
2. How do Meng, Eang, and Loung fair in Vietnam? Provide specific examples to support your answer.
3. Describe what happens on the boat ride from Vietnam to Thailand.

Vocab: **cavernous** **lustrous** **mannequins**
 derogatory **imminent** **putrid**
 charred **ransack** **meekly**

Chapter 27: Lam Sing Refugee Camp

1. What must they obtain before they can leave for America? Does this happen instantly?
2. What item does Loung finally replace? Is she satisfied with the replacement? Why or why not?
3. What is the mood of Meng, Eang and Loung as they leave for America? Do you agree with where Loung ended her story? Why or why not?

Vocab: **refugee** **adapt** **prolong**
 gasp **voluptuous** **ration**
 malnutrition **linger**

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Further topics for discussion or writing:

- At the very beginning of her book Loung Ung introduces Phnom Penh and draws a pleasant picture of her family life before April 1975 as a contrast to the awful world she is about to enter. In the first paragraph she lists the things that she likes including the cool morning breeze, the uniforms of the waiters and waitresses, the aroma of food, her favorite foods, and the noises of the city. Write a similar list of the things you would like to introduce and describe about your own neighborhood that stand out and are important to you.
- Write two paragraphs. In the first describe Loung from her self-portrait in the first two chapters. In the second paragraph describe Loung as she prepares to board the plane taking her from Bangkok to America. How much time has passed since the first paragraph? How has she changed?
- Is the story Loung Ung tells more or less compelling because it tells the story of only one family caught up in this tragedy? Discuss.
- Loung has chosen a very simple way to tell her story. What is it? Is a chronological plan the only way her story could have been told? Does how the simplicity of her storytelling added power to the story? Throughout the book we are aware that we are seeing the events through the eyes of a child. What impact does this have on the impact the story has on you?
- *First They Killed My Father* is a work of non-fiction but in several places some text in *italics* have been added. Where does this happen? Are these additions to the text successful? Would you classify these additions as fiction or non-fiction?
- Another author might have used these personal experiences to write a novel. If you had been living in Cambodia during this period, would you have written of your experiences as fiction or non-fiction? Why? In drawing attention to a particular event is fiction or non-fiction the most powerful? Discuss with reference to other books you have read yourself or studied in school.
- What tense, or tenses, did Loung choose for writing this book? Do her choices make her storytelling stronger or weaker? Discuss.
- You have probably seen many moving films. Which has the strongest impact, a film or a book? Which has the longest lasting impact? Discuss. Would Loung's story make for a good movie? Explain.
- This book is concerned with murder and family tragedy yet some reviewers have written of it as "life affirming". What do they mean by this? Do you agree?

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Additional Resources on Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge:

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"Cambodia: The Betrayal." Documentary. 1991.

"Cambodia Dreams." Documentary. 2008.

"The Flute Player." PBS' P.O.V. Documentary. 2003.

"Investigate Reports: Return to the Killing Fields." A&E. Documentary. 2000.

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"My Khmer Heart." Documentary. 2000.

"Small Voices: The Stories of Cambodia's." Documentary. 2008.

"Pol Pot: Biography." A&E. Documentary. 1998.

"Refugee." PBS' Independent Lens. Documentary. 2004.

"S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine." Documentary. 2004.

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<http://www.dccam.org/>
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<http://edwebproject.org/sideshow/>
Stories of the Cambodian Genocide

<http://www.khmerinstitute.org/>
The Khmer Institute

<http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/>
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<http://www.yale.edu/cgp/>
Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Project

<http://www.cambodiangenocide.org/genocide.htm>
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<http://www.cwcc.org/kh/>
Cambodian Women's Crisis Center

<http://www.loungung.com>
Loung Ung's site

<http://harperacademic.blogspot.com/search?q=Loung+Ung>
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<http://www.tourismcambodia.com/>
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Cambodia Information Center

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>
CIA World Factbook: Cambodia

<http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/cambodia/>
PBS FRONTLINE'S *Cambodia: Pol Pot's Shadow*

LOUNG UNG INTERVIEWS AND SPEECHES:

<http://www.booknotes.org/Program/?ProgramID=1557>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJItHcrx27Y>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Kt6Sk8Qwx0&feature=related
<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/podcast/?podcastID=342>

Source:

http://www.pbs.org/pov/film-files/fp_delvedeeper_reading_list_0.pdf

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Resources on Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, and Khmer refugees that coincide with Loung Ung's second book, *Lucky Child: A Daughter of Cambodia Reunites with the Sister She Left Behind*:

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Lo Bosco, Rosco. <i>Buddha Wept</i> , GreyCore Pr, 2003.	Hein, Jeremy. <i>From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Refugee Experience in the United States</i> , Twayne, Paperback, 1995.	Welaratna, Usha. <i>Beyond the Killing Fields: Voices of Nine Cambodian Survivors in America</i> , 1993. Paperback: Stanford Univ Pr, 1994
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Chandler, David P. <i>A History of Cambodia, 3rd Edition</i> , 1992. Paperback: Westview Pr., 2000.		
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