

December 2020 - Nonfiction Book Club
First They Killed My Father
by Loung Ung

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?

(Questions issued by publisher.)