

Module Topic:

Those Who Are Made Toys: Khmer Rouge Youth Mobilization, Indoctrination, and Organization

Level: Regional Study abroad course, English 200 level or higher, or World Literature Course

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Outline: This lesson covers the influence of national youth mobilization/organization in Cambodia and America prior to and during Vietnam war era Cambodia. Articles, readings, and video in this section define youth mobilization and importance to the development and maintenance of social power.

Lecture Notes for Instructor: Indoctrination and mobilization are tools used to direct groups of people toward specific social or political goals. Groups are organized based on common ideologies or goals. In Vietnam era Cambodia several different groups all practiced forms of youth mobilization in order to utilized the young to form a base of workers, soldiers, and leaders for their respective regimes. The Khmer Rouge, The Lon Nol government, and even the Americans and Vietnamese practiced forms of youth mobilization to form the core of their fighting forces and social political support for their respective regimes actions.

In Cambodia, propaganda was used to organize and mobilize pro-western young people into direct military action against prince Norodom Sihanouk who attempted to maintain Cambodia's neutrality during Vietnam war. This was done through a combined effort of the United States and the military leader Lon Nol. This backdoor partnership culminated in the bloodless coup of 1970 that removed Sihanouk from power and the establishment of the pro-western Lon Nol government. It was with American aid that for five years the Lon Nol government fought against the communist supported Khmer Rouge. During these five years the United States would be responsible for numerous carpet booming runs in Cambodia that were supposed to target the Vietnamese, but killed many neutral Cambodians along what would become known as Ho Chi Minh trail. The Khmer Rouge were largely a force of young fighters who drew their strength from experienced charismatic leadership who were the product of the first Indochina war and Cambodia's struggle for independence from the French. Khmer Rouge youth were indoctrinated at early ages to value, respect, and fear what was known as "Angkar" (the organization). On April 17th 1975, the largely young battle hardened Khmer Rouge overtook the capital Phnom Phen and the short disastrous reign of the Khmer Rouge began. During their reign, family structures like the one in Loung Ung's book *First They Killed My Father* experienced separation, displacement, and daily threats to their survival. Both children and adults from families like Loung's were indoctrinated into Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia through fear, starvation, beatings, murder and forced marriages. These forms of violence were done in an attempt to return Cambodia to a "pure" state. All thing associated with class, faith, social status, and even personal expressions like hair styles were stripped from families as signs of corruptions from "the capitalist". Loung Ung's book highlights the experiences of her life as a young girl in pre Khmer Rouge Cambodia through the harshest periods of Khmer Rouge control.

Readings:

- First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers: Loung Ung
- Adult Wars, Child Soldiers: Voices of Children Involved in Armed Conflict in the East Asia and Pacific Region
Link: <http://www.unicef.org/eapro/AdultWarsChildSoldiers.pdf>

Essay Prompt Suggestions

1. Is propaganda used in the Khmer Rouge work camps throughout the story? If so, how and in what ways does it shape the behavior of the people?
2. How do superstition and faith shape the way Loung experiences her years under the Khmer Rouge?
3. Throughout the story we hear a lot about bodies. We hear about how they look, smell, feel, and interact. Write an essay in which you focus in on the element of bodies in this story and discuss how Loung uses them to move the story and share ideas with you as a reader.
4. Imagine that you are a member of “the base” people who has been giving the responsibility of observing Loung’s family during their time in Ro leap. Write a letter to the chief outlining your thoughts about the family.
5. Loss shapes the family and Cambodia in this story. Choose a member of Loung’s family and explain how lose shapes their character by using examples from the text.
6. Control is something the Loung as writer has over her experience with the Khmer Rouge. In fact, control is used by many different groups within the narrative. How is control used in the novel and what affects does it have on people?
7. Loung’s imagination is huge part of her character. How does her imagination change the way she experiences hunger?

Chapter Quiz Questions

Chapter 1-5 Phnom Penh- Seven Day Walk

1. Do a little research. Loung's sibling tell her at the pool that "The French had been in Cambodia for a long time." Why had the French been in Cambodia for so long? Write a brief history of the French in Cambodia in space provided below?
2. Luong writes her autobiography from the perspective of her 5 year old self. How is this perspective differing from other novels you have read?
3. What are some indicators of middle class status that the narrator points to in the novel?
4. Loung spends a great deal of time talking about her parent's physical features, especially their skin. In the novel, how is darker skin perceived vs lighter skin? Use examples.
5. What might a list of proper behaviors for Cambodian women look like if Loung's mother were writing it? Imagine you are her and create that list?
6. Loung's family is Buddhist. How does their faith affect the way they view the world and events in it?
7. Loung means what is Chinese?
8. Describe how people reacted when the Khmer Rouge first came to Phnom Penh? Why?
9. What things does the family take as they leave the city?
10. How are they treated?
11. Describe the family's walk from Phnom Penh? Where are they going and what is it like?
12. What is the Angkar?

13. What do former military and politicians have to do once they reach the checkpoint? Why does pa tell his family to go into the line with peasant families?

14. Why is the Lunar New Year important to Cambodians?

15. What happened to those who were former government and military and politicians?

16. Who does the family find on the road after washing?

17. Why do the Khmer Rouge believe that Luong's uncles are "uncorrupted"?

Krang Truop (April 1975)

1. Describe the village of Krang Truop? How do the people live?
2. How does the family think of Chou's comments vs Luong's?
3. Who does pa have to go in order to get permission to live in the village?
4. Luong says to her father "The village is so poor" What do you think of pa's response to this statement?
5. Briefly tell the history of Cambodia under Prince Sihanouk that pa tells his children?
6. What things were banned by the Angkar(The Khmer Rouge) and what can't Loung do?
7. What do you think pa thinks of as he looks at the sky at night?
8. Has pa changed?

Waiting Station July 1975

1. Why does the family have to leave?
2. Where do they have to go?
3. How does a young Loung describe the physical differences between Chinese Khmer and "pure" Khmer?

4. Pa says “Friendship does not matter” Why?
5. Does the family ever make it to Battambang?
6. What happens at the waiting area?
7. How does pa’s family end up departing the waiting area before other families? What does pa do to speed up the process?

AnglungthMor July 1975

1. What time of year does the family arrive at AnglungthMor?
2. What instructions does pa give his family?
3. Who controls food in the village?
4. What makes the children sick?
5. Hypothesize, what do you think this illness might be?
6. Who controls the population of the villages?
7. Describe the kind of labor the men in family must perform?
8. What happens to the family’s food supply?
9. Why are Khmer houses build on stilts?
10. Where does the family get rabbits from?
11. “Hunger and fear make people turn against one another”. According to Luong, why does pa believe that this fact will affect his family?
12. What happens to “New People” from the cities that were originally moved to Anglungthmor?

Ro Leap November 1975

1. What do the people of the village wear? How do the people react to the arrival of pa and the other “new people” who?
2. What are base people? How are they rewarded?
3. What are capitalist and why should they be killed? Think like the Khmer Rouge, why might they feel this way? Do their feelings have any support? Why or why not
4. What determines “purity” in a Khmer Rouge ‘organized’ Cambodia?
5. What things do the Khmer Rouge claim divide the people of Cambodia? Based on what you’ve read so far, what factors may have been more responsible for creating divisions between city people and rural people? Do these factors influence city and rural people in other parts of the world today?
6. What rules are in place in village? Why?
7. What does burning clothes in the village accomplish?
8. Describe education and housing under the rule of Khmer Rouge Chiefs
9. What are levels of citizenship according to Luong? What powers, roles, and abilities do they have?
10. What are the levels of “corruption” among the “New People” according to the Khmer Rouge?
11. How does pa arrange for extra food to be given to his family?
12. What does Kim (the little monkey) sacrifice in order to help his family?
13. Reflect: Pretend you are Loung, write a letter to Kim explaining how you feel about what he is doing in order for your family to survive?
14. Why do people keep to themselves in the new village of Ro leap?
15. What kind of meetings must the new people attend?
16. How do people get information and new news?
17. Look up the word agrarian. What kind of society were the Khmer Rouge trying to produce?
18. What does it mean when a family “Disappears”?
19. What position does pa end up “earning” because of his hard work?

20. Describe how food is distributed to the new people in specific?
21. What is the punishment for stealing in the village?
22. Why was religion banned? How did the Khmer Rouge enforce this?
23. What happened to Temples like Angkor Wat?

Labor camps January 1976

1. What made a male less likely to be recruited into the Khmer Rouge?
2. Why is Davi so protected by her parents?
3. What happens to women like Davi? What is their “duty”?
4. How has the family experienced changed Khmer?
5. Who are the “Yon”? (Yon is a slur for a specific group of people)
6. Where do the older children in the family end up having to go?
7. What are the differences between base children and new children like Loung?
8. *What do you believe the emotional state of Loung might be at this point in her life?
9. Why does the “little monkey” end up not being?
10. Who is Pol Pot and how did he affect the village where Loung lives?
11. Who is helping the Angkar?

New Year's April 1976

1. What is New Year celebration like in Cambodia?
2. What does Loung begin to understand about thieves in Phnom Penh? Is she right?
3. How does lack of food affect Loung?
4. How have food rations changed for everyone since the family first arrived at the village of Ro leap?
5. What is decreasing the population of people in the villages?
6. At this point, what is the most important thing for Loung?
7. What was the crime of the man who ate the dog he found?

8. Why are Loung's feet swelling?
9. What year do people celebrate the day someone is born in Cambodia?
10. What is the village like once the dying starts?
11. What happens to the children of Chong?
12. What ends up keeping the family alive during the time dying stated?
13. Why is trading for food a problem under the logic of the Khmer Rouge?
14. What do the people know for certain about Pot Pot?
15. What does Lounge do to betray the family and what does she feel should be her punishment?
16. Does she ever confess?
17. How does hunger change ma and pa's relationship?
18. What is Loung's relationship with her sister Chou?
19. Why does pa push his wife so hard to work?
20. What does Loung do to her skin?

KEAV August 1976

1. How are boys fed vs girls in the work camp of Kong Chalat that KEAV lives in?
2. Loung Ung switches between 1st and 2nd person in this chapter imagining her sister Keav's experiences. What effect does this have on you as reader
3. What happened to all the doctors and nurses? Who replaces them?
4. What happens to Keav ?
5. Does Keav get her wish?

Pa December 1976

1. What does Loung become obsessed with?
2. What preparations does Pa suggest for his children to keep them safe?
3. What happens to Pa?
4. What does Loung feel the Angkar has taught her through her experiences
5. What passage of this chapter highlights the intensity of Loung's pain?
6. What is happening to the other father's in the village?
7. What has happened to the food supplies?
8. What happens to the two older brothers who are working?

Ma's little monkey? April 1977

1. What does Kim do to keep his family alive? Why is this dangerous?
2. Why can't Kim talk about his suffering?
3. What happens to Kim?

Leaving Home May 1977

1. What pattern does Loung begin to notice in the food distribution?
2. Why does Kim believe this is happening?
3. Why are entire families being killed? Which family's disappearance confirms this for Loung?
4. What does Ma order her children to do in order to protect them?
5. Why does Loung become angry with her mother?
6. How does Loung refer to children's work camp leader?

7. What kind of labor do Loung and her sister perform?

8. What are the conditions at the camp?

9. How does Loung endure life at the camp?

Child Soldiers August 1977

1. When Children are bigger and stronger, how does the Angkar promote them?

2. What are the children ordered to do if they hear talk against the Angkar?

3. Describe the music and dancing Loung sees and hears in the new camp?

4. How does the (Met bong) curve the girls' hands?

5. Why do the girls keep to themselves? What might be the result of their secrets being found out?

6. Who is the closest thing Loung has to a friend?

7. At first the children must praise the Angkar but latter they are told to give praise to whom?

8. Why do the Khmer Rouge remove the heads of the (Yuon) Vietnamese?

9. What happens to the young men in the boy's camp?

10. After the boys leave what does the Loung's (Met bong) begin to teach the young girls who were recently only instructed in dancing?

11. What are the difference between the way (Met bong) describes the Vietnamese and the way Pa has described them?

12. What is a bodiless witch?

Chicken for Gold November 1977

1. What kind of condition is Geak in? What does she need?

2. What happens to Ma's earrings and to Ma? Why?

3. Why does Loung feel guilty?

The Last Gathering May 1978

1. What has happened to the food supply again?
2. What kind of Physical condition is Loung in?
3. When Loung enters the water what does she start to do with dates and months? Why?
4. What does Loung eat in order to help her hunger before going to the infirmary?
5. Describe the condition in the infirmary that Loung goes to?
6. Who does Loung meet in the infirmary?
7. Who can't the family seem to be able to talk about?
8. What kind of medicine are people given the infirmary?
9. How does Loung "put a marker" on an old women's grave?

The Walls Crumble November 1978

1. In Loung's camp what do the girls spend all their time doing now?
2. What does Loung choose to do in order to see her family?
3. What kind of "power" does Loung have?
4. Does she find what she is looking for?
5. What has happened when the soldiers come to the village and take someone with them?
6. What happens to Ma and Geak?

The Yuon Invasion January 1979

1. When the Vietnamese invade, what happens to the work camps that the family is in?
2. Why does Loung not help the young women in the house?
3. Describe the conditions on the road away from the camps ?
4. How do people feel about Pol Pot?
5. What is the “Crushing Monster”?
6. Where is Kim taking his sisters?
7. What group of people does Loung meet on the road?
8. How does Loung react to the Vietnamese that she meets on the road?
9. Why do the Vietnamese attack the Khmer Rouge?
10. What excuse does Pol Pot give for his actions against the Vietnamese?
11. What is life like in the refugee camp?
12. What happens when Loung and her family try to get help from adults inside of the camp?

The First Foster Family January 1979

1. Who are the first foster family? Where are they from ?
2. What happens when the “new” family takes Loung and her family in?
3. What does Loung suspect about the older 14 year brother (Paof) in the First Foster Family?
4. What does he try to do?
5. What does Loung point out as something she does not know about the new family?

6. What happens when Loung asks for water from the Vietnamese soldier?
7. When Loung thinks she sees the soldier again what happens to her?
8. Who does Loung hear once the mother in first foster family insults her?
9. What does Loung believe is the one thing that will make her somebody one day?

Flying Bullets February 1979

1. Why is it hard to tell the difference between the Khmer rouge soldiers and the refugees?
2. What makes it so difficult to protect people in the villages and refugees in the liberated areas?
3. What happens to the grandmother?
4. What does Loung accidentally kick on the trail on the way to hospital?
5. Why do people scream in pain in the hospital in the newly liberated areas? How is this different from the Khmer Rouge infirmary?
6. What has happened to young boy that Loung sees in the hospital?
7. Why can't the family keep Loung and her family?
8. Where does the "new" father take Loung and her family?
9. What is new family like? How are they treated?
10. How do people dress in the liberated zone?
11. How does holding on to her hate help Loung?

Khmer Rouge Attack February 1979

1. What happen to Pithy?
2. What did the family not feel as they hid from the attack on the shelter?
3. How bad was the attack? Why?
4. Who does Kim come back with?

The Execution March 1979

1. Who have the Vietnamese captured?
2. What do the villages want? Do they get it ?
3. Why does the crowd want the prisoner?
4. Why does Loung want to go to the execution?
5. What do the people finally decided to do?
6. Who decides to be a part of the execution?
7. According to Loung, what is it too late for?
8. How did the crowd react to the execution?
9. What do the children go to see after the execution?

Back to Bat Deng April 1979

1. Where do Loung and her family decided to go back to? Why?
2. Why do Loung's older brothers practice jumping off the second floor of their shelter?
3. Who does Loung speak to in her mind?
4. Who approaches the family on the bicycle?
5. How were the Khmer Rouge Cadre different in different areas?
6. What product is used in place of money?
7. Why is it difficult for the family to grow food in the land?
8. Describe the jobs that different family members take to hold the family together
9. Where does Meng go?
10. What are the places many Khmer are going to ?
11. Describe how Khmer refugees are getting to Thailand?
12. Why is Loung chosen to go with Meng?

From Cambodia to Vietnam October 1979

1. What does Phnom Penh look like when Loung returns?
2. Why have farmers moved to the city and where do they live?
3. Where does Loung ask her brother to take her?
4. Why is it easy for old houses and apartments to be taken over by anyone?
5. How do Loung and her brother get into Vietnam?

6. Why do Loung and her brother move to the house boats?
7. Where does the house boat eventually take them?
8. Why do the women cover themselves in vomit and charcoal?
9. What do the Thai pirates take from women and men?

Lam Sing Refugee Camp February 1980

1. What does the family use their hidden gold to buy?
2. What is a sponsor?
3. Who is “The father”? Why are the people going to sea to meet him?
4. Why do people blame the girl who is attacked in her hut?
5. What images do the refugees see in movie shown by the camp officials?

Epilogue:

1. When Loung returns, what does she reflect on?
2. At night what things bothered Loung as she studied in America
3. What other crisis reminded Loung of her experiences?
4. What things did Loung “Americanize” herself?
5. What happened to Chou?
6. What happened to Meng?
7. What happened to Kim?

8. What happened to Khouy?
9. What is CLFW?
10. What does Loung see as the thing that redeems her?
11. What mistake does Loung feels she made when she returned to Cambodia?

Supplementary Aids:

*Note: Movie version forthcoming in 2017 through Netflix

- **Khmer Rouge Convictions Offer Small Solace For Cambodian Victims (Interview with Loung Ung)**

<http://www.npr.org/2014/08/07/338639706/khmer-rouge-convictions-offer-small-solace-for-cambodian-victims>

- **United States Department of Defense**

Link: <http://www.humanitarian-demining.org/2010Design/Partners.asp>

- **N.I.U: Landmines in Cambodia**

Link: <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/khmer/Ledgerwood/Landmines.htm>

- **Cambodian man clears land mines he set decades ago**

Link: <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/07/29/cnnheroes.cambodia.demining/index.html>