

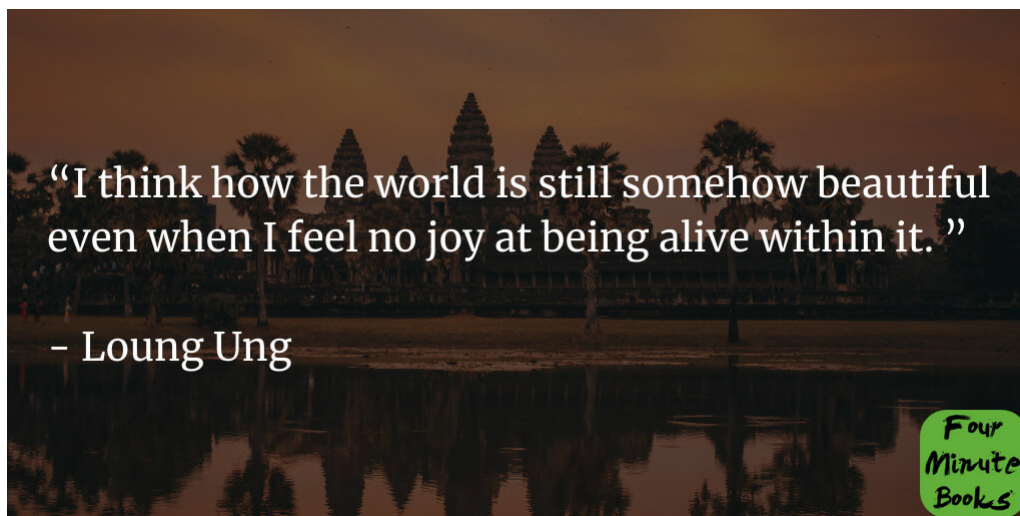
# First They Killed My Father Summary



**1-Sentence-Summary:** *First They Killed My Father* is Loung Ung's account of the horrific events that she and her family had to go through while living in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s and explains how it devastated their country, the way it separated their family, and how Loung got through it all.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Only a little more than forty years ago, the brutal Khmer Rouge overtook the country of Cambodia. In just four years, this regime perpetrated the genocide of up to two million Cambodians in its horrific reign. However, we may never know the true extent of their crimes.

But through the first-hand account of Loung Ung in her book *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*, we get an intimate glimpse of what it was like. She was only five when Pol Pot and his regime took over the country. But her description of the war crimes and desperation she saw in her young years will make you feel like you are witnessing history with her.

You will find inspiration from the resilience of these Cambodians in the face of insurmountable trials. But the underlying message Ung beautifully shares is that no matter what happens, family bonds can never be broken.

Here's the book summarized in just 3 lessons:

1. Loung Ung was a privileged child living in Cambodia until the Khmer Rouge showed up.
2. The reign of the Khmer Rouge dismantled and devastated the Ung family and Cambodian society.
3. Although her childhood was ravaged by war, Loung Ung got a second chance at life because of her mother's bravery and her brother's generosity.

Let's get right into these lessons so we can understand the awfulness that some people have to go through.

## **Lesson 1: Life was good for Loung Ung and her family until the Khmer Rouge won the Cambodian civil war.**

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When Ung was five-years-old, her life as she knew it changed forever. Up until that point, she had enjoyed a comfortable middle-class life, as her father was a high ranking military official. They had a modern apartment in the city's capital of Phnom Penh and even attended school, though most of the city's inhabitants were not so fortunate.

**But one day in 1975, from her balcony she saw a swarm of soldiers enter the city and everything changed.** It was the Khmer Rouge, a communist rebel army who was at war with the incumbent democracy and they had won. They were coming to enforce communism that demanded everyone live simple peasant lives.

Her father's job and wealth put a target on their backs and within hours they fled the capital and left their life behind to hide in the country. Now, as enemies of the state, they had to keep their identity a secret or they would lose their lives.

The regime also set out to persecute anyone who was not ethnically Cambodian. This put a target on their backs as well since her mother was half Chinese. So they left their old identities behind and set out to work in the fields.

## **Lesson 2: Tragedy after tragedy struck Cambodian society and the Ung family after the Khmer Rouge took over.**

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Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of their nightmare. The Khmer Rouge forced those who fled the cities to work in rural cities, where their masters took advantage of them. From dawn until dusk, they were forced to do back-breaking work digging, building, and planting.

But worse still was that there wasn't enough food to go around. **In just five months, two-thirds of the new workers had died of starvation or illness.** As educated people from the city, they were considered the lowest class of all and they were treated horribly.

The only reason they avoided starvation was that her brother had a job at the village chief's home. He endured beatings knowing he could bring table scraps to his starving family.

Soon she began losing members of her family. First her sister, who was taken to work in a camp and became ill and tragically was left to die in a "hospital" far from her family. Then her father, when the truth of his identity got out. The regime brutally murdered him and threw his body into a mass grave.

### **Lesson 3: Loung Ung's future is in her hands now because of her generous brother and brave mother.**

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After the truth of their identity got out, Ung's mother had to make a terrible decision. Knowing that the regime would soon find and execute the rest of the family, she told Ung and her siblings to flee to different cities. From there they were to say they were orphans, so they couldn't be traced back.

So they left behind their mother and their four-year-old sister. Sadly, their once happy family was now in pieces. Ung went to a work camp for orphaned children. Soon after arriving, she found out that the regime had taken her mother and sister to be executed as well.

But thanks to the courage of her mother, she and her three remaining siblings were able to see the end of the regime as Vietnamese soldiers liberated much of Cambodia. **Her oldest brother was able to save enough money to allow him and just one of his siblings to leave for the United States, and he chose Ung.**

He felt that because of her young age, she still had a chance at an education and a new start. In the end, thanks to her courageous mother and generous brother, she was able to finally have freedom as a US citizen.

### **First They Killed My Father Review**

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Oh my gosh, this whole story of *First They Killed My Father* is just awful. These are the parts of history that they didn't teach me about in school. Part of me wishes they had and another part of me wishes they hadn't. The big question that I wonder now is how can we prevent terrible things like this from happening?

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**Who would I recommend the First They Killed My Father summary**

**to?**

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The 56-year-old who has seen *The Killing Fields* and wants to learn more about it, the 33-year-old that is interested in history, and anyone who deals with first world problems that has no idea the horrors that some people experience.