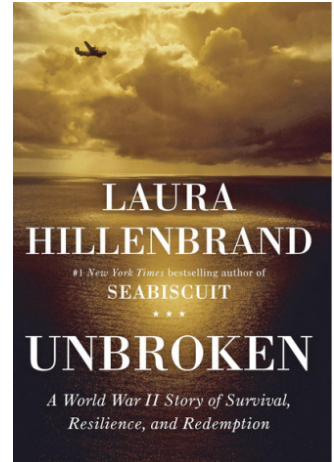


Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption by Laura Hillenbrand



1. Readers and critics alike have described *Unbroken* as gripping, almost impossible to put down. Was that your experience as well? How do you account for the page-turning quality given the grim subject material? Also, would your reading experience have been different if you didn't know that Zamperini survived? (Or didn't you know the outcome?)
2. Laura Hillenbrand gives us a moving story, one that brings to life the suffering and courage of not just one man but thousands, whose stories are untold. What is it about Hillenbrand's writing that saves her book from becoming mired in bathos and melodrama?
3. What do you admire most about Zamperini? What enables him to survive the plane crash and POW ordeal? Does he possess special strengths—personal or physical? Did his training in track, for instance, make a difference in his resilience?
4. How do the POW captives help one another survive? How are they able to communicate with one another? What devices do Zamperini and others use not only to survive but to maintain sanity?
5. What do you find most horrifying about Zamperini's captivity?
6. Does this book make you wonder at mankind's capacity for cruelty? What accounts for it—especially on the part of the Japanese, a highly cultured and civilized society? (The same question, of course, has been applied to the Nazis.)
7. Hillenbrand devotes time to the difficulty of veterans' re-entering life after the war. She says, "there was no one right way to peace; each man had to find his own path." What is Zamperini's path? How does his conversion under Billy Graham help him? What role does his wife, Cynthia, play?
8. Follow-up to Question 7: Why, after World War II, did the medical profession fail to acknowledge Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? After all, this was the mid-20th century, and psychiatry was a fairly established discipline. Plus, the horrors of World War I were only one generation behind. What took so long?
9. *Unbroken* is a classic inspirational story, but it lies somewhat on the surface, offering little in the way of psychological depth. Do you wish there were more introspection in Zamperini's account? Or do you feel this story is rich enough as it is?