**1. A People' s Liberation Army officer from Shantung (Shandong)**

On my first leave home in 1959 I found life very hard. The Great Leap had destroyed the general standard of living. But people still survived. When I went home again in 1961, I learned that my grandmother and uncle had starved to death . That year I saw trees stripped of bark for food....The military forces were also affected by food shortage; in 1961-62 the amount of food provided was decreased and substitutes were introduced. But conditions were better than for the civilian population.

**2. An athlete from Tientsin (Tianjin)**

The paradox of food scarcity in a great agricultural country like China troubled me. Athletes, high-level intellectuals, and the military were much better off. I received a generous sum for food every month. And when my friends and I traveled just outside the city, we saw people collecting tree leaves, bark, and wild grasses. As a student at the Athletic College I was often asked to participate in welcoming foreigners at the airport. My healthy, robust, and cheerful appearance was meant to give foreigners the impression of well-fed, happy youth. In fact, the opposite was true for most young people.

**3. A Russian miller from Sinkiang (Xinjiang)**

After 1958, there was hunger. Many died of starvation. I myself suffered from lack of food, but, as a miller, I was a little better off....It's interesting. The Communists blamed everything on the drought; but before, even in years of drought, there was plenty to eat. So everyone understood it wasn't because of the weather. It was the authorities who were responsible for the famine....Many Chinese fled into Sinkiang from other famine areas [in Tsinghai and elsewhere]; they had been deceived into thinking there was food there. [In 1962] Uighurs [people of Northwest China] fled into the Soviet Union .

**4. A peasant from Kwangtung (Guandong)**

The worst time was 1959-62, with 1960 worst of all. I was very young at the time—about 11-12 years old. It was terrible for me—I would search everywhere for any blade of grass or leaf to eat. I also ate live crickets. People got only 1.7 taels [1/2 cup] of rice a day. In my large brigade there were about 2,000 people, and almost half of them died. It was like this: Someone dies in the morning, I carry him to the mountain to bury him. In the afternoon someone else will take me to the mountain for burial.

*\*These testimonials have been adapted for the classroom\**

**COLLECTIVE QUESTIONS:**

1. **According to these accounts, who suffered the most during the Great Chinese Famine? Why?**
2. **According to these accounts, who fared best during the Great Chinese Famine? Why?**
3. **Do these accounts reflect the true communal/communist/Maoist spirit of the Great Leap Forward? Why or why not?**