

# *Unbroken*

*An Olympian's Journey from Airman to  
Castaway to Captive*

Laura Hillenbrand

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_

Miss Connelly– Aviation History and Literature

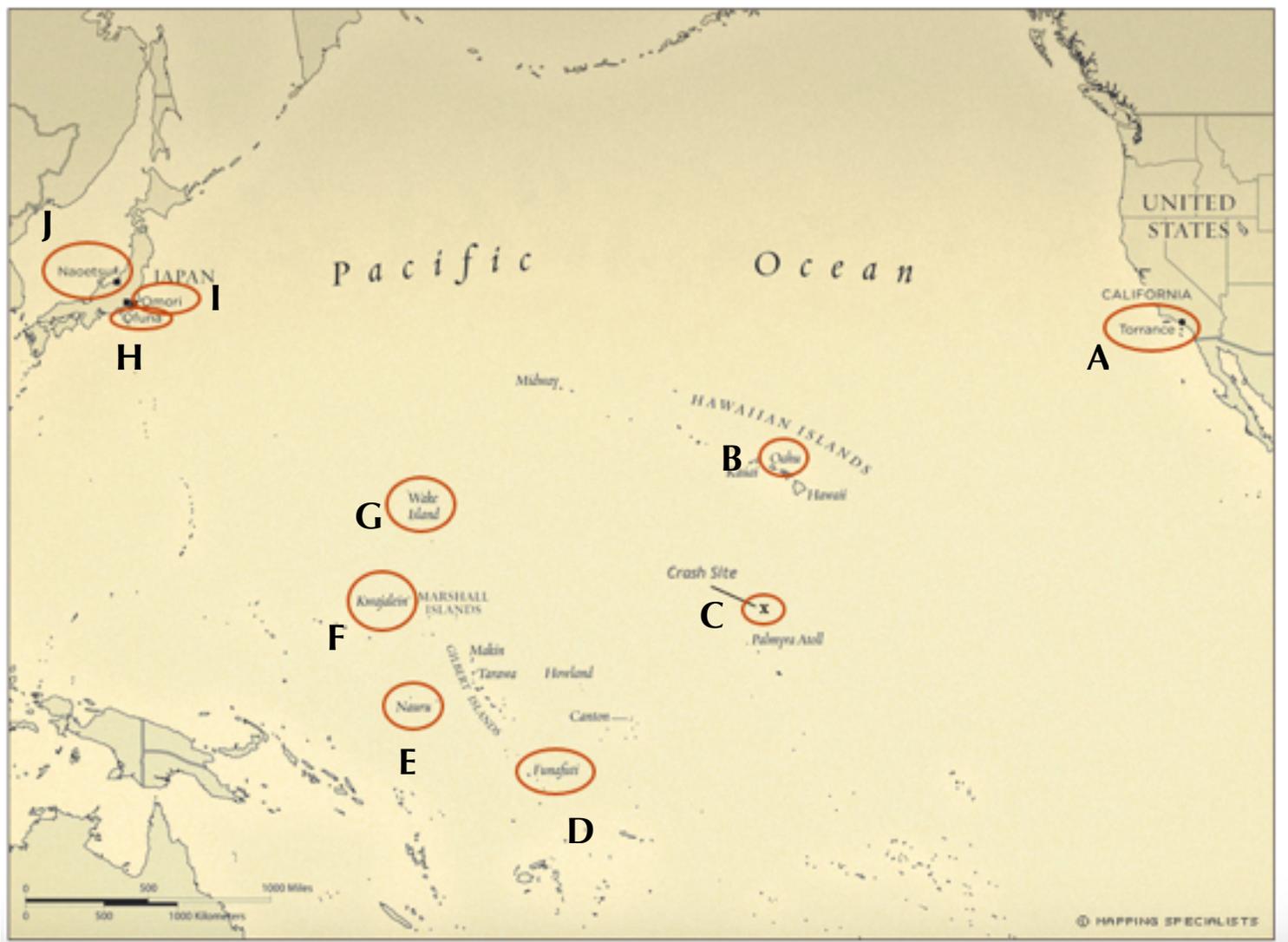




-The Battles:

- Midway:
- Guadalcanal:
- Iwo Jima:
- Okinawa:

## Louie's Journey:



Use the map on the previous page to outline what happened to Louie in the following places; refer to this link as reference: <http://laurahillenbrandbooks.com/interactive-map/>

A: Torrence:

B: Oahu:

C: Crash Site:

D: Funafutti:

E: Nauru:

F: Kawajalein:

G: Wake Island:

H: Ofuna:

I: Omori

J: Naoetsu:

# The Cast of Characters:

As you “meet” the following characters, write a brief description of each:

**Pete Zamperini:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Louise Zamperini:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sylvia Zamperini:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Lt. Russell Allen Phillips (Phil):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Super Man:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The Green Hornet:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sgt. Francis McNamara (Mac):** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Lt. William Harris:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mutsuhiro Watanabe, “The Bird:”** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cynthia Applewhite:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Discussion & Reading Questions:

## Part I

As you read the following chapters, answer the corresponding questions thoroughly and in detail. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

### Chapter 1: The One-Boy Insurgency (p. 5-12)

1: Why was the world so fascinated by the *Graf Zeppelin*?

2: Why did the science of eugenics make Louie question his self-worth? Why is this such a twisted/gruesome philosophy?

3: Look up the definition of *insurgency* and write it down. Why does Hillenbrand title her first chapter "The One-Boy Insurgency?" What does this mean in regards to Louie's character?

### Chapter 2: Run Like Mad (p. 13-19)

1: Who is the "Pete" in your life? Who has pressed you hard, but has ultimately shaped who you are today?

### **Chapter 3: The Torrence Tornado (p. 21-29)**

1: Describe the reaction to Louie's near-win at the Olympic trials in Torrence. He was inaccurately announced the winner, but the town didn't seem to care that he had actually come in second. Why?

### **Chapter 4: Plundering Germany (p. 31-39)**

1: Compare and contrast Louie's view of running as something he is forced to do (p. 15) with his self-encouragement, "Let go" (p. 36), while running in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. What constrained Louie?

2: Why is Louie so fixated (almost obsessed) with looking ahead to the 1940 Games in Tokyo, Japan?

### **Chapter 5: The Red Circle (p. 41-46)**

1: Study the photographs of Louie in Part 1. How do they support the personal attributes/ characteristics revealed in Part 1?

2: How do you think Louie's experiences as a child and as a runner in the Olympics would help shape him for what was ahead of him?

## **Part II**

### **Chapter 6: The Flying Coffin (p. 49-59)**

1: Describe why the B-24 Liberator was a dreaded aircraft and nicknamed “the Flying Coffin.”

2: Study the image of the B-24 Liberator on page 54. What do you notice about the aircraft based on this image? What challenges would men on this aircraft face?

3: Look up the definition of Louie’s position of *bombardier* and describe what that means.

### **Chapter 7: “This Is It, Boys” (p. 60-67)**

1: Describe Louie’s pranks between himself and his crewmen. What does this tell you about his character?

2: This chapter ends by explaining that Americans felt sure “Japan might be finished within a year” (p. 67). Describe the problems this mindset might have in light of the war ahead.

### **Chapter 8: Dying in Doves (p. 69-77)**

1: What unique challenges/fears were faced by pilots in the Pacific during WWII?

2: Hillenbrand explores the extraordinary risks faced by America’s WWII airmen: 54,000 men killed in combat, 36,000 killed in noncombat aircraft accidents, and a stunning 15,000 men killed in stateside training—at times, an average of 19 per day. Men faced a 50% chance of being killed during combat tours of only 30-40 missions. Were you aware of the dangers faced by airmen in the Pacific war? What facts and stories were most surprising to you?

**Chapter 9: Five Hundred and Ninety-Four Holes (p. 78-85)**

1: What does it take for you to overcome your fears?

2: Describe Louie's role in saving the crew and the plane after *Super Man* was hit during the Nauru bombing raid. What does this tell you about him?

3: In addition to the inherent danger of combat, what problems did airmen encounter aboard their planes?

### **Chapter 10: "The Whole Island Was Blowing Up" (p. 87-93)**

1: Study the images throughout Chapter 10. What observations do you make about the images? What do you imagine it would have been like to experience the bombing of Funafuti.

### **Chapter 11: "Nobody's Going to Live Through This" (p. 95-100)**

1: What went wrong with the *Green Hornet* that made it crash?

2: Page 98 writes, "Phil felt strangely fearless. He watched the ocean rotating up at him and thought: *There's nothing more I can do.*" Analyze these feelings. What is the author's purpose of including them?

# **Part III**

## **Chapter 12: Downed (p. 103-106)**

1: Describe the events of *Green Hornet's* ill-fated search mission. How did Louie, Phil, & Mac survive?

## **Chapter 13: Missing at Sea (p. 107-111)**

1: What would you do or think if someone you loved was reported missing?

2: What are your feelings about Mac? Do you feel sympathy for him? Anger? Explain your answer.

**Chapter 14: Thirst (p. 112-117)/Chapter 15: Sharks and Bullets (p. 118-123)**

1: How would/could you exercise your brain if you were in Louie's situation?

2: What drives the human spirit to endure through these horrific conditions?

**Chapter 16: Singing in the Clouds (p. 125-130)**

1: In the end, did Mac redeem himself? In other words, did he make up for his faults? Explain your answer.

2: What did you find most remarkable about the things Louie and Phil did to survive on the raft?

**Chapter 17: Typhoon (p. 131-135)**

1: What value do we put on our bodies in order to carry out what we love to do? What do we take for granted?

# **Part IV**

## **Chapter 18: A Dead Body Breathing (p. 139-144)**

1: What do you think is meant by “dignity?” Why is losing this greater than losing food, water, or physical capabilities?

## **Chapter 19: “No One Knows You’re Alive” (p. 145-151)**

1: How does the explanation of Japanese culture help explain how and why the Japanese soldiers acted the way they did?

2: Why does racism emerge in the midst of war and conflict? What can be done to rise above it?

### **Chapter 20: Farting for Hirohito (p. 152-159)**

1: Why do you think Phil felt so responsible for the crash? Why do you think he said he'd never fly again? What would you do or how would you feel?

### **Chapter 21: Belief (p. 160-164)**

1: Can you imagine being in the shoes of the Zamperini family? How would you feel?

2: How do you *believe* someone is alive?

### **Chapter 22: Plots Afoot (p. 165-170)**

1: What was a stake for Louie and his friends in attempting an escape? What would you do?

2: What do you think is meant by “fearful joy?” Have you ever felt a fearful joy before?

**Chapter 23: Monster (p. 171-175)**

1: In this chapter, we are introduced to Mitsuhiro Watanabe “The Bird.” Describe your first impression of him.

2: How do you think the title of this chapter (*Monster*) foreshadows something that is to come later in Louie’s story?

**Chapter 24: Hunted (p. 176-181)**

1: Think about resistance. Although the the POWs were desperately stuck in a horrid situation, in what small ways did they show resistance to the Japanese over them?

**Chapter 25: "He's Alive" (p. 183- 189)**

1: Imagine what it would have been like for POWs to see the B-29 in the sky. Why do you think they reacted the way they did?

2: How would you react if you were Louie's family and you just heard the news that he was alive?

**Chapter 26: Madness (p. 190-195)**

1: Being an Olympian, why was Louie targeted as a POW?

**Chapter 27: Falling Down (p. 196-199)**

1: Describe what you think went through Louie's mind upon his arrival Naoetsu?

### **Chapter 28: Enslaved (p. 201-206)**

1: What were some of the “victories” that kept the POWs going?

2: Consider the last line of this chapter, *“If anything is going to shatter me, Louie thought, this is it.”* Describe what you think this means and why cleaning the pig’s sty with his bare hands was a final straw for Louie.

### **Chapter 29: Two Hundred and Twenty Punches (p. 207-211)**

1: “Louie was sick and demoralized. He lay on his plank, daydreaming of the Olympics, clinging to them as a shining promise.” Why do you think Louie held to the Olympics as his “hope.” Do you think this hope was sufficient to see him through? Why or why not?

2: Why was surrender for Japan “unthinkable.” For possibly the same reasons, why did Japan issue the kill-all order?

### **Chapter 30: The Boiling City (p. 212- 217)**

1: The lifting of the beam is most certainly a pivotal moment in Louie's battle with the Bird. Louie says: *He cannot break me*. Describe what you think this means and why this is such a momentous episode in Louie's life.

2: What do you think of Louie's and the POWs' plot to kill the Bird? Do you think their plot and intention is justified? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 31: The Naked Stampede (p. 219- 224)/Chapter 32: Cascades of Pink Peaches (p. 225- 231)**

1: What would your reaction be to hearing the war had ended if you had been a POW? Would you have believed the news? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 33: Mother's Day (p. 232-239)**

1: Look at the image of Louie's homecoming on pg. 239. Describe what you see and write about what you imagine that moment being like.

# **Part V**

## **Chapter 34: The Shimmering Girl (p. 243-249)**

1: What problems did Louie deal with upon his arrival home?

2: Describe how Louie met Cynthia Applewhite. Why was he so drawn to her?

3: What factors were inevitably leading into a hard marriage for both Louie and Cynthia?

## **Chapter 35: Coming Undone (p. 251-256)**

1: Describe the problems (physical, mental, and emotional) faced by U.S. soldiers returning home after fighting in World War II.

2: Why do you think “running wasn’t the same” for Louie after his experience in the war?

3: Why was the notion of killing the Bird a replacement to Louie’s “lost Olympics?” Do you think it will satisfy him? Why or why not?

**Chapter 36: The Body on the Mountain (p. 257-260)**

1: What do you make of the Bird’s life after World War II? Do you feel sympathy or anger towards him? Explain your answer.

### **Chapter 37: Twisted Ropes (p. 261- 264)**

1: Louie is convinced that murdering the Bird would solve all of his problems. Do you think that is true? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 38: The Promise (p. 265-269)**

1: Why do you think Billy Graham's question "Why is God silent while good men suffer?" grabbed Louie's attention and made him start listening to Graham's sermon.

2: What do you make of Louie's transformation and what was responsible for the transforming?

### **Chapter 39: Daybreak (p. 271-273)**

1: Consider the line "For Louie Zamperini, the war was over." What "war" does this line refer to and how was it resolved?

### **Epilogue (p. 275-282)**

1: Why do you think in the end, Louie was able to write that letter to the Bird without any regret? Why do you think the Bird refused to see Louie?

### **In Conversation (p. 285-292)**

1: After reading "In Conversation," what is one more question you would like to ask Louie if you could meet him? Explain why you would ask that question.

# Themes:

## Heroism:

1: Define heroism. Would you consider Louie a hero? Why or why not?

2: Were there any other heroes in the story *Unbroken*? If so, name them and explain why they should be considered heroes.

## Forgiving the Unforgiveable:

1: Describe the importance of forgiveness in the grand scheme of Louie's story. How does this change him?

**Brokenness:**

1: Consider the title of the book, *Unbroken*. Why do you think Laura Hillenbrand chose this title for her book?

2: Despite everything he went through, why is Louie ultimately “unbroken?”

**Aviation:**

1: Describe the role aviation played in Louie's story. How would his story be different if aviation didn't exist.

2: Describe the role of aviation played in WWII as a whole. How would the narrative of the history of the world be entirely different if it hadn't been for aviation and its effect on the Second World War.