

# ***Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand**

Approved for use in Grade 11

## **Summary**

On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War.

The lieutenant's name was Louis Zamperini. In boyhood, he'd been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman, embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown.

Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Driven to the limits of endurance, Zamperini would answer desperation with ingenuity; suffering with hope, resolve, and humor; brutality with rebellion. His fate, whether triumph or tragedy, would be suspended on the fraying wire of his will.

In her long-awaited new book, Laura Hillenbrand writes with the same rich and vivid narrative voice she displayed in *Seabiscuit*. Telling an unforgettable story of a man's journey into extremity, *Unbroken* is a

## **Connection to Curriculum**

*Unbroken* fits with multiple Grade 11 units. Unit 4's Essential Questions "Where does my voice fit?" and "What is the future of American Literature?" are compelling fits for a book written in 2010. In an American Literature curriculum, texts from the previous century are common; a recent, awarded text provides powerful evidence to support the intention that writing in the present is vital. Unit 4 is also a research unit in Grade 11, and a work based in a real historical context provides ample opportunities for deeper learning through research and possibly collaboration with other disciplines. Unit 3's themes of "Disillusionment, Defiance and Discontent" are also readily supported by this book.

<p>testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit. -- <i>BookBrowse</i></p>	
<p><b>Standards</b></p> <p>RL 11.3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.</p> <p>RL 11.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.</p>	
<p><b>A Note on the Text</b></p> <p><i>Unbroken</i> was recognized as 2010 <i>Publishers Weekly</i> "Top 10 Best Books"; 2010 The New York Times Best Seller list (Nonfiction); 2010 <i>Time</i> magazine's "Top 10 Nonfiction Books" (#1).</p>	<p><b>Additional Unit Design Connections</b></p> <p>Unbroken affords cross-curricular project possibilities with U.S. History classes.</p>