*Unbroken*

Laura Hillenbrand, [*Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*](http://www.amazon.com/Unbroken-World-Survival-Resilience-Redemption/dp/0812974492)(New York: Random House, 2010).

Summary:

Louie Zamperini was a lieutenant in a WWII Army Air Forces bomber, which once landed with 594 bullet holes. He was also an Olympic runner, a childhood vandal, and a man who survived 47 days in the Pacific Ocean on a raft followed by two and a half years in Japanese POW camps, where he was regularly beaten. *Unbroken*, by Laura Hillenbrand, author of *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*, is a story of the themes in its subtitle: survival, resilience, and redemption. Zamperini, who died in 2014 at the age of ninety-seven, converted to Christianity after his POW camp survival and a period of alcohol abuse. Hillenbrand writes in a straightforward style that captures the many instances of pride, pain, and hope in Louie’s life. Angelina Jolie directed the film of the same name.

Themes:

* Redemption. The novel moves in an arc, from the Creation of Louie as a rambunctious child, to put it mildly, to the Fall of his place crash, to his Redemption at the Billy Graham revival.
* Suffering. Louie is shot at, beaten, stranded, starved, nearly drowned, punched, and placed in solitary confinement.
* War. WWII is the setting for much of the book, which focuses specifically on the Pacific theater.
* Heroism. Many of Louie’s actions could be described as heroic, but there were other instances of heroism to which Louie was a witness.
* Forgiveness. Louie has a chance to confront many of the guards from the POW camp later in life.
* Dignity/self-worth. In his letter to the Bird, Louie writes of how his rights and dignity were stripped from him.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Louie’s experiences in his childhood impact him as an adult?
2. Consider how Louie forgave Watanabe, the Bird. Does forgiveness require repentance? Is forgiveness “selfish” if one person forgives another without the latter acknowledging his or her wrong?
3. Compare and contrast Louie Zamperini’s experience with forgiveness in Chapters 38 & 39 of *Unbroken* with Corrie ten Boom’s in Chapter 15 of her biography *The Hiding Place.*
4. What motivated the Bird to commit his many acts of atrocity against the prisoners?
5. In November 2014, Hillenbrand revised *Unbroken* so that it could be republished in what was called the “Young Adult Adaptation.” Does this hurt the impact of the story, or is this a helpful way to increase reader accessibility? You can read more about this [here](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/08/business/media/laura-hillenbrand-jon-meacham-adapt-titles-for-children.html?_r=0).