

## Selection Review #1

### *First They Killed My Father*

Introductory material and pages 1-55

- 1. List some of the text features provided at the beginning of this book. Explain why the writer probably included them.** Text features at the beginning of this book include: a dedication; a table of contents; an author's note; a chart of the author's family members at the time the narrative takes place; and a map of Cambodia. These features help readers understand the context of the book and what it is about. The family chart helps them keep track of the people involved and how they are related to one another, and the map shows some of the different places mentioned in the narrative.
- 2. What was Loung's childhood like before April 1975? Tell about her home and her family.** Before April 1975, Loung lived with her family in the busy capital city of Phnom Penh. They had a large apartment on the third floor of a building, with a television, electric fan, and modern plumbing. They had two cars and a truck. Her father was a well-respected police captain. Loung and her five older brothers and sisters went to school every day, learning French, Chinese, and Khmer. On weekends, they went to the movie theater or went swimming at the club. Loung's younger sister, Geak, was just three years old. The family lived a cheerful, busy life.
- 3. In what ways was Loung's family different from most other Cambodian families? Why did this put them in danger when the Khmer Rouge took over?** Loung's family was different from other Cambodian families in two ways. First, they were more well-off than most families. They had a bigger home and more possessions. Second, the Ung family was ethnically three quarters Chinese, since Ma was completely Chinese and Pa was half Chinese. The children had lighter skin than most Cambodians and Ma spoke Khmer (the Cambodian language) with a Chinese accent. These two facts put the family in danger when the Khmer Rouge took over, because the Khmer Rouge wanted to get rid of anyone who was part of the old government or was an outsider.
- 4. What happened on April 17, 1975? What advantage did the Ung family have at first?** On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge soldiers took over Phnom Penh. Almost everyone had to leave the city with whatever they could carry. At first, the Ung family was lucky, because they had a truck to ride in to leave the city. However, when the truck ran out of gas, they had to abandon it and get out and walk. They were just as helpless as everyone else.
- 5. Loung and her family walked for six days. What was this time like for them? What finally put an end to their walking?** The Ungs' long walk was a desperate, difficult time. Their food ran very low, and they did not have a chance to bathe or change their clothes. The children became very tired. They heard shots as people were killed and even came across dead bodies. Finally, after six days, their uncles from the village came to meet them. Uncle Heang brought a wagon that they could ride in the rest of the way to his village.

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- 6. Why do the Ungs have to pretend they are a family of peasants? How does this affect their lives in the village?** The Ungs have to pretend they are peasants because if Pa is recognized as a military police captain, he will be killed. Even just being from the city could get the whole family killed. Because they have to hide who they really are, the children must not make friends in the village. When other families from the city arrive in the village, the Ungs have to leave, because they are afraid they might be recognized and identified.
- 7. What is the biggest problem the family faces in Anlungthmor, the second village they live in?** The biggest problem the family faces in Anlungthmor is hunger. Although the Khmer Rouge promises to deliver food for the new families in the village, the food rarely comes. Loung's brothers go out into the forest to try to find leaves and wild mushrooms or catch birds and fish. The younger children catch frogs and insects to eat. Then it rains so much that the village is flooded. They cannot go out of the hut. They have to try to catch dead animals and fish floating past in the flood waters to have something to eat.

## Selection Review #2

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 56 - 112

1. **In what ways did the local people in the village have a better life than the new people? What was the reason for these differences?** The local people were called “base people” and were allowed to live in their own homes. They could grow and eat their own food. The new people could only eat the food that was rationed to them. They had to work in communal work teams and could not eat any of the food they were growing. In the Khmer Rouge view, the “base people” were true, unspoiled Cambodians. The new people had lived in cities and received Western education. Some of them were ethnically mixed. These outside influences contaminated them. They had to work harder and suffer more to show their loyalty and learn to be true Cambodians. Many of them were killed or died of hunger or disease.
2. **Explain why Loung’s older brothers and sister moved away from their parents. Why did Pa think that it was a good idea for the family members to be separated?** Loung’s parents arranged for Khouy to marry a girl from a nearby village. The parents did this so Khouy would not be taken away to become a soldier, and also so the girl would not be raped by the Khmer Rouge. The couple and Loung’s other brother Meng moved to a different village. Later, the soldiers said all teenage boys and girls had to go to a separate work camp. Loung’s sister Keav had to go away too. Pa said it was safer for the family to be separated so that some of them might escape if the soldiers learned about his past and tried to kill the whole family.
3. **How did Kim help the family survive in the village? Why were the people so hungry, even though they were growing a lot of food in the gardens?** Kim became an errand boy for the village chief. He was allowed to bring home leftovers from the chief’s meals to his family, until one day he was told he could no longer work there. Even though the people were growing a lot of food, they were not allowed to eat any of it. They heard that the Angkar was using the food to pay off its debt to China. They had borrowed a lot of money from China for guns and weapons at the beginning of the revolution.
4. **List some of the details the author uses to support the central idea that the people in the village were starving to death.** Some of the details used to support the main idea are:
  - The children dreamed of food all the time, but only received one bowl of thin rice soup each day.
  - People were so hungry that they ate anything they could find, including leaves, grass, insects, rats, birds, and dogs.
  - Loung’s neighbor, Chong, watched her baby die of starvation and her girls die from eating poisonous wild mushrooms; then she went crazy and also died of poison.
  - Loung was so hungry that she stole a handful of dry rice from her family’s pot, then felt terribly guilty afterwards.

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- 5. How did Keav die? Why couldn't Pa and Ma bring her body back to be buried?** Keav died after becoming violently ill. When Ma saw how sick she was, she went back to get Pa. However, Keav died before Pa and Ma returned. So many people were sick and dying that Keav's body was thrown out in a pile of corpses so that her bed could be used for another patient. Pa and Ma were heartbroken that they could not even see her body, but were simply told that she was dead.
- 6. What explanation did the soldiers give when they came to take Pa away? Do you think Pa and the rest of the family knew what was going to happen? Why or why not?** The soldiers said they needed Pa to help them with a wagon that was stuck in the mud. They said he would be back the next morning. However, Pa knew that he would probably never see his family again. He gave each of them a special good-bye and told Kim to take care of his mother and sisters. Ma also probably guessed that Pa would never come back; after he was taken away, she went into the hut to cry uncontrollably. However, for a while the children believed the lie that he would be back the next day. After many hours passed and he did not return, they realized that he had been taken away to be killed.

## Selection Review #3

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 113-174

- 1. Why does Ma send the children away on their own? What instructions does she give them? How well do they follow her instructions?** Ma sends the children away because she fears that the whole family will be killed if they stay together. This has already happened to a neighbor family. She tells Loung, Chou, and Kim to go in three different directions and walk until each one finds a work camp. They are to change their names and tell the camp leaders that they are orphans. The children go away, change their names, and present themselves as orphans. However, Chou and Loung cannot bear to be separated. Instead, they walk through the jungle together until they find a camp.
- 2. Why is Loung sent away to a different camp? How does this new assignment reflect her personality?** Loung is sent away to a different camp where girls work hard in the rice fields and are trained to be child soldiers. She is given this assignment because although she is young, she is a very hard worker. She is also a fighter and defends herself when she is bullied. The camp leader thinks she will be a good choice for the new camp.
- 3. A propaganda session is held every evening at Loung's new camp. What does the Met Bong (camp leader) tell the girls in these sessions? How much of this information do you think is true?** During the propaganda sessions, the Met Bong tells the girls that the Angkar and especially its leader, Pol Pot, are the liberators of the Cambodian people. She tells them that the Khmer Rouge soldiers are protecting them from the "Youn" or Vietnamese soldiers. She claims that the "Youn" are stupid, cowardly savages and evil demons with magical powers, but the Khmer Rouge are stronger and braver. However, almost all of this information is false. The Angkar and Pol Pot have not liberated the people; they have brought terror and misery to the nation. The Vietnamese at this time are not even attacking Cambodia; instead, Pol Pot's armies are attacking and destroying Vietnamese villages. When the Vietnamese do attack Cambodia, their army is much stronger than the Cambodian one. They take over the country in three weeks and set the people from the camps where Pol Pot's soldiers hold them like prisoners.

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- 4. What happened to Ma when she tried to get some meat for Geak? Why do most of the members of the family end up in the infirmary?** Ma tried to get meat for Geak by trading her ruby earrings for a chicken, but her plan was discovered. A man took her earrings, beat her viciously, and sent her back to the village without the chicken. Soon after this, most of the family is reunited as the members are all in the infirmary at the same time. They are all suffering from the same “sickness”—starvation. Rest, food, and a sugar cube each day give them back some of their strength. This is the last time they will all be together.
- 5. What happens to Ma and Geak? How does Loung find out about this?** Ma and Geak are taken away from the village by soldiers, and are almost certainly killed. Even though she is far away, Loung senses that something is wrong. She escapes from her camp and goes to the village. Ma and Geak are already gone; the neighbor lady tells Loung that the soldiers took them away.
- 6. How does Loung’s life change when the Vietnamese army arrives? What are Kim, Chou, and Loung’s main goals as they wait at the refugee camp?** When the Vietnamese army arrives, the work camp where Loung lives goes up in flames and all the children run away. Loung goes to Chou’s camp and meets up with Kim and Chou. Together they travel with the crowd to a refugee camp. Their main goal is to find their older brothers. However, it is hard for three children to care for themselves and find food. Their other goal is to find a family that will take them in and care for them.

## Selection Review #4

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 175-238

- 1. What is the children’s status in the two “foster families”? How do the two families differ?**  
 In both families, the children are treated as servants, not as family members. They work hard to earn the food they are given. In the first family, the children are treated harshly. The fourteen-year-old son, who seems nice at first, grabs Loung and tries to make her kiss him, so she tries to avoid contact with him. In contrast, the parents in the second family are kind and generous.
- 2. List some of the terrible experiences Loung has in the camp. How does she handle these experiences?**  
 Loung has many horrifying experiences in the camp. A Vietnamese soldier tries to rape her. She sees rotting corpses just lying on the ground or floating in the river. She is sitting beside her good friend, Pithy, when a shell hits their shelter and kills Pithy. She watches the villagers beat a Khmer Rouge soldier to death with hammers and knives. Loung handles these experiences by hardening herself. She locks them in her heart and turns her anger and hatred into a force to help her survive.
- 3. How do the children’s lives change when their older brothers, Meng and Khouy, arrive in the camp?**  
 When Meng and Khouy arrive, they take the children away from the foster families. They begin to plan and save food so that they can travel to Bat Deng, a village many miles away where their uncles live. When they finally reach Bat Deng and their uncles, the children find the safety they have been longing for.
- 4. Why does Meng get married? What are the consequences of this marriage for Loung?**  
 Meng gets married because his aunt and uncle think that he needs a wife since he is now the head of the household. They even choose a wife for him, a young woman named Eang. Soon after the marriage, Eang learns that her family is still alive and is living in Vietnam. Eang and Meng go to Vietnam to visit this family. Meng learns about a camp in Thailand where people can become refugees going to America. He and Eang decide to go to America, and to take Loung with them.
- 5. What steps must Meng, Eang, and Loung follow to reach America?**  
 To reach America, Meng and Loung first join Eang and her family in Saigon, in Vietnam. Then they live on a houseboat with Eang’s sister and her family. For three months, they pretend that they are a Vietnamese fishing family. Then they join a smuggling boat that takes refugees to Thailand. Ninety-eight people are crowded into the hold of the small boat for three days. They go through a storm and are held up by pirates who take their valuables. Even when they reach the refugee camp, they wait for several more months before they find a sponsor who will help them come to America.

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- 6. What happens to the rest of Loung's family after she goes to America with Meng? How does the separation affect her, as a young girl and later as an adult?** After Loung goes to America, the rest of the family does well. Chou marries, has five children, and runs a shop with her husband. Khouy becomes the village police chief and father of a large family. Kim lives in France where he also has a family. In America, Loung tries to forget her past. She does not write to her family and tries to become a perfect American girl. However, after she becomes an adult, Loung returns home to visit the family. It is awkward at first, but they welcome her, and she finds that the love they have for her is still strong.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Literature Test #1

## *First They Killed My Father*

Introductory material and pages 1-55

1. What happened on April 17, 1975, to change life for Loung Ung and her family? Use the T-chart below to show what her life was like before and after that day. Try to include as many details as possible to show the change.

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The Ung Family's Life Before April 17, 1975	The Ung Family's Life After April 17, 1975

2. Explain why Pa warned the children to pretend that they were a family of peasants.

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3. About three hundred people arrived at the village of Anlungthmor at the same time as the Ung family. Five months later, more than two hundred of these people had died. Why were so many people dying?

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4. **Matching:** Select terms from the box at left. Fill in the chart below, showing the person or organization that came to power in Cambodia at each date, and the type of government that was brought in.

<b>Word Box</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person or Organization in Power</b>	<b>Type of government</b>
<b>Lon Nol</b>	<b>1953</b>		
<b>Communist</b>	<b>1970</b>		
<b>Sihanouk</b>	<b>1975</b>		
<b>Khmer Rouge</b>			
<b>Monarchy (kingship)</b>			
<b>Military</b>			

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Literature Test #2

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 56-112

1. Why did the local village people have more food than the new people? How did Kim help his family survive in this situation?

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2. Describe the dangers that teenage boys and girls in the village faced from the Khmer Rouge soldiers.

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3. The author spends a whole chapter in this book describing the desperate hunger that the people faced. List at least two examples or details that she gives to support this central idea.

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4. Loung's sister Keav died of sickness in a work camp and her father was taken away by soldiers, never to return. Why does Loung say she chose to feel rage and hatred after these events? Toward whom did she direct her anger?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Literature Test #3

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 113-174

1. Explain why Kim, Chou, and Loung go out on their own to live in orphans' camps. Then describe the special camp where Loung is sent. What are the children at this camp being trained for?

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2. Why do Loung and the other family members go to the infirmary? How do they get better? What happens to Ma and Geak after they return to the village?

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3. How does the Met Bong (camp leader) describe Vietnamese soldiers in her propaganda messages? How does this compare with Loung's view of these soldiers when they actually arrive?

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4. Where do Kim, Chou, and Loung go to live after they flee their camps and meet up on the road? Who or what are they looking for?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Literature Test #4

*First They Killed My Father*

Pages 175-238

1. How do Kim, Chou, and Loung survive in the refugee camp before their brothers come? List at least three frightening events that Loung experiences in the camp.

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2. How does life change for the children when they reach their uncles' village, Bat Deng? How does life change for their oldest brother, Meng?

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3. What plan does Meng make after he visits his wife's family in Vietnam? List at least two of the challenges they face in carrying out this plan.

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4. How did Loung relate to her family in Cambodia after she reached America? Why do you think she felt this way?

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