Unbroken: An Olympian’s Journey from Airman to Castaway to Captain

AUTHOR: Laura Hillenbrand
PUBLISHER: Delacorte Press
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GENRE: Non-fiction, Historical, World War II
SETTING: The setting is various locations throughout California, Olympic Games’ venues, and the Pacific Theatre during World War II.

SUMMARY: The life of Louis Zamperini is chronicled in this nonfiction work by Laura Hillenbrand. Zamperini’s energetic, raucous childhood led to his success as a high school and collegiate track star who became an Olympic standout. Zamperini’s Olympic dreams were dashed when World War II began. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and faced extraordinary challenges that shaped the man he would become.

BOOK TALK: Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand is a gritty true story of one man’s incredible journey through life. Louis Zamperini grew up during the Great Depression and was quite a spirited young man who found himself in lots of trouble. His big brother, Pete, took Louie under his wing and helped him hone his talent on the track. Zamperini went on to become an American high school and collegiate track star. He was set to become an Olympic Games standout when World War II broke out and he enlisted in the military. Zamperini’s remarkable travels while he served in the United States Army Air Corps took him around the world, and he experienced events that would shake others to the core. Louie’s tale of perseverance and determination is a must read!

BOOK TRAILER: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjfGxiE2UzI from Random House

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
AUTHOR’S NAME: Laura Hillenbrand
Author’s Website: http://laurahillenbrandbooks.com

Other books written by the author: Seabiscuit: An American Legend

Laura Hillenbrand wrote the critically acclaimed Seabiscuit: An American Legend. Born and raised in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., Hillenbrand went on to study at Kenyon College in Ohio, where she was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome.
SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
*The Warrior’s Heart: Becoming a Man of Compassion and Courage* by Eric Greitens
*The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* by Daniel James Brown
*The Right Fight* by Chris Lynch
*Code Name Verity* by Elizabeth Wein
*Pure Grit: How American World War II Nurses Survived Battle and Prison Camp in the Pacific* by Mary Cronk Farrell

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. How do you feel about Zamperini’s behavior as a child? How did his childhood circumstances and family support contribute to making him into the man he became?

2. Zamperini was on track to become an Olympic medal winner. How do you imagine he felt when the 1940 Tokyo Olympics were cancelled?

3. What do you believe to be the most terrifying event that Zamperini faced during his life? (Cite evidence from the book regarding the event.)

4. Describe how Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) impacted Zamperini when he returned to the United States. What do you think finally freed him from the nightmares that he had involving the Bird?

5. If you could write an epitaph for Zamperini’s gravestone, what would it say?

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Language Arts
- **Writing an Argumentative Essay**
  Reflect on this quote uttered by Pete Zamperini to his brother in the novel: “A lifetime of glory is worth a moment of pain.” (p.36)
  Consider the implications of these words and the impact they had on Louis Zamperini throughout his life. As a child Louie lost his temper a lot. How did Pete attempt to motivate Louie with these words? Do you believe Louie took the words to heart? Write an argumentative essay that supports your opinion of whether or not Louie’s life exemplifies the quote, citing evidence from the novel.

**Indiana Standards:**
8.W.3.1 Write arguments in a variety of forms that –
Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
Use effective transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. Establish and maintain a consistent style and tone appropriate to purpose and audience. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**Mathematics**
- **“A war without funerals” (p.77)**
  Students research the number of servicemen and women killed in the line of duty during World War II. Students decide how to collect and disaggregate data that represents casualties recorded (i.e. casualties within the U.S branches of the military, casualties from each of the nations that fought in the war) Once students establish their parameters they will conduct research, create data representations, and share/discuss their findings.

**Indiana Standards:**
6.DS.3: Formulate statistical questions; collect and organize the data (e.g., using technology); display and interpret the data with graphical representations (e.g., using technology).

**Social Studies**
- **Japan in World War II**
  Students research several aspects of World War II through the eyes of Japanese citizens during the time period.

**Indiana Standards:**
7.1.12 Analyze the Japanese imperial period (1868-1945), including Japan’s involvement in World War II.

7.1.16 Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, bearing in mind multiple causation in the role of individuals, beliefs and chance in history.

7.1.17 Distinguish between unsupported expressions of opinion and informed hypotheses grounded in historical evidence.

**RELATED INTERNET SITES:**

**Challenging Words:**
- insurgency (p. 5)
- raucous (p. 9)
- resilient (p. 9)
restiveness (p. 11)
eugenics (p. 12)
bombardier (p. 46)
pliant (p. 59)
tedium (p. 62)
plaintive (p. 81)
atoll (p. 87)
reverie (p. 125)
placidly (p. 125)
harangue (p. 207)
cessation (p. 222)
incredulous (p. 235)
ethereal (p. 263)
nonentity (p. 288)