

Grade 9 English – Summer Reading Guide

Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand

Unbroken is the story of Louis Zamperini, a juvenile delinquent who first becomes a world class runner and later a WWII airman. In May of 1943, Zamperini's plane goes down in the Pacific. He and two fellow airmen find their way to a raft but are presumed dead and left to fight for survival on the vast ocean.

As you read, consider the following questions. You may want to note answers either in the text or on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is Zamperini's childhood like? How is it similar to/different from your own childhood?
2. Why does Zamperini begin running competitively? Is there a particular moment that serves as a turning point in his youth?
3. What was it like to serve as an airman in the Pacific during WWII? What specific stories does Hillenbrand choose to help the reader understand this time and place?
4. What are Zamperini's most important traits? What traits allow him to survive?
5. Does Zamperini fit your conception of a hero? What does he do that is heroic?
6. Who are the villains of this narrative? What does Hillenbrand seem to suggest about evil?
7. What difficulties does Zamperini face when he comes home? Why might it be difficult for a soldier to readjust to home life after fighting in a war?
8. What lessons can we take from Zamperini's life? What aspects of his life might be most instructive for us?