

Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption Study Guide

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

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Plot Summary

Unbroken is the true story of Louis Zamperini, a promising young Olympic runner from Torrance, California, who was called into service on a bomber crew in the Pacific in World War II. Zamperini's plane went down in the Pacific Ocean and he and two other survivors drifted over 40 days living on rainwater and the occasional fish or bird they could catch. One of the crash survivors died on the raft. Zamperini and the other survivor, the plane's pilot, were finally nearing land when they were captured by the Japanese navy. The Japanese did not inform America of the capture of Zamperini, and after some time he was declared officially dead. His family in California refused to give up hope that he might return alive, however.

The men were treated gently at first, given time to recuperate in a hospital. They were then suddenly transferred to a Japanese prisoner camp where they expected they would be executed. Because of his relative fame as an Olympic runner, Zamperini was selected for especially harsh treatment by the Japanese guards, but he was not killed. He was sent to a series of prisoner camps, eventually arriving at a camp in Tokyo where he received particularly brutal treatment by a guard the men called "The Bird." Japanese propagandists attempted to force Zamperini into making pro-Japanese broadcasts to America, but he refused and was severely punished.

Louis was in a prison camp in Tokyo when American forces dropped the atomic bombs on Japan that led to surrender. Cut off from news, the prisoners knew almost nothing about the tide of the war until their guards informed them it was over. Louis was hospitalized and eventually sent home to Torrance, to the delight of his family. His life became troubled, however. He married a young woman after knowing her for only two weeks. He was disturbed by flashbacks to his days as a prisoner and had terrible dreams of being beaten by The Bird. He began to drink excessively and his wife told him she wanted a divorce.

Zamperini's life was turned around after a visit to a revival meeting staged by the young Billy Graham, an evangelist Christian preacher. He saved his marriage, quit drinking, and found his nightmares diminishing. He began giving talks and making appearances telling his story. He even found it possible to forgive The Bird for his brutality.

Zamperini had thought that The Bird had committed suicide after the war, but he had actually escaped and eluded capture for years while he was hunted down by Japanese police for his war crimes. Upon learning that The Bird was still alive, Zamperini tried to arrange a meeting with him. He traveled to Japan, but The Bird refused to see him.



Part I, Chapters 1-3

Part I, Chapters 1-3 Summary and Analysis

Unbroken begins with a short but dramatic preface. Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner who became a bombardier in the Army Air Forces in World War II, drifted in the Pacific Ocean on a small raft after the crash of his plane. Two other survivors of the crash were with him and after nearly 30 days adrift they suffered from starvation, exposure and lack of water. They were surrounded by sharks. Suddenly, a plane flew past and the men tried feebly to signal it. The plane turned back toward them and dropped low over the men. It was a Japanese plane, and it began firing machine guns at them. Zamperini's companions were too weak to get into the water, but he jumped overboard to escape the bullets. Beneath him, the sharks began to stir.

The first chapter is called "The One-Boy Insurgency." The chapter begins in 1929 when Louis Zamperini was twelve years old and living with his Italian immigrant family in Torrance, California. Louis was a troublemaker as a child, often stealing things and getting into fights. He was the apparent opposite of his older brother, Pete, who was good in school and sports and well-liked. As Louis entered high school, those who knew him thought he faced a life of trouble.

Chapter 2 is called "Run Like Mad." Louis entered high school and soon was in regular trouble. As a punishment, his high-school principal made him ineligible to join and clubs or go out for sports. Louis did not care one way or the other about this, but his brother Pete approached the principal and asked him to allow Louis to join a sport. Pete argued that Louis needed recognition, and that if he could get positive attention as an athlete perhaps he would stop seeking negative attention. The principal relented and soon Pete was helping Louis train as a member of the track team.

Louis worked hard at training and started having good showings at meets. He grew impatient and argumentative with his family, however. After a fight with his father, Louis ran away with a friend but was soon hungry and miserable and returned home to the great relief of his parents. Louis began training even harder under Pete's direction and became a star at the track. He began to idolize a runner named Glenn Cunningham. Louis broke his high school record for running the mile, then the state record. He started competing against college runners and beating them soundly.

Chapter 3 is called "The Torrance Tornado." Louis continued to improve his time on the mile course and started thinking seriously about trying to run for the United States at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. He decided his best chance was to aim for one of the three spots open running the 5,000 meter race, a distance of just over three miles. Although Louis had never competed at this distance before, he began training hard for it. After running a close second against the top runner at the distance in a California meet, Louis was invited to the Olympic trials in New York. As his family and the whole city of

Torrance listened over the radio, Louis had a photo-finish that was eventually declared a tie for first. He made the Olympic team.



Part I, Chapters 4-5

Part I, Chapters 4-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4 is entitled "Plundering Germany." Louis traveled with the rest of the Olympic athletes by steamer across the Atlantic. Louis was overwhelmed by the comparative luxury of the ship and the enormous amounts of food offered to the athletes. He gained several pounds on the trip.

This ocean crossing is an ironic counterpart to Louis' later raft journey in the Pacific, where he suffers from starvation.

In Berlin, Louis was intimidated by his competitors. The Finnish team, especially, looked very strong. In the qualifying race, the Finns took the lead. Louis managed to stay close to them, but when he got close, he was elbowed and spiked by the other runners, slowing him down and sending him back in the pack. Louis did not give up, however, and made up ground, running the final lap of the race in under a minute, an incredible time, but only giving him fifth place. He received congratulations from Adolf Hitler, the German leader, who had watched his fast finish. After the games, Louis and the other athletes had a good time in Berlin. He received a hero's welcome back in Torrance. He set his sights on competing and winning in the next Olympics to be held in 1940 in Tokyo.

Hillenbrand ends the chapter with Louis' optimism about going to Japan in 1940; however, it is apparent he will not meet this goal, since World War II is on the horizon and will change Louis' destiny.

Chapter 5 is called "Into War." Louis returned to California and attended the University of Southern California, setting national college track records and looking ahead to the 1940 Olympics. In 1937, however, Japan and Germany began the invasions of their neighboring countries that would lead to world war. The Tokyo Olympics were canceled, devastating Louis. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps, intending to learn to fly but found that he did not care for flying. He had signed an agreement that he could be called back into the air service, however, and that is where he was assigned. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in late 1941, Louis and all other servicemen were called to their bases.

While at USC, Louis had become acquainted with a man named Jimmie Sasaki, a Japanese man everyone assumed was a fellow USC student. Sasaki was vague about his background and activities, however, and was probably spying for Japan. Louis would meet Sasaki again later in his saga.



Part II, Chapters 6-8

Part II, Chapters 6-8 Summary and Analysis

Part II begins with Chapter 6 called "The Flying Coffin." The name of the chapter is in reference to a common nickname for the B-24 bomber, a plane with a reputation at the time for being difficult to fly and prone to crashes. Louis was sent to Washington state where he was trained as a bombardier on a B-24 crew headed by pilot Russell Phillips, who was known by his men as Phil.

Phil was a devoutly religious man from Indiana and engaged to be married. He and Louis shared living quarters along with the rest of the crew while learning to fly the B-24. After ,they were sent to an airfield in California where they were assigned to a plane, which they named Super Man. They then flew to Oahu, Hawaii.

Chapter 7 is called "This is it, boys." In Oahu, the crew underwent further training in the B-24, spending their off days exploring Honolulu. They were eager to get into the fighting against the Japanese and their call finally came just before Christmas, 1942. They were ordered to fly to Midway, an island base in the Pacific, from which they would be part of an attack on Wake Island, a former US base that had been overtaken by the Japanese.

The crew flew toward the island in the dark, striking it in the early morning hours. Louis used the top-secret Norden bomb sight, a highly advanced instrument at the time, to target almost all of their bombs successfully. The devastation was quick and thorough and soon the bombers were back on their way to Midway. On the return, however, Super Man lost an engine. Phil knew that the other engines would probably soon fail and the crew kept a tense watch for Midway in the dark. Phil managed to bring the plane down safely. Shortly after landing, the second of the four engines failed, then the final two. Had they taken just a little longer, they would have crashed.

Chapter 8 is entitled "Only the Laundry Knew How Scared I Was," after a quote from an airman who survived a close call in a B-24. This chapter documents some of the difficulties bomber pilots and crew faced with the new B-24 and other planes. The statistics show that airmen died at a very high rate, not only in combat but in training and routine missions. Mechanical problems and unpredictable weather were large contributors to the death rate.

This chapter provides background for the next chapters in which a bomber goes down at sea and Louis' crew is sent out on a search mission during which they encounter devastating mechanical problems of their own.



Part II, Chapters 9-11

Part II, Chapters 9-11 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 9 is entitled "Five Hundred and Ninety-four Holes," in reference to the number of bullet holes sustained by Super Man during a harrowing bombing mission over the island of Nauru. Louis' bomber crew and 22 other bombers were sent from the island of Funafuti to bomb Nauru which had been captured by the Japanese and where they had built a phosphate mining operation.

Their orders were to bomb the island from 8,000 feet, well within the reach of anti-aircraft weapons on the ground. The crew was nervous as they approached. Louis, the bombardier, carefully sighted a Japanese airfield in his bombsight, but the plane was thrown to one side by a shell striking the rear rudder. Shells continued to explode around the plane, sometimes hitting it, but Louis was able to successfully target and hit a fuel depot, creating a huge explosion on the ground. Their bombs away, Phil turned the plane back, but it was immediately surrounded by Japanese fighter planes. The plane was sprayed with gunfire. The gunners on the B-24 fired back. Some of the crewmen were badly hit, and Louis did what he could to help them. The control cables for the plane were damaged, and Louis quickly rigged up a way to connect them so Phil could maintain some control. Super Man was able to escape the Zeros, but it was badly hit. Suspecting the landing gear was damaged, the crew prepared for a crash.

Phil was able to bring the plane in for a very rough landing. The ground crew rushed to the plane to help the wounded. Harry Brooks, one of the gunners, died from his wounds. Another gunner had his leg badly injured. Louis was unhurt. The ground crew later cataloged every hole in the plane, counting 594. Nobody had ever seen a plane return that had been so shot up.

The incident demonstrates the skill of Phil as a pilot as well as the resourcefulness of Louis under pressure. They would not be so lucky on their next crash.

Chapter 10 is called "The Stinking Six." The title is a reference to a nickname given to a set of Japanese bombers that raided the American base on Funafuti where Louis, Phil and the surviving crew of the Super Man were stationed. It was right after the bombing of Nauru that the Japanese struck, catching the base by surprise. Men jumped out of their barracks and struggled to find shelter as bombs dropped all around. The casualties were heavy, and the base completely devastated. Louis and Phil survived the raid, but some of their crew had been hurt. Their plane was unfit to fly. With no plane and a diminished crew, Phil, Louis and their co-pilot Cuppernell were reassigned to a unit on Hawaii and given a new crew. This bothered Louis, who thought that mixing up crews was an invitation for a crash.

Chapter 11 is called "Nobody's Going to Live Through This." A B-24 that had left Hawaii for Canton, China the day before had never arrived. Phil was asked to volunteer his



crew for a search mission. Phil replied that he had no plane and was directed to take a B-24 called the Green Hornet, an unreliable plane that had a particular reputation for being difficult to fly. Mechanics had also been robbing the plane of parts, and although it passed inspection Louis was afraid important parts might be missing. The men followed orders and took off in the plane with their crew.

The plane reached the search area and the men looked for any signs of a crash or survivors. In the cockpit, Phil and Cuppernell noticed the engines on one side of the plane were burning fuel more quickly than on the other. Suddenly, one of the left engines stopped. Then the other left engine quit. Unable to keep the plane aloft with only the two right engines, Phil gave the order to prepare to crash. Louis thought to himself, "Nobody's going to live through this."

The plane hit the water, broke apart, and immediately began to sink. In the cockpit, Phil was able to kick out through the cockpit window and get to the surface. Louis found himself underwater in darkness, entangled in broken wires and cables. He blacked out, thinking he was about to die. He awoke again, however, and suddenly realized where he was in the plane. He felt for an opening and kicked through. He surfaced and threw up the saltwater that had been in his lungs.

This dramatic episode comes on suddenly in the narrative and is described in quick, succinct prose that emphasizes the sudden and surprising situation in which Louis and Phil were thrown. Hillenbrand ends the second part of the book with this suspenseful event.



Part III, Chapters 12-14

Part III, Chapters 12-14 Summary and Analysis

Part III opens with Chapter 12, which is called "Downed." Louis emerged amid the wreckage of the bomber and heard Phil's voice. With Phil was Francis MacNamara, the tail gunner, who was called Mac. Louis saw the plane's life rafts nearby, but floating away with the current. He swam toward them and was able to catch them by a trailing rope. He got on the rafts and rowed them toward Phil and Mac. Phil had received two bad gashes on his forehead and was very faint. He put Louis in command and slipped into unconsciousness.

In the rafts were some basic survival provisions. There were some bitter chocolate bars and a few tins of drinking water. The larger provisions box had apparently been lost with the wreckage of the plane. Also in the rafts were patching supplies and an air pump, along with some basic tools. There was nothing to use for shelter from the sun during the day or from the cold at night. There was no first aid kit or emergency radio.

Mac had remained silent since being pulled onto the raft, but he suddenly lost his composure and began to cry that the men were all going to die. Louis struck him to stop his ranting and he fell quiet. Louis set up ground rules. Each man would get two squares of chocolate a day and a tin of water from which they could take a few sips each day. This plan would stretch their supply for a few days.

Soon the rafts were surrounded by sharks, which rubbed up against them and circled the men. At night the temperature dropped sharply. The men put a bit of water in the rafts, which kept them warm once their bodies had warmed it up. Louis and Phil fell asleep, but Mac stayed awake.

Chapter 13 is called "Missing at Sea." The search plane that had left at the same time as the Green Hornet returned to find that the Green Hornet had not arrived. It was past midnight, and the search for the missing plane could not begin until morning.

On the raft, Louis awoke and reached for the chocolate to dole out the day's ration to everyone. The chocolate was gone. He realized at once that Mac had panicked and eaten all of it while the others slept. Louis curbed his anger and tried to reassure Mac they would soon be rescued.

The following day the men saw a bomber and tried to signal it with a flare. The bomber did not see them and continued on its way. The days stretched into a week and finally the crew of the Green Hornet were officially classified as missing at sea. Louis' family was notified by telegram, and they were extremely worried, yet optimistic that Louis may have survived.



Meanwhile, the men on the raft continued to decline in health as they faced starvation and lack of water. They had fishhooks and line, but no bait. Mac's mental state deteriorated.

Chapter 14 is called "Thirst." The small tins of water were soon empty and the men were starving. Louis managed to catch an albatross that landed on the raft, killing it and pulling it apart to eat. The men could not stomach the meat, however. Louis used parts of the bird for bait and managed to catch a few fish to eat. A passing storm provided a small amount of fresh water to drink, which the men caught in the canvas bags that held the air pumps for the rafts. As they ran out of water again, Louis began to pray. He had not been an especially religious man before, but shortly after he prayed for more water another rain came. It happened a second time. Louis made a promise to God that if he survived he would dedicate his life to him.



Part III, Chapters 15-17

Part III, Chapters 15-17 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 15 is called "Sharks and Bullets." The men had survived on the rafts for 27 days when they saw another plane. Louis tried to signal it with a hand mirror and also dumped a container of signal dye in the water. The plane continued on its course, but after a short time returned. The men started waving their shirts, overjoyed at the prospect of rescue.

It was a Japanese plane, however, and in an instant the air was full of machine gun fire. Louis jumped over the side of the raft to escape the bullets, but Phil and Mac were too weak to join him. They balled up in the floor of the rafts. The plane made several passes, each time hitting the rafts with bullets. In the water, Louis soon had sharks lunging at him. Remembering some training he had received from a native islander, he hit the sharks squarely on the nose and they turned away.

The bullets stopped and Louis climbed back on the rafts. Miraculously neither Phil nor Mac had been hit, although all around them the rafts were punctured. They began to sag and fill with water as Louis hurriedly worked to patch them. The raft on which Phil had been floating was ruined, but with Phil and Mac taking turns continuously pumping to keep the remaining raft inflated while Louis patched it, they were able to salvage one raft and stay afloat, although they were greatly cramped.

Chapter 16 is entitled "Singing in the Clouds." The title refers to a hallucination that Louis had one day while floating on the calm ocean that he heard beautiful singing from the sky. He checked with Phil, who heard nothing.

The sharks grew bolder and some started to jump up onto the raft trying to get at the men. Louis managed to catch and kill one, after which they seemed to stop their attacks. Mac's condition deteriorated and he died quietly one night. Phil and Louis wrapped his body in part of the ruined raft and dropped it overboard.

Another storm approached as the men spent their 46th day at sea. As they topped a swell they saw a dark mass on the horizon. It was an island.

Chapter 17 is called "Typhoon." Phil and Louis reasoned they had drifted toward the Marshall or Gilbert islands, both under Japanese control. The island systems were dotted with many small uninhabited islands, however, and they planned to stay off shore until they could find a hidden place to go ashore. They spotted what they thought was a small island and made way toward it.

What they thought was an island turned out to be a Japanese ship, and the men were spotted. They were taken aboard and taken to the ship's infirmary where they were treated and made comfortable. They were told that they would be turned over to the

Japanese authorities, however, and that after they left the ship their lives could not be guaranteed.

After recuperating for a few days, during which time they ate great amounts of food, Louis and Phil were taken to Kwajalein. The place was known by reputation to American servicemen. It was called "execution island." The men were blindfolded and taken from the ship. They were bound and handled roughly. Louis was thrown onto the floor and heard a door slam and lock. He was in a tiny cell. He called out to Phil, who responded, then he began to sob.



Part IV, Chapters 18-20

Part IV, Chapters 18-20 Summary and Analysis

Part IV begins with Chapter 18, which is called "A Dead Body Breathing." Examining his cell, Louis found carved on the wooden wall the names of ten Marines who had been missing in action. Their fate had been unknown until then. Louis and Phil were given meager food and weak tea to drink. There was a stinking latrine hole at one end of the cell that Louis was forced to stay near so the guards could see him through the small window hole in the door. One day a smiling Japanese man came to Louis' door and started asking him questions in English about his running career. Louis was known on the island and his capture was a popular topic of conversation. Louis asked the man about the men whose names were on the wall and the man replied they had all been executed. All the prisoners brought to Kwajalein were executed, he said. Louis carved his own name on the wall under the names of the Marines.

Phil and Louis were treated badly by most of the camp guards, who threw things at them through the open cell windows and degraded them as much as possible. One guard, named Kawamura, was kinder to Louis, however. He prevented other guards from beating him and taught him some Japanese words.

One day Louis was taken from his cell to a room where several Japanese officers were seated at a table loaded with food. They interrogated him about his plane and the location of US air strips. Louis knew that the Japanese had already captured a B-24 like the one he crashed in, so he described it to them. They asked him about the Norden bombsight, and he claimed to be ignorant of how it worked. They pressed him on the location of air strips and Louis caved in and gave them several locations. He was rewarded with some food and a bottle of soda and taken back to his cell. He had only given them the locations of several fake airstrips that had been set up as decoys, however.

Louis was pulled suddenly from his cell one day and feared he was about to be executed. He was told he and Phil were to be transferred to a POW camp. They boarded a ship for Yokohama.

Chapter 19 is called "Two Hundred Silent Men." The title refers to the captives at the Japanese camp called Ofuna, where Phil and Louis were taken, and where the prisoners were forbidden from talking to one another. When he arrived at Ofuna, Louis was given a bath and had his hair and beard shaved. He was taken into an interrogation room where he was surprised to find Jimmie Sasaki, his friend from USC. Sasaki told Louis that Ofuna was a special interrogation camp for special prisoners, and that he himself was a head interrogator.

The men at Ofuna were treated brutally and fed starvation rations. Prevented from talking to one another, they managed to communicate using hand signals and Morse



code. The camp medical officer was an especially cruel man named Kitamura who the prisoners called "the Quack." Some guards refused to take part in the regular beatings of the prisoners, but they themselves were then beaten for being merciful.

Louis and the other prisoners became aware of what was called the "kill-all" policy of the Japanese military. This was the plan to execute all prisoners if the Allied forces threatened to capture the camp. The men lived every day in fear they might be rounded up and killed.

Hillenbrand provides some examples of this policy having been carried out in some gruesome circumstances.

Chapter 20 is called "Farting for Hirohito." The title refers to the practice of some of the men of passing gas at the moment they are forced to bow to the Japanese emperor Hirohito every morning as part of their prison routine.

At Ohuna, Louis met an officer named William Harris, who led a kind of resistance movement among the prisoners. Harris had hidden away a supply of tools and other banned items that other prisoners brought to him. He had a photographic memory and could copy down maps and the text of articles that he glimpsed from stolen newspapers. Louis began helping Harris and the other prisoners gather items and information. After some time, Phil was taken away from Ohuna, told he was being sent to a comparatively comfortable POW camp. In reality, he was sent to a labor camp. He and Louis said a quick good bye.



Part IV, Chapters 21-23

Part IV, Chapters 21-23 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 21 is called "Belief." The Zamperini family back in California had only been told that Louis was missing at sea, and they continued to hope and believe he was still alive. American forces advanced on Kwajalein and demolished it, and the board with Louis' name was discovered, but it offered no proof of his fate and the information was not shared with Louis' family. Thirteen months after Louis was first declared missing, in June 1944, he was officially declared dead, as was Phil. Their families were notified by telegram. They refused to believe that their sons were actually gone, however.

Chapter 22 is called "Plots Afoot." Louis, Harris and another prisoner named Tinker spent the summer of 1944 plotting to escape from the prison camp and make their way to China, part of which was under Allied control. Harris drew maps and the men determined the route they would take to get to a boat and then cross to China. The Quack discovered Harris' collection of maps and banned items, however, and had him beaten so badly he temporarily lost his memory. Then one day it was announced that Louis and several other men were to be transferred to a regular POW camp called Omori located on the outskirts of Tokyo.

Chapter 23 is called "Monster." Louis arrived at Omori and soon met Mutsuhiro Watanabe, an especially cruel guard. Although Watanabe was only a corporal, he essentially ran the camp. He was brutal to the men, beating them for no reason, or for made up infractions of rules that changed constantly. He was especially brutal with officers, and singled out Louis for particularly harsh treatment.

Watanabe came from a privileged background and was well educated. He would easily fly into a rage and begin beating prisoners horribly, then sometimes return to them and apologize, offering them food and drink.

Hillenbrand describes some of the sadistic treatment that Louis and others suffered under Watanabe. Watanabe's story will be followed after the end of the war.



Part IV, Chapters 24-25

Part IV, Chapters 24-25 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 24 is called "Hunted." Louis adapted to life at Omori prison. Watanabe, he learned from other prisoners, was the most cruel of the guards. So that the men could speak about the guards without using their real names, Watanabe was called "the Bird." The Bird stepped up his attacks on Louis, who dared not strike back for fear of provoking even worse beatings. Inside Louis raged with anger as the Bird punched and beat him.

The enlisted men among the prisoners were taken from the camp every day to work as virtual slaves. The advantage to being able to leave camp was that they often managed to sneak food and other banned items back into camp. These items were shared and traded among the men on a black market.

Chapter 25 is called "B-29." It was October, 1944 and Louis had been in Japan for thirteen months. While sent on an errand into Tokyo to pick up some meat for the prisoners, Louis noticed some graffiti in Japanese that read "B-29." At the time he did not understand what it meant. He found out soon after, when a large plane was spotted by the prisoners flying nearby. One prisoner who had been recently captured told the others it was a new American bomber called the B-29. The men were ecstatic, but their excitement was met with even harsher treatment at the hands of the Bird.

One day Louis was taken from the camp into Tokyo to a radio broadcast station. He was invited to write a message to be read to his family in the United States. The station broadcast Japanese propaganda to the US, and sometimes broadcast messages from prisoners. At this point, Louis' family had no news of his fate, although they believed him to be alive somewhere.

Louis read his message over the radio, greeting his family. He said nothing negative about his captors in his message. In San Francisco, a woman named Lynn Moody was monitoring the broadcast and transcribing what was being said. As it happened, she had gone to USC with Louis and instantly recognized his voice. She hurriedly notified his parents, and word spread quickly through the Zamperini family that Louis was alive.



Part IV, Chapters 26-28

Part IV, Chapters 26-28 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 26 is called "Madness." Louis was invited back to the radio station. Instead of being able to write his own message, however, he was given an anti-American text to read. He refused. He was shown a clean living area and given a good meal and told if he would cooperate he could live there and never return to the prison camp. Louis again refused and the radio men grew angry. They told him he would be sent to a punishment camp. He was returned to Omori. The thought of an even worse prison worried him, but if it meant he could escape the Bird, it would be worth it he felt. He had begun to have terrifying dreams in which the Bird was beating him.

American bombers began flying more frequently over Japan, including near Tokyo where Omori was located. The bombing raids enraged the Bird, who sometimes forced the men to stand in the open instead of finding shelter. Word of the Bird's cruel treatment had found its way to a member of the Japanese royal family, who put pressure on the military to address the situation. The response was to transfer Watanabe to another prison. He was still given complete freedom to mistreat prisoners and was even promoted. The men at Omori, Louis especially, were overjoyed to see him leave.

Chapter 27 is called "Falling Down." Some new prisoners were brought to Omori, including Bill Harris, Louis' friend from the previous camp. Harris was mentally vague and in bad physical shape.

Conditions improved somewhat at Omori after the departure of the Bird. A guard named Kano was humane to the men and soon Red Cross packages were being distributed. Under the Bird's reign, these packages had been kept by the Japanese. Bombing raids increased over Tokyo, and Louis witnessed tremendous air battles with waves of American bombers hitting Tokyo.

Every day Louis expected his transfer to the punishment prison. He had first welcomed it if only to get away from the Bird. With the Bird gone, and some of his friends now at Omori, he wanted to stay. Finally the day came. He was told to gather his things as he was being transferred to a camp at Naoetsu. It was wintertime, and Louis and the other men who were being transferred trudged through the snow the last part of the journey to the camp. Standing in the freezing cold at the camp, Louis was shocked to see a familiar man come out of a shack to inspect the prisoners. It was the Bird.

Chapter 28 is called "Enslaved." Naoetsu was essentially a slave labor camp. The men were marched out every day to back-breaking work breaking rocks or loading barges. The work was dangerous and Louis suffered a bad fall with a heavy load on his back, seriously damaging one of his knees. Unable to work, Louis was put on half rations. Full rations were reserved for those who worked. He began to starve and grow ill. He



begged the Bird for work. As cruel as ever, the Bird gave him work caring for a pig kept at the camp. Louis had to keep his stall clean, but was not allowed any tools. He cleaned the pig sty with his hands.



Part IV, Chapters 29-31

Part IV, Chapters 29-31 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 29 is called "Two Hundred and Twenty Punches," a title that mirrors the earlier chapter title "Five Hundred and Ninety-Four Holes." Like that earlier chapter, it refers to an attack on Louis and other service men.

It was now early May, 1945. B-29 raids on Japan continued, with bombs sometimes falling near where the enslaved prisoners were working. The POWs learned that Germany had fallen. At Naoetsu, the Bird was as brutal as ever, singling out Louis and some other prisoners. He made them stand at the center of the camp, then ordered every prisoner to strike each man in the face. Louis withstood as much as he could before falling unconscious. Each man received some 220 punches.

The Bird split his time between Naoetsu and another camp called Mitsushima, where the prisoners hated him so much they tried to kill him by introducing bacteria from their waste into his food. The Bird did become very ill, but survived.

More prisoners were moved into Naoetsu and the food situation became worse. Among the prisoners, news of the rumored "kill-all" policy circulated. They could see from the increased bombing that Japan was losing the war and feared that they would all be killed before they could be rescued. Different sources seemed to confirm that a date had been set of August 22, 1945, as the day all prisoners of war would be executed.

Chapter 30 is called "The Boiling City." The title refers to Hiroshima, on which the US dropped an atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. Hillenbrand gives an account of the bombing from the viewpoint of the men on the plane that dropped it.

The Bird's brutality continued unchecked at Naoetsu. Louis and some other prisoners hatched a plan to murder him by tying him to a rock and dropping him into the swift river that flowed near the wall of the camp. They readied the rock and some rope and waited for an opportunity.

Chapter 31 is called "The Naked Stampede." A few days after the bombing of Hiroshima, Nagasaki was also bombed. The prisoners had no hard news of what had happened, but they could tell by the behavior of the guards that something big had occurred. It was now August, and the "kill-all" date was approaching. Louis continued to suffer terribly from dysentery.

The prisoners were all called out into formation and told by the camp commander that the war had ended. They were skeptical, thinking it was a trick. They were allowed to leave the camp and go down to the nearby river to bathe, which was unusual. As they were in the river, a bomber plane flew low overhead. Frightened at first, the men soon saw it was an American plane. It was flashing a signal in code, which told them the war really was over. The naked men stampeded back to their camp. Soon planes were

dropping small packages of chocolate and cigarettes, along with a magazine that described the strike on Hiroshima.

Part IV, Chapters 32-33

Part IV, Chapters 32-33 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 32 is called "Cascades of Pink Peaches." American bombers returned often to the camp, dropping huge amounts of food and supplies until the men had all they possibly could eat. The guards became resigned and even fearful of the prisoners, some afraid they would be reported for their actions during the war. Eventually, arrangements were made for the Naoetsu prisoners to be transported by train to Yokohama before being sent home.

Chapter 33 is called "Mother's Day." Louis made his way back to California after a stay in Okinawa where he was hospitalized and regained his weight and health. His injured knee would keep him from competing as a runner, he told reporters. He finally returned to his overjoyed family.



Part V, Chapters 34-35

Part V, Chapters 34-35 Summary and Analysis

Part V begins with Chapter 34, and is called "The Shimmering Girl." Louis returned home, but had difficulty adjusting to normal life again. As a famous runner who survived the Japanese camps, he was in high demand for speaking engagements and public appearances. All the while he was troubled by nightmares in which the Bird appeared, beating him.

While in Florida, Louis met a woman named Cynthia Applewhite, the "shimmering girl" of the chapter title. After a two-week romance, he asked her to marry him and she agreed. Her parents were shocked and asked her to wait, but on a visit to Louis in California the two of them were hurriedly married.

Meanwhile in Japan, Watanabe had been placed on a list of war criminals sought by the Japanese police to be prosecuted. He managed to escape capture after the war. He went to his family and told them he had to disappear but that he would contact them if possible.

Chapter 35 is called "Coming Undone." Louis and Cynthia took a honeymoon in the mountains of California and afterward he tried to start training again as a runner. His knee gave out on him, however, and he decided competing again was impossible. He started smoking again, and drinking more regularly to escape the flashbacks and nightmares of his imprisonment. He became consumed with a single thought. He planned to hunt down the Bird and kill him.

Part V, Chapters 36-38

Part V, Chapters 36-38 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 36 is called "The Body on the Mountain." In Japan, the Japanese police hunted down the people who had been accused of war crimes for prosecution. Many were convicted and sentenced to execution or long prison terms. The Bird went into hiding, working as a farm hand under a false name and eluded the police, who kept a close eye on his family in case he tried to contact them. The bodies of a man and a woman were found on a mountainside, apparently having committed suicide together. The man was identified as Mutsuhiro Watanabe.

Chapter 37 is called "Twisted Ropes." Louis continued to descend into alcoholism. He and Cynthia had a daughter, to whom he was devoted, but his increased nightmares and drinking put a strain on the family. Cynthia left him for a time, then returned.

In Japan, the Bird miraculously appeared, alive, at the restaurant owned by his family. He spoke with his mother. It had not been his body on the mountain. He left again, promising to contact her again if he could.

Chapter 38 is called "A Beckoning Whistle." Cynthia told Louis that she wanted to divorce him. His drinking and behavior were too much to take. Then, after having attended a revival meeting led by the young Billy Graham, Cynthia told Louis she had changed her mind about divorce. She asked him to come to one of Graham's meetings. At first he refused, but finally relented.

At the revival meeting, Louis was profoundly moved. He remembered his promise on the raft to serve God if he survived. He left the meeting feeling renewed. He poured out all his alcohol and threw away his cigarettes. His nightmares stopped.



Part V, Chapter 39 and Epilogue

Part V, Chapter 39 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Chapter 39 is called "Daybreak." Louis had turned his life around. He had become a Christian speaker, making a living from the fees. It was now 1950 and he had returned to Japan to meet some of the guards whom he had known while a prisoner. The guards were themselves now prisoners. He had long given up the idea of killing the Bird, but was surprised not to find him among the guards. He was told that the Bird had killed himself.

Louis did not know how he would feel upon seeing the guards who had once tormented him. When he finally met them, he found he was happy to see them. He greeted them with a smile.

Hillenbrand ends the book with this act of reconciliation, then includes an epilogue. Louis went on to found a camp in California for troubled boys and continued to run, although not as a competitor. He was asked to carry the Olympic torch at several games, including the games at Nagano, in Japan.

Hillenbrand gives accounts of some of the other men Louis had known as a prisoner and how they adjusted after the war. Watanabe eventually came out of hiding after his name was removed from the list of war criminals after several years. He became a successful businessman.



Characters

Louis Zamperini

Louis Zamperini is the main subject of the book. He was born in New York in 1917 to Italian immigrant parents who moved to Torrance, California when Louis was a boy. As a youth, Louis was frequently in trouble for stealing and playing pranks. Upon entering high school it appeared he was in danger of dropping out and drifting into a life of crime. He was encouraged by his older brother, Pete, to join the track team and soon proved to be an outstanding runner, breaking school and state records in the mile. Louis was given a track scholarship to the University of Southern California and competed in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin.

Louis' running career was interrupted by the American entry into World War II. He was trained as a bombardier on a B-25 bomber crew and sent to the Pacific. While on a search mission for another bomber that had disappeared at sea, Louis' plane crashed. He was among three survivors who floated for 46 days on a raft before being captured by a Japanese ship. After his capture he was sent to a series of Japanese prison camps where he was brutally treated and nearly starved to death. He was imprisoned near Tokyo, Japan when the Japanese surrendered to Allied forces, after which he was evacuated and sent home to California.

Back home, Zamperini had trouble adjusting to regular life. He married and had a daughter, but was continually troubled by memories and nightmares from his days in captivity. He became an alcoholic. After a visit to a revival meeting led by Billy Graham, Louis devoted his life to Christianity, which helped him recover from his alcoholism and troubled memories. He was still alive as of the publication of the book, and active as a public speaker.

Mutsuhiro Watanabe

Mutsuhiro Watanabe was a Japanese corporal and prison guard during World War II. He was especially brutal to the prisoners in his charge, particularly with officers. He had a reputation for constantly changing the rules of behavior, then punishing prisoners for not following the new rules he had just made up. He would fly into a rage beating prisoners, then later apologize and ask them to forgive him.

Watanabe was from a privileged family and had been educated at an exclusive school. He spoke French and studied French literature. Despite his low official rank in the military, he essentially ran the prisons where he was stationed, terrorizing them.

Watanabe was given the nickname "the Bird" by Louis and his fellow prisoners so they could speak about him without using his real name. After the war, Watanabe was placed on a list of suspected war criminals and hunted by the Japanese police. He escaped



capture, working for a time as a farm hand under an assumed name. He kept limited contact with his family, because they were being watched by the police.

After the American occupation of Japan ended, Watanabe's name was taken off the list of wanted criminals and he returned to public life. He became a successful businessman. Given the opportunity after many years to meet once again with Louis Zamperini, the man he had treated so brutally, he refused.

Allen Phillips

Allen Phillips was the pilot on Louis Zamperini's bomber crew in the Pacific. He was known familiarly as "Phil." Phillips survived the crash of the Green Hornet along with Zamperini and another crew member, Francis MacNamara, although he received a bad wound to his head. He and Zamperini were taken to the same prison after their capture by Japanese naval forces and then sent together to another prison camp after which they were split up. Phillips survived captivity and returned home to Indiana where he married his fiancée from before the war.

Bill Harris

Bill Harris was a Marine officer and fellow prisoner of Louis Zamperini. Harris was highly intelligent and organized a system for gathering intelligence about the war from stolen newspapers and other sources which he recorded in a book that he kept secret. Harris suffered a brutal attack at the hands of a prison medical officer that seemed to affect his mental abilities. At the end of the war, Harris was selected to attend the formal signing of the papers of surrender by Japan. He returned home after the war but went back into the service to fight in Korea, where he went missing in action.

Pete Zamperini

Pete Zamperini was the older brother of Louis. Pete was a popular young man, successful at school and in sports. When he saw his younger brother endangering his future by getting into trouble, he steered him into competing in track where Louis succeeded. Pete was a faithful supporter of his brother, never giving up hope that he was alive during the years that he was missing.

Louise Zamperini

Louise Zamperini was Louis' devoted mother. An Italian immigrant, she spoke little English at home. Like the rest of her family, she never gave up hope that her son was alive and was overjoyed at his return.



Cynthia Applewhite

Cynthia Applewhite was the charming and beautiful daughter of a wealthy East Coast family. While vacationing in Florida, she met Louis Zamperini and the two embarked on a two-week whirlwind romance after which she agreed to marry him. Their marriage was rocky at first owing to Louis' drinking and troubled behavior. Cynthia threatened to leave him, but after a religious experience she decided instead to stay and try to get him to join her in devoting his life to Christianity.

Jimmie Sasaki

Jimmie Sasaki was a friend of Louis Zamperini at USC. While everyone assumed he was a fellow USC student, in reality he was probably spying for the Japanese. Louis would cross paths with Sasaki again in Japan, where he was a translator for prisoners being interrogated.

Charleton Cuppernell

Cuppernell was the co-pilot on Louis' bomber crew when the plane crashed in the Pacific. He died in the crash.

Sylvia Zamperini

Sylvia Zamperini was Louis' sister. Along with the rest of her family she believed Louis was still alive. She moved in with her parents during part of the war to provide support.

Francis MacNamara

Francis MacNamara was one of the survivors of the crash of the Green Hornet. While isolated on the raft, MacNamara sometimes lost control of his emotions and cried that the three men were bound to die. In a panic one night, he ate their entire supply of emergency chocolate. MacNamara helped the three survive by fighting off sharks and by pumping and bailing water while they repaired their bullet-ridden raft. He died before the men were rescued and his body was buried at sea.



Objects/Places

California

California is the western state where Louis Zamperini grew up and went to college.

The 1936 Olympics

The 1936 Olympic games were held in Berlin, Germany, which was under the leadership of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Louis competed in the 5000 meter race.

Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

A surprise attack was launched by Japanese forces on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in December, 1941. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the US formally entered World War II

Wake Island

Wake Island is a small island in the Pacific that had been captured by the Japanese and used as a military base. Louis and his crew were among the bombers that attacked the island in a devastating raid by US forces.

The Battle of Nauru

Louis' bomber, the Super Man, was badly damaged in air battle called the Battle of Nauru

The Green Hornet

The B-24 bomber assigned to Louis and his bomber crew on a mission to search for another lost bomber was named the Green Hornet. It crashed in the Pacific, killing all but three of the crew members.

Kwajalein Prison

Also called "Execution Island, " Kwajalein Prison was an interrogation camp where Louis and Phil were taken after their capture. They expected they would be executed there but were instead sent to another camp.



Ofuna

The prison camp where Phil and Louis were sent after leaving Kwajalein was named Ofuna.

Omori

Omori was the interrogation camp where Louis was sent after leaving Ofuna, and where the Bird was in charge.

Naoetsu

The final camp where Louis was sent and where he once again encountered the Bird was Naoetsu.

B-24

A common type of bomber used in the Pacific war was the B-24. The plane had a pilot and co-pilot, a bombardier, a turret gunner and two waist gunners. The B-24 had a reputation for being unreliable and difficult to fly.

B-29

A larger bomber than the B-24, the B-29 was introduced during the war and used extensively to bomb Japan.

Themes

Decline and Redemption

The central theme of *Unbroken* is stated in the subtitle, "A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption." Louis Zamperini was saved from an undesirable fate several times in his life, as the author documents. As a boy he was rebellious and often in trouble. He was in danger of being expelled from school and descending into a criminal life when his brother and mother stepped in and encouraged him to enter athletics, putting him on a path to compete as an Olympian.

Louis' career as a bombardier in the Pacific was a dangerous one, and he narrowly escaped death at the battle over the island of Nauru, then survived the bombing raid on his base shortly afterward. He seemed to be very lucky, and his luck held when he was among the only three survivors of a plane crash in the Pacific who floated for 46 days with little food or water. The experience was one of amazing survival and resilience, but his situation did not improve greatly after his rescue by Japanese forces. For two and a half years he endured daily physical abuse and appalling conditions in Japanese prison camps until his mind was consumed with nightmarish images of brutality and his thoughts turned to murder and revenge.

It was not until after Louis returned home that he hit bottom, however. He became an alcoholic and faced losing his wife and young daughter over his increasing drunkenness and erratic behavior. It was at this point Louis was once again redeemed through a religious experience during a revival meeting with Billy Graham, the charismatic preacher. According to Louis, after embracing religion he stopped drinking and smoking and was no longer troubled by flashbacks and nightmares from his war experience. The book ends on a note of forgiveness as Louis returns to Japan and is overjoyed to see once again the guards who once mistreated him.

Faith

Hillenbrand investigates the subject of faith in several ways. Louis is not especially religious in his upbringing or his life before the end of the war. While adrift at sea, however, he has what he considers to be some miraculous experiences. He hears singing from the skies, for example. When he has reached the lowest point in his endurance of the starving conditions on the raft, he makes a promise to God that he will serve heaven if he is allowed to survive. He also begins to pray, and recalls that three times he prayed for rain to provide drinking water, and three times it rained shortly afterward.

Louis' years in prison camps seem to have shaken his faith somewhat since he had been exposed to horrifying conditions and daily beatings. After the war, his decline



continues until he rediscovers the faith he had found while on the raft and returns to religion for comfort.

In addition to Louis' religious faith, Hillenbrand documents the faith that his family had in him. Unwilling to allow him to continue his downward path as a young man, Louis' brother supported him and encouraged him to enter athletics, where he excelled. When Louis was reported missing at sea and later officially pronounced dead, his family did not give up their faith in his ability to survive. They somehow knew he was still alive and even made plans to search for him after the war. They continued to support him as he struggled to adjust after his war experiences.

Brutality of War

Unbroken focuses on the story of Louis Zamperini and his particular experiences, but it paints an overall picture of the sometimes brutal and dehumanizing aspects of war. These are most evident in the descriptions of the treatment of prisoners by the Japanese. Louis Zamperini was beaten practically daily and sometimes tortured. Despite international agreements forbidding it, he and other prisoners were forced into slave labor. They were not allowed to send or receive letters from home. Many suffered from hygiene-related illnesses such as dysentery. Zamperini and others were subjects in medical experiments.

The Japanese also had a policy of killing prisoners as enemy forces advanced rather than evacuating them. Hillenbrand documents several instances where this was known to have happened, and the expectation of mass execution hung over Louis and the other prisoners constantly.

This brutality was personified in the figure of Watanabe, the "Bird," an especially cruel guard who was accused of war crimes after the Japanese surrender. As Hillenbrand explains, the Japanese police under the American occupation were tireless in tracking down the people on the list of suspected war criminals and the Japanese courts sentenced those convicted with long prison terms or even death. Watanabe escaped capture during this period and, after the American occupation ended, the hunt for war criminals was relaxed and several of those imprisoned had their sentences reduced. This was seen by many as official forgiveness by the Japanese people for the brutal acts these men committed. Hillenbrand also suggests that it was a necessary step for the nation of Japan to cope with their past and move forward. Watanabe became a successful businessman in Japan. He never fully took responsibility for his actions, claiming that in wartime men are often driven to extremes.

Style

Perspective

Unbroken is a non-fiction biographical account of Louis Zamperini's experiences before, during and after World War II. It is told mostly from his perspective, relying extensively on interviews conducted by the author with Zamperini. Related events for which Zamperini was not present have been filled out by interviews with family members of Zamperini and other people who went through similar things.

Zamperini was an American soldier and an enemy of the Japanese. The author takes care to provide an objective perspective on the behavior of Zamperini as well as the Japanese prison guards with whom he interacted. She verifies his claims with other witnesses and the historical record where available, and sometimes documents similar actions at other places reported by other prisoners. Hillenbrand is also careful to include Zamperini's descriptions of the Japanese prison guards who treated the prisoners humanely and tried to reduce their suffering. The overall perspective is balanced.

As an historical biography, the perspective of Unbroken is also one of someone who has lived through great hardship but has come to terms with it afterward. Zamperini's endurance and redemption through his own religious conversion is a main theme of the book, and the perspective is of a person who has been able to cope with the misfortune in his life and even forgive people who treated him horrifically.

Tone

Unbroken is a biographical work of non-fiction that describes Louis Zamperini, its main subject, in a series of dangerous and dehumanizing situations. In the first pages of the preface, which describe Zamperini and his fellow plane crash survivors attacked from above by Japanese bullets while floating on a raft surrounded by sharks, the author introduces a suspenseful tone to the book and introduces questions in the reader's mind about how Zamperini got into that situation and how he survived it.

That he survived is understood from the title of the book, which has the subtitle "A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption." This sets the overall tone of the book, which is one of sympathy and admiration for its main subject as he moves from one dangerous situation to another, enduring and surviving each of them. The descriptions of the dehumanizing treatment that Zamperini suffers are dark and sometimes horrific in tone, but Hillenbrand tempers this with descriptions of Japanese guards who tried to help prisoners and treated them kindly. She also intersperses within

the narrative accounts of Louis' family in California who never give up hope that he is alive despite getting no word of his fate for over two years.

Structure

"Unbroken" is divided into five parts, each covering a different period in the life of Louis Zamperini. Part I covers Zamperini's troubled boyhood and his career as a promising young collegiate and Olympic athlete, until his career is interrupted by the entry of the US into World War II. Part II describes Zamperini's military career prior to the crash of his B-24 bomber in the Pacific. Part III chronicles Zamperini's amazing feat of endurance surviving on a raft in the Pacific for 46 days. Part IV is the largest single section of the book and describes Zamperini's two and a half years in a series of Japanese interrogation and prison camps after his rescue at sea by the Japanese. This section of the book concludes as Zamperini is rescued from Japan after Japan's surrender to American forces. In Part V, Zamperini returns home to California to find difficulty adjusting to normal life. This part of the book describes how he overcomes these difficulties through a devotion to religion.

Within each section are several chapters, each with a name taken from an event described within the chapter. In addition, the author includes a preface, which briefly describes the most dramatic episode in the book when Zamperini and his fellow survivors are starving on a raft in the Pacific with dangerous sharks surrounding them and a Japanese bomber firing machine guns at them from above. In an Epilogue, the author traces the post-war lives of Zamperini and some of the other men with whom he served.



Quotes

"All he could see, in every direction, was water." Preface, p. xvii

"When the school track season began in February, Louie set out to see what training had done for him. His transformation was stunning." Chapter 2, p. 17

"Louie and his father rode together to the train station. The platform was crowded with uniformed young men and crying parents, clinging to one another, saying good-bye. When Louie embraced his father, he could feel him shaking." Chapter 6, p. 54

"Before Louie had left the States, he'd been issued an olive-drab Bible. He tried reading it to cope with his anxiety, but it made no sense to him, and he abandoned it." Chapter 8, p. 89

"it was absolutely dark and absolutely silent, save for the chattering of Phil's teeth. The ocean was a flat calm. A rough, rasping tremor ran through the men. The sharks were rubbing their backs along the raft bottoms." Chapter 12, p. 129

"Slowly, his thoughts quieted and his eyes settled. He was in a wooden cell, about the length of a man and not much wider than his shoulders." Chapter 17, p. 174.

"Louie began to come apart. At night, the Bird stalked his dreams, screeching, seething, his belt buckle flying at Louie's skull. In the dreams, the smothered rage in Louie would overwhelm him, and he'd find himself on top of his monster, his hands on the corporal's neck, strangling the life from him." Chapter 26, p. 265

"No one in Naoetsu was sleeping. B-29s crossed over every night, and the air-raid sirens wailed for hours on end, competing with the roar of the planes. the sound of them, and the sight of endless flocks of planes soaring unopposed over Japan, sent the Bird ever deeper into madness." Chapter 30, p. 294

"As bad as were the physical consequences of captivity, the emotional injuries were much more insidious, widespread, and enduring. in the first six postwar years, one of the most common diagnoses given to hospitalized former Pacific POWs was psychoneurosis." Chapter 35, p. 346

"In the morning, he woke feeling cleansed. For the first time in five years, the Bird hadn't come into his dreams. The Bird would never come again." Chapter 38, p. 376

"Louie was seized by a childlike, giddy exuberance. Before he realized what he was doing, he was bounding down the aisle. In bewilderment, the men who had abused him watched him come to them, his hands extended, a radiant smile on his face." Chapter 39, p. 380

"'There were two people inside me,' he continued. 'One that followed military orders, and the other that was more human. At times I felt I had a good heart, but Japan at that



time had a bad heart. In normal times I would never have done such things." Epilogue,
p. 393



Topics for Discussion

The subtitle of *Unbroken* calls it a story in part of "redemption." how does Louis find redemption? From what is he redeemed?

How does Watanabe account for his behavior during the war? Can he be excused for his actions?

How does the author try to balance her descriptions of the horrors of the Japanese prison camps? Is there anything positive that can be said about the experiences there?

Hillenbrand connects Louis' experience to similar ones by other prisoners of war. Is his story special? Why or why not?

How does Louis' attitude toward religion change as described by the author. What makes it change?

What is the impact of Louis disappearance on his family? How are other families affected?

Discuss the theme of forgiveness in *Unbroken*. How does Louis find he is able to forgive his captors? Should he?