

History final analysis narrative essay



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In this semester, we read many incredible survival stories of the youths under disastrous historical crisis. These characters, we read about, went through enormous hardships and fears; but with courage and determination, many of them survived and lived on. However, in many cases, these characters did not begin their lives in miseries. Many of them, in fact, were born in the comfort of wealth and privilege. In this essay, I will discuss four wealthy families, which we read, and how the main characters benefited or not from its wealth; and also under what historical conditions that they lost their comfort of wealth.

Loung Ung, in *First They Killed My Father*, was born in upper middle class in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Her and her parents, three brothers, and three sisters lived in a big apartment on the third floor. Living on the third floor, in fact, symbolized the status of their wealth; since most well-to-do families lived above the ground floor to avoid dirt and noise. Her and her brothers and sisters were all getting proper education, and because of her father being the military police captain, they received many privileges such as sometimes watching movies for free. Even though she had many siblings, Loung Ung was much loved by her parents, especially her father. She had everything that the family could offer, until the Khmer Rouge drove her family out of their home. Khmer Rouge was the Cambodian Communists led by Pol Pot, who had been fighting against the weak and unpopular government of Lon Nol. With the help of the North Vietnamese Communists, Pol Pot was defeating the Nationalists troops. Eventually on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge took the capital Phnom Penh, where Loung Ungs family lived. As soon as the takeover, they evacuated the city. They told people

that the Americans were going to bomb the city; but in fact, their intention was to get rid of the city folks and the intellectuals. The ideology, to the Khmer Rouge, was that the people should live on, and with their land.

In comparison with Loung Ung, Chang Yu-I (from *Bound Feet and Western Dress*) was born in much wealthier family; but she was, however, less privileged in her family. Yu-I and her family lived in a big compound with two courtyards. Her family inherited a lot of land from her grandfather, who was a high-ranking judge of the imperial government. Her father was also a well-respected doctor. In Chinese custom, at the age of three, young girls must begin the painful process of foot binding. The reason for that was because Chinese men found small feet exotic. Yu-I couldn't have escaped such horrible fate if it wasn't for the protest of her second brother. Her father also had different expectations towards his sons and daughters. Eight of Yu-I's brothers were all highly educated; however, the daughters were not, including Yu-I. Her father believed education was useless once a girl was married. Although Yu-I was able to convince her father to let her go to school, she was forced to leave early due to her engagement to a very wealthy Hu family. In *Wartime Lies*, Maciek's father was the leading physician in town T., Poland. Because of his father's profession, Maciek and Tania often interacted with the elites of the town. They also had servants, a cook, and a laundress; they lived a comfortable life. Since Maciek was the only child, he was treated like one. He was spoiled, even; since, he often purposely vomited food to protest against Tania. Maciek's health condition was also the reason why he was treated with special care. The fact that they were able to enter a beach, with an entrance fee, showed their status of wealth.

Their privilege and comfortable life ended when the Russians took Macieks father away when the Germans overran the eastern Poland, in 1939. Since Maciek and his family were Jews, they were demanded by the Germans to leave the house they had lived. Unfortunately, that was only the beginning of their misery. The author of the Wild Swans was not born in a wealthy family; but never the less, her family was undeniably privileged. In China, both authors parents joined the Communists in the very early years before the Long March, and after taking over China, her father became one of the most important senior officials in his province. Her mother was also put in charge the entertainment in that region. Therefore, the author grew up among the children of the elites. However, she was obligated, like the other children, to participate in community works such as collecting steels. Their privilege life was soon taken away when her father openly criticized Maos backyard furnaces, which was, in theory, to collect scrap metals and melt them into industrial used steels. It failed miserably; what was worse, it created a mass famine in China. In 1965 during the Cultural Revolution, both of her parents fell under black label because they were senior officials, and which made them class enemies. Soon, they were put through many denunciation meetings and were often detained. Bibliography: