



ALICE

*'Pung makes
everything
she writes
about shine'*
THE AUSTRALIAN

PUNG

Her Father's Daughter

FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *Unpolished Gem*

TEACHING NOTES BY PAM MACINTYRE

“Pung has an extraordinary story to tell and the finesse to bring it most movingly to the page.”—*The Monthly*

“a tender, sophisticated sequel to *Unpolished Gem*, told with humour, compassion, finesse and powerful imagery.”
—*Wet Ink*

“Pung is one of the best young writers in Australia. Her *Father’s Daughter* is an exhilarating journey. Take it.”
—*Walkley Magazine*

“Pung makes everything she writes about shine”
—*The Australian*

“A beautiful exploration of father-daughter relationships.”
—*Vogue*

“Remarkably tender and thoughtful.” —*The Sunday Age*

To view footage of Alice Pung and her family discussing *Her Father’s Daughter* and download complimentary teaching notes for *Laurinda*, *Unpolished Gem* and *Growing up Asian in Australia* visit www.blackincbooks.com/teachers

Her Father's Daughter

By Alice Pung

*Many readers may well already be aware of the basic outline of the Angkar revolution with its insistences on the reversion to simplistic codes of mass collectivised farm living and complete rejection of anything smacking of the twentieth century or mechanisation, through films such as The Killing Fields...it is also quite another thing to read, or be reminded of the impact of systematic starvation and random bullying on a personalized group of family and friends, two of whom, at least, survive to produce the author (Bill Wootton in *Viewpoint: on books for young adults* 19 (4) 2011, p6).*

My new book is an unspoken conversation between a father and a daughter, about growing up and growing old. In writing it I was not searching for easy epiphanies but an understanding of what it means to risk love again when you have lost almost everything.
Alice Pung (<http://theincblot.blogspot.com/2011/08/interview-with-alice-pung.html>)

www.alicepung.com

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Background:

Alice Pung has followed up her personal story of growing up as part of an immigrant family living in Melbourne's inner west suburb of Footscray in *Unpolished Gem*, with this story which probes the often difficult relationship between a girl brought up in contemporary Australia, and her father, whose odd behaviour and over-concern for his daughter are born out of shocking experiences in Cambodia's killing fields. We are lead into this story slowly, as Alice first seeks her roots in China: her paternal grandparents are Chinese. However, she finds little to connect with there and it is not until the scene shifts to Kuan (her father) and Cambodia in the 1970s that our and her understanding of her over-protective but loving father begins to form.

Just as in her first book, the author does not dwell on sensational or sentimental details but presents us with an appealing, accessible story, told in alternating third person voices. There are moments of startling clarity and poetry in the writing that are worth spending time recognising and responding to. This story of the relationship between a father and daughter reveals the way that experiences shape a person in different societies and circumstances, and that events a generation earlier have repercussions for a daughter in the present.

Set the scene

- Read the TS Eliot poem at the beginning and share responses to it and in what ways it positions the reader for what is to come.
- Return to it after the story is finished to talk about interpretations. Are they different?

This story is told in sections and by different voices, so these notes follow the emerging narrative in each section. Because it is a story that reveals itself and its major players to us slowly, the notes move along with it, highlighting significant moments to make, and to pause and reflect. However, this is only one reading, and students can be invited to identify and pause at moments that are significant to them.

Prologue

- This is where we are first introduced to the Father. How do readers react to his concern for his daughter? Is it over concern? What do they attribute this worry to? What questions do they have about his view of the world and what this might have been shaped by?
- The author says about her decision to write about her Father in the third person: *Although I interviewed my father many times for this book, we speak Teochew to each other. If I had written his chapters in first person, I would have had to do a literal translation to capture his voice and that would not have worked. My father has a warm and funny way of telling a story, but a direct translation would have sounded stilted and awkward. So that's why my father's voice is in third person.*

This gives us valuable insights into the decisions that writers make to craft their narratives. But it also raises the impact of that choice on the reader. Does the use of third person maintain a distance between father and daughter for the reader? If so, is that a strength of the writing, or do we feel displaced from close involvement?
- Later when we move to Year Zero, Kuan's story is told in an omniscient third person voice. It is worth discussing why the author might have done this and the effect on the reader. For instance, talk about how easy it would have been to manipulate the readers' emotions here, but the straightforward account of the terrible atrocities and the resilience of the family are given dignity by the mode of telling.
- The daughter is also written in the third person and is not named. Considering what Alice has said above, consider this choice and talk about possible reasons for it and the result for the reader.
- From the beginning we see that father and daughter view the world through different lenses – about what is valuable (p7) to build a life again and the importance of eating (p8).

Part I China

- While on a writing residency in Beijing, the daughter searches for her family heritage, such as the birthplaces of her grandparents. She feels little connection to this society and place, neither with her grandmother's memories of it (p13). It is worth discussing here the idea of memory and how it is impacted on by reality.
- We are given China through a *huaqiao* perspective (p15). Contemporary China is a developing country as evidenced in its ubiquitous building sites, but also of time-honoured practice of bargaining (pp16-17) that seems violent to the daughter.
- p18 The daughter wonders at how the locals living in the hutongs deal with all the tourists and how it would feel in Australia. This is a sharp perspective and fun and fruitful to speculate about. Invite students to produce a travel brochure or diary for their neighbourhood from the point of view 'Mexicans or Mongolians'.
- p19 Her lack of desirability in China as an unmarried thirty-year-old woman. Talk about reactions to and reasons for this – are they merely patriarchal or more complex?
- Contrasts between China and Australia (p22) 'In Australia no one wore a uniform if they could help it. Uniforms were for school and gags.' Do readers

agree with this? Why would the daughter be scared of uniforms? Why are they a mark of pride in some cultures and not in others?

Part II Melbourne

Alice says: *The daughter's voice also had to be in third person, otherwise it would have then just been a story about a daughter who tells a story about her father.*

How important is this distinction in the reading and for the reader?

- This section goes back in time to when the daughter is living at the university as a residential tutor, a move which needed permission from her parents even though she is twenty-three years old.
- The world views of daughter and parents are very different. This is set up early in the book and it is worth noting during the reading, because as Alice's understanding grows so does the reader's. Moments in the narrative can be identified and shared. The notion that we are all shaped by our context and experiences is worth focussing on, and in this case it is also the experiences of the parents that shape the daughter. Few of us probably, research and gain insight into those experiences as thoroughly as Alice does.
- p43 Her parents are disappointed in the university-issue, dowdy furniture in her flat, and cannot understand her desire to live in the residence, while she longs for solitude.
- pp47-48 Perspectives into the intellectual demands of first year university life, and her approach to understanding the abstract through the concrete, and through keeping busy making and doing – her experience at home. This gives insight into how she has been shaped by her family experiences, even as she longs to be independent.
- p48 She does not miss home but lies to her mother. Talk about the sorts of lies we tell our parents and why. Are lies that are designed to protect ourselves or others still morally wrong?
- pp49 She is proud of her parents – whose 'accomplishments were more than the material gleanings of life' but they never eat in her flat – why?
- p59 She writes about the sense of freedom she has, can choose what she will do rather than being obligated to family pressures of always having to work and be busy.
- p70 She tries to get excited about the block of land, but she wanted a house, and to make the plan work, to pay off the mortgage and the land, she would have to move back home.
- p77 She finds her parents too interfering. Is she misinterpreting their care for her, or is that care too oppressive?
- pp89-90 This is another example of the daughter's more adult understanding of her parents, that they have a sense of humour and of perspective. She starts to see them differently.
- p93 Her 'newly built white middle-class existence' begins to crack when her mother gets lost before a talk at Ormond college. What does this reveal about the daughter?
- pp94-5 Father cuts off points of a sharp knife: a telling episode worth exploring.
- pp100-1 She sees her family is not like the families of her Asian friends as she had assumed. Her father is suspicious and sees 'depravity in places where other people would not even bother to look'.
- pp103-5 She underestimates the effect of the incident with the young worker on her father. Is this an over-reaction or do we understand why Kuan reacts as he does?
- p110 She realises her father would do anything for her.

From her father's perspective

*He is exasperatingly protective of his daughter yet also profoundly impressive, a pragmatist who survived the depredations of the Khmer Rouge and journeyed across the wreckage of Cambodia to a Thai refugee camp before emigrating to Australia where people have...no way of knowing what fearful events have brought him among them (Brenda Walker, *The Monthly*, September 2011, p64).*

- We have the father's expectations of how his daughter should live her life according to his social and cultural view, and we see that he is open to criticism for letting an unmarried daughter leave home.
- pp51-2 revealing and humorous description of the university debaters from his perspective. In a short paragraph like this one, have students stand outside themselves and write about their group from the perspective of an outsider looking in – with similar humour.
- pp52 He doesn't understand her need for space and to be alone and we are given a glimpse into why being close to family is important to him, and his sense of loss when she moves out.
- p65 Father and daughter go house hunting on the weekends: he sees beyond the surface of buildings, whereas she responds to surface aesthetics; he takes a long term view rather than a quick fix. The father takes the situation into his own hands and buys her a block of land near a mobile phone tower.
- pp73-4 Things he has learned to take for granted that he once wouldn't have: wonderment at seagulls and penguins not eaten.
- p87 The big fears are eventually subsumed by the daily ones. Is that a healing process or just that the everyday life assumes an importance it doesn't deserve?
- p97 Talk about the joke his son tells. Does he get it? Why can't his son understand his reaction?
- p105 He has dreams of Cambodian horrors. How does this connect with his reaction to the Vietnamese boy who touches Alice?
- p107 The world is full of dangers for him because the possibilities of death are always present when you have seen so much dying.

Part III Cambodia: Year Zero

There is a change of tone in this section and we move to a third person, omniscient narrator. There is a folk-tale quality to it: 'Once there was a boy, Kuan' (p117). Why is this do you think? How differently are we positioned as readers by this – is there a sense of a larger scale of action and significance?

- The brief story of Pol Pot, the former monk, and the 'Base People' begins similarly: In the beginning there was a man and a bowl' (p115). There is also much in this section that bears close reading and talking about. Below are some powerful moments in the telling. Consider how it is important to be given a picture of the normality of life before the advent of the Khmer Rouge.
- p117 Kuan's childhood as a Chinese living in Phnom Penh, one of ten children largely supported by his mother's printing business – a happy affluent household.
- p121 Shocking description of the bombing of Cambodia: 'Split-open brains and sweet blood leaked from lives in a cacophony of colour.'
- p122 The family business thrives during war while the Khmer Rouge gets closer to the city.

- p125 The extended family decides to leave and go to France via Thailand.
- p126 An army of children invades the city and ransacks it. There is something shocking about the age of these 'soldiers' – why?
- p130 The coming of the Black Bandits affects people who can never see children in an innocent light again. The city surrenders and people leave in thousands at gun point. p131 Old people die by the side of the road.
- p134 From here onwards we are given graphic but matter-of-fact details on life in the countryside. An army of illiterate boys takes them to the collective and all are put to hard physical work supported by local peasants.
- p138 They are moved, separated from their children and then educated people are killed. Kuan and his brother survive by saying they are factory workers.
- p140 Kuan wonders why the people don't revolt – they have the weight of numbers. Is it fear of the consequences? Similar questions were asked about Jews during the Holocaust.
- pp141-2 The Black Bandits chat about their casual brutality, torture and killing.
- p143 The people who died from starvation number in the thousands, in one collective alone. While we are given the experiences on a personal level, the scale of the horror is important too.
- p145 Kuan's cousins are made to dig their own graves and their sister has to bury them alive. Talk about the personal impact of this and how students put this experience of Kuan's as a young man together with what they already know about him.
- p147 The horrors of the 'hospital' – teenagers are the 'doctors'.
- p152 Kuan as a teenager goes to China and is shocked at the poverty. He learns to be an acupuncturist, and applies it in the village with wires he found.
- p154 He cures the chairman and is given an 'easier' job – collecting human waste and making it into fertilizer.
- p160 The inhumanity is indescribable, such as the killing of the young woman Maly.
- p163 There are good people too as the act of kindness from an old man in the kitchen demonstrates.
- p164 Imagine the hunger of Kuan, that he boils and eats his leather belt.
- p167 After the Vietnamese liberate the Cambodians, the remaining family members – Kuan, Kiv, his wife and three children and sister, Kieu – return to Phnom Penh.
- pp170 Kuan's memories are couched in the senses. This is an opportunity to use this as a model for writing.
- p177 Another family is living in their old home in Phnom Penh so they move to Siem Reap and a communal house.
- p178 Enterprising Kiv sets up a gold trade, making gold rings in exchange for rice.
- p180 Kiv gets them to Vietnam.
- p180 'At the end of his twenties, his world, once so peopled with attachments, was down to this ragged walking cluster, a cluster he vowed to love and protect till the end of his days.'
- p181 Kuan courts his future wife, Kien, in Saigon. That she has escaped the terrible experiences of the Killing Fields is a positive reminder to him that ordinary life has gone on. This small recognition is a powerful one. 'Teeming with life' Saigon brings him to tears.
- p183 They journey to the refugee camp in Thailand and the beginning of a new life.

Mother, Kien

This book is about a daughter and her father so we only get brief, but telling glimpses of Alice's mother.

- p77 A poignant image of Kiev having friends in Australia only as 'memories': 'Friends were to while away the time with, and her mother had no more idle time.'
- p79 She is afraid of what people think about how her family behaves.
- p186 Briefly we get Kiev's perspective on her relationship with Kuan. She has not seen what he has seen – has he even told her? She is only twenty-two and is flattered by the attention of the older man and ready for change, but she wonders what she has got herself into as memories haunt and disturb him. She is stoical.
- Do you think there is another story completely about Alice and her mother? Kien demonstrates resourcefulness and an enormous capacity for hard work. Is it fair to say we both admire her and yet feel ambivalent about the very busy life she has chosen which leaves so little time and space for her? Do you think she would see her life this way?

Part IV Cambodia

Dismemory

- This section brings the elements together in terms of Alice's understanding of why her father behaves as he does.
- p193 In striving to make his children Australian and yet preserving their Chinese culture 'he had wiped out the most significant part of their identity.' They are part of Diaspora culture whose behaviour is determined by their lack of a sense of belonging. Scarcity is what identifies them, not the ancient culture of their heritage. This is a powerful distinction and perhaps students also belong to a diaspora whose disconnect from the original culture becomes apparent on return.
- p194 Her father names her Alice because he believed Australia to be a wonderland. Are there any parallels between Carroll's Alice and Alice Pung? Invite students to find out about their choice of name and any significance. Does this affect the way they see themselves?
- p197 How does anyone cope after living through the hell that Kuan did? His mechanism of coping is to live in the moment to work and achieve, to move on, not to look back. It seems Alice struggles with this attitude. Do you understand his motives? Why do you think Alice struggles too?
- p199 Kuan, Alice and Alison arrive in Phnom Penh and are taken with bodyguards into bullet proof cars to his brother's mansion. What does this tell us about life in the city for the wealthy?
- p201 Alice feels she is not far from home – her uncle's house and her father's are similar despite that they are in different cultures and different countries. How strong are family traits? Or do you think it is their past history that has led them to create similar surroundings for their families?
- p204 It is a funny perception of Alice's father that his girls are 'so foreign': his daughters don't 'understand hierarchy' having been brought up 'soft' in Australia. They are interested in the history and culture of Cambodia, not the new represented by Kiv's mansions and businesses. This visit highlights the gap in the father and daughter's perceptions of the world.
- p207 What the daughters notice in Cambodia are the people – victims of landmines, poverty, beggars, children. Everywhere they go they have

bodyguards, as the uncle is afraid of kidnappings. Does this highlight a gap between affluent third world citizens and how they view the 'exotic' nature of different cultures?

- pp208-9 This beautifully written, revealing episode about the cats, throws into focus the value of human life. It is sure to engage students in wanting to talk about it as an event, and its wider resonances.
- pp210-11 Kuan returns to the Killing Fields – a waste of four years of his life. He doesn't want to remember those wasted years. He wants to start anew. It seems his daughter can't understand this dislike of dwelling on the past. He can choose to remember the little miracles. This tells us a lot about this man doesn't it?
- p214 When they are on the field she begins to understand him and the emptiness his life had been filling.
- p215 The ritual of remembering the dead.
- p216 They visit the home of a man who had headed the children's army and murdered children, who is now living next to the fields. The daughter is shocked with her father and uncle being able to visit his humble house. She understands that she will never understand it. However: 'She felt that this country was something precious – as brutal, as split open as a pomegranate...The real miracle ...was not that he had lived, the real miracle was that he could love.' Talk about this in relation to the daughter's growing understanding, and in terms of the students' reaction. How can a country and a people that were so brutalized be 'precious'? And how can someone still love after seeing humanity at its basest?

Epilogue

- p224 She recognises the value of family as expressed by her parents, and feels a pang of sadness for what her parents have forfeited. Is that simply her view? Would her parents think they have forfeited anything? Will they forever see the world differently? If so, is that to be celebrated or rued?
- p237 Father understands how his children accommodate him and his fears.

Potent images:

There are many throughout the book. Here is a couple, but others can be shared and their impact responded to throughout the reading.

- p177-8 The little girl, Hue, born during the 'days of slavery' tastes ice and red beans for the first time not knowing what cold tastes like.
- p73 Kuan: 'He remembered when he first arrived in this country. The sweet bread-and-butter faces of the Australians and their tenderness like pudding.'
- p93 'Over the years her parents had learned a kind of helplessness. They lived like acrophobes on the precipice'.

Vivid writing

Even in a story that is as sober and shocking as this one, Pung uses her skill with language to lighten dark moments, but never to trivialise. Below are some examples, but students can be invited to mark and discuss those that resonate with them.

- p7: 'She read about ailments such as anaemia, beriberi and pellagra, which sounded more like the three Graces in a pidgin language than the effects of vitamin deficiency as a result of starvation'.
- p12 'People are packed in like last-minute socks in a heaving suitcase.'
- p21 Description of herself as a cocoon.
- p29 'his stiff leg sticking out like an inadvertent prank.'

- p53 ‘...each time one of his children entered this place [the university] they were like little planets flung into far distant galaxies.’
- pp70-1 Evocative writing about the houses they look at – what they look and feel like, what is revealed about people’s lives.
- p77 ‘...sometimes it was just the little yellow nuclear family ensconced inside the large white house, like an egg inside an eggshell.’
- p102 ‘His hands also wandered up to her chest. The feeling was fast and scuttling. Like tarantulas or something.’
- p121 ‘Operation Breakfast’ – what makes this analogy so shocking?
- p213 ‘...death here had hot halitosis that withered away the bodies much faster.’
- p214 ‘There were bones beneath their feet, souls between their breaths.’
- At times, Alice also employs a matter-of-fact style that gives dignity to events and people, such as the unimaginable experience of a nine-year-old girl described on p179 as she imagines how that child felt ‘like a rusted spoon scraping at the inside of her stomach’.

Father’s experiences before Alice was born

We are given various expressions of Alice’s father – through her, his responsibilities in Australia as a parent and provider, his shocking experiences in Cambodia, and then establishing himself in Australia as a newly arrived immigrant.

- p75 Gives insights into his life at the migrant hostel and people’s sense of loss and dislocation. He sees himself as lucky in comparison. Discuss this relativity of values. Can there ever be absolutes?
- p82 His plan is to work hard and build up a business. He was robbed twice and yet he builds up a store that employs forty people.
- p84 How many things do people need, he asks. Good question worth answering.
- p239 He feels born again at thirty when his new life began and he found love.
- Discuss with students the changing portrait of Kuan, and how our understanding of him changes. We all have events in our lives that define us at the time, and continuing aspects that describe us to ourselves and others. Invite students to think about and represent their lives through particular events, and then identify aspects that they think are unchanging – this could be a written piece – prose or poetry, or a visual text – photographic, drawn, collage, or a multimedia text.

Her relationship

- p23 Recollects the feel of Teodoro
- p24 Their different ideas of love, different ways of loving.
- p25 They tell stories to each other from their childhoods. Why are these remembered? Why are they shared? What stories would you tell?
- p31 Desire is not enough: she would lose her sense of being grounded. Do you understand what she means?
- p32 Why does she decide not to have the experience?
- p34 Why does she have her hair cut off? Does it symbolize the end of the relationship?

Ideas to respond to

Love is central

I wanted to portray a man who was my father, but could remind anyone of their own dad too. Because being a father is not a distinct 'cultural' thing – love is instinctive ... I wanted to explore the other residual emotions that come afterwards: hyper-vigilance, acting like a haywire motion detector that goes off when it senses nothing but the rain, and loving your children too much.

There are many moments in the story that concern love – between lovers, child and parents, parent and parent. Some are identified below:

- p27 'If all love was about was clinging to good feelings, then things might not work.'
- pp44 'sometimes love bound too tightly.'
- p81 'Love was a verb with a certain amount of energy attached to it – a daily quota – and you had to choose on whom you wanted to spend this energy. That was love... If it were not finite, no one would pine for love in their lives – they would just wait to receive or learn to give. But Buddhist love, she knew was meant to be non-discriminating ...'
- *When I was at university, Australian friends would tell me to move out of home or stop being so passive. But it wasn't passivity. You just can't break bonds of your parents' love. It's the burden of love that you live with because it's the burden of being loved* (The author in *Sunday Tasmanian*, 18 September 2011, p23)
- Is it possible to be loved too much? Is that Alice's difficulty?

Poverty

- p36 'Being poor makes a person look so very much older ...'

Alone in foreign country

- p37 Being alone in a foreign country like this had made her peripheral vision disappear. All thought and feeling was condensed to simple words. I am well, I am hungry. Thank you, thank you – the idea that nuance of feeling didn't exist if she didn't have the language for them.

Confronting attitudes

- p153 'Don't worry, he's a peasant,' explained the doctor [in China]. 'They don't feel as much pain as ordinary people.'

Survival

- p179 Kuan learned from his older brother in the collective – 'about how to condense your world to the smallest possible unit so that you could keep it safe.' Discuss responses to this and whether there are examples in students' lives.

Suffering

- p193 'Do you think there's too much suffering in the Cambodian part? Maybe white people don't want to read about too much suffering. It depresses them.' Is that true and how has Kuan come to that perception? Is it deflection on the part of white people? An unwillingness to accept or confront suffering?
- p142 'sometimes the eyes can see too much.'

Depending on others

- p227 'What was wrong with dependency he wondered. If you didn't depend on anyone, you died.' Is this true for us all?

Independence

- p233 'Independence was sweet...but she knew that at some point she would bump against the raw edges of her selfishness.' Is being independent selfish?

Dismemory

- 'A memory that you had deliberately forgotten to remember'. Do we need them? Why? pp192 onwards give examples of how they important dismemories are in Kuan's life.
- Talk about this, and share any examples from class members.

Humour

- p58 Alice is working in the Retravisation shop and runs into a pimp and his girl. There is a funny exchange when the girl says to Alice 'You have a good smile. You don't have to sell phones, you know.'
- p61 'It was difficult to be angry at your parents when they were dressed like sleep-befuddled children from a 1981 Target ad.'
- pp63-4 The dating agency is written about like it is a job interview. The life-style packages have wonderful names. Students could have some fun inventing and describing others. This chapter would make good Readers' Theatre.
- p85 The laminating machines distorts the photos.
- p86 Descriptions of white people's *good* food. They couldn't eat the hostel food so he cooked two minute noodles for his pregnant wife.

Reactions

We know that everyone reads differently and brings their personal, social and literary repertoire to their readings. Below are excerpts from reviews that make a valuable starting point to discuss different perceptions and focuses and to prompt students to respond – do they agree with the views expressed? Are some more insightful than others? Are there particular perspectives and attitudes revealed through which the book has been read?

- *His shattering experiences render Alice's father incapable of cutting his daughter loose, of allowing her to make her own way in the world...That Alice achieved her independence, travelled and practices law is testimony to a similar toughness to that of her father (Australian Bookseller+Publisher, August 2011, p28).*
- *Pung has difficulty moving away from her family, particularly her father, Kien[sic]who is a survivor of the killing fields [sic] in Cambodia...A guilt-ridden Pung tries to comprehend his point of view by peering into the darker parts of their family history (The Big Issue, 13 September 2011, p41).*
- *By the book's end, the anxieties of her parents – usually about personal safety and financial security – are understandable and their apparent lack of sentiment becomes comprehensible...Pung re-experiences her grown-up relationships with her parents, interprets their complex history and appears to make peace for herself and her family (The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 October 2011, p32).*
- *Instead of rebelling against her father's 8pm curfews, Pung tries to understand why he is so afraid of the "what if". (The Hobart Mercury, 20 September 2011, p18).*
- *Pung...fail[s] to fully tease out the connections between the man her father is – at least the man she has always perceived him to be – and what he experienced in Cambodia (The Canberra Times, 10 September 2011, p26).*
- *Her father's stories of the atrocities of the Killing Fields, the unimaginable cruelty of the "Black Bandits" and basic lack of humanity rendered by Vietcong soldiers, all offer some insight into why her father behaves as he does. In her father's mind, hard work equates to freedom, to rest can be lethal and to let your guard down means potential torture (The Courier Mail, 1 October 2011, p23).*

- *The book is a record of suffering and a record, too, of the real miracle of love after suffering...is, ultimately, the story of a man shaped by the calculated catastrophe of a totalitarian regime and by his deep concern for his version of Australian life, to which his family and eldest daughter are central* (Brenda Walker, *The Monthly*, September 2011, p64).

Related reading/viewing

Unpolished Gem by Alice Pung

Growing up Asian in Australia edited by Alice Pung

Stay alive, My Son by Pin Yathay with John Man

First they Killed my Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Loung Ung

Lucky Child by Loung Ung

Year Zero: The silent death of Cambodia (Documentary by John Pilger)

The death and life of Dith Pran by Sydney Schanberg

The Killing Fields by Christopher Hudson

The Killing Fields Movie (Warner)

The Happiest Refugee by Ahn Do

The Boat by Nam Le

A Step from Heaven by An Na



ALICE PUNG is the author of *Laurinda*, *Unpolished Gem* and *Her Father's Daughter* and the editor of the anthology *Growing Up Asian in Australia*. Alice's work has appeared in the *Monthly*, *Good Weekend*, the *Age*, *The Best Australian Stories* and *Meanjin*.

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At twenty-something, Alice is eager for the milestones of adulthood: leaving home, choosing a career, finding friendship and love on her own terms. But with each step she takes she feels the sharp tug of invisible threads: the love and worry of her parents, who want more than anything to keep her from harm. Her father fears for her safety to an extraordinary degree – but why?

As she digs further into her father's story, Alice embarks on a journey of painful discovery: of memories lost and found, of her own fears for the future, of history and how it echoes down the years. Set in Melbourne, China and Cambodia, *Her Father's Daughter* captures a father–daughter relationship in a moving and astonishingly powerful way.

Recommended for middle and upper secondary

Subjects: Memoir, Non-fiction, History, Cambodia, Holocaust studies

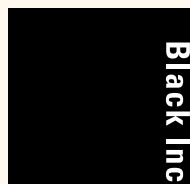
ISBN: 9781863955904

RRP: \$19.99

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