



Westminster Christian Academy

12th Grade Summer Reading

Advanced Expository Writing

[Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption](#)

by Laura Hillenbrand

ISBN-13: 978-0812974492

CANNOT BE THE ADAPTED FOR YOUNG ADULTS VERSION: 978-0-385-74252-8

From the book jacket:

“In boyhood, Louis Zamperini was an incorrigible delinquent. As a teenager, he channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that carried him to the Berlin Olympics. But when World War II began, the athlete became an airman, embarking on a journey that led to a doomed flight on a May afternoon in 1943. When his Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean, against all odds, Zamperini survived, adrift on a floundering life raft. Ahead of 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.”

Hillenbrand’s narrative has been made into a major motion picture. You are more than welcome to watch the film after you finish reading the book, but know that the film will do little to replace the content of the narrative, which is rich in historical detail and goes far beyond the time limits of the film. The film probably captures less than 20% of the book and leaves out some of the most important elements, so do not be tempted to skip the reading. It is worth your time—and you will need a strong understanding of the text for the first unit and writing assignment. We strongly encourage students to listen to the book as you read, as a gifted narrator can really enhance a reader’s understanding and enjoyment of this remarkable story.

Your Reading Journal

In order to better comprehend the narrative and engage with the story, you should annotate as you read and are required to keep a reading journal. In this typed journal, you will capture your thoughts about *Unbroken* as you progress through the book. You will choose one of the following reading prompts and respond thoughtfully after reading each of the five sections in the book. Your journal entries should reflect authentic and genuine reflections on the characters and story *as it unfolds*—please don’t attempt to write all of your journals in one sitting.

This will be the first graded assignment in your Advanced Expository Writing class and will be an aid to you in your first socratic seminar of the year.

Instructions

- There are five parts to the book. You will complete one journal entry for each section and also annotate the text as you read.
- Date each response. Title the entry by the appropriate section of the book.
- Type and double space the entire entry in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font with 1 inch margins.
- Copy and paste the prompt/question you choose at the beginning of each prompt response.
- Fully develop your response with specific examples from the text in the form of summary and paraphrasing. Respond with your own original thinking and analysis of the passages you select.
- Cite the page number in parentheses after each summary/paraphrase or direct quote. (Note that whether you include page citations is a key aspect of the grading rubric below.)
- You may write in the first person since this is meant to be a journal for you to record your thoughts.
- Please check mechanics.

Journal Grading Rubric

| Exceptional (A) | Strong (B) | Satisfactory (C) | Superficial (D) | Unsatisfactory (F) |
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| Responses are richly developed with personal reflection and multiple specific examples from the text. Responses display close and careful reading of the text. Accurate citation included. | Responses are developed with some specific references or details from the text. Some personal connections or reflections are made. Accurate citation included. | Responses are partially developed with some ideas not fully explained or supported with examples from the text. Some accurate citation included. | Responses are very general and lack specific examples from the text. Responses are underdeveloped. | Responses show little to no evidence of actual reading OR Responses are significantly underdeveloped. |

Annotation:

As we discuss this book in class, we'll consider what it means to be a *person of character*, what develops *character*, and by what standard one's character can be measured.

1. As you read, please look for quotations/sections of the text that illustrate Louis Zamperini's character, lack of character, or growth of character. Be prepared to discuss with your classmates how the quotations/passages you have identified relate to the concept of character/character development.
2. Annotate the text for quotations/passages that you find especially compelling, enlightening, puzzling, shocking, or otherwise worthy of class discussion. Especially if you read *Unbroken* early in the summer, you may want to add a post-it note/margin note to remind you why you annotated a particular passage.

Journal Prompts: (Choose one prompt for each of the five sections)

1. How are characters developing as the story progresses? How do you personally feel about these characters? With which characters do you relate and why? Does the fact that this text is nonfiction change your reaction/response to various characters and their choices? Please be specific and reflective in your response to show your careful reading and reflection.
2. Describe the major conflicts in this section of the story and analyze how the main character(s) overcome them. Consider man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. self, man vs. God, etc. What, in your assessment, is allowing the main character(s) to endure and persevere?
3. Every reader has a right to an opinion on the author's writing style. What do you appreciate about the way this book is written? What techniques does the author frequently employ and what effect do they have on the narrative? What aspects of the writing style make the story difficult to understand or less interesting to you? If you are listening to an audio copy of the book, how has listening affected your understanding or enjoyment of the story? Please explain your reactions/impressions with specific examples.
4. What, in your opinion, is the overall theme or message of the story (or what overall theme/message do you see developing)? Choose one scene or more scenes from this section and explain how this scene/scenes directly point to the overall theme/message and why. (Don't forget to cite page numbers!)
5. End of book prompt choice: In what ways did the story challenge the way you think about your own life? What on earth does this great story of perseverance, loyalty, and suffering have to do with being a typical American teenager in 2026?
6. Create your own prompt. (Please choose this option for only one section of the book - and make sure the prompt is an interesting one that allows you to express your thoughts about and observations of the story.)