

# First They Killed My Father

## A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers

### By Loung Ung

#### **-After you've read the book- 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?