



8th Grade Summer Reading

Directions: Please read the provided Novel over your summer break. Refer to the questions attached, as they will help you comprehend the text. This will help you stay engaged over the summer and prepare for reading novels as the academic school year progresses.

UNBROKEN by Laura Hillenbrand

1. Louie’s experiences are singular: None of us is going to be in a plane crash, strafed by a bomber, attacked by sharks, cast away on a raft, or held as a POW. And yet the word most often used to describe him is “inspiring.” What does Louie’s experience demonstrate that makes him so inspirational to people who will never endure what he did? What are the lessons that his life offers to all of us?
2. Is Louie a hero? How do you define heroism?
3. In Louie’s boyhood, he was severely bullied, then became a delinquent and hellraiser. In these experiences, did he already display attributes that would help him survive his wartime ordeal? Did he also show weaknesses or tendencies that foreshadowed the struggles he would face postwar?
4. Did Louie’s athletic career help prepare him for what he would face in war?

5. Louie was especially close to his brother Pete, who devoted himself to him. If Pete hadn't been there, what would have become of Louie? Does Pete deserve credit for shaping Louie into a man who could endure and survive his Odyssean ordeal?

6. 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?

7. What are your feelings about Mac? Do you feel sympathy for him? Anger? If you endured the trauma of a plane crash, and were placed in a situation that you knew very few men survived, might you have reacted as he did? In the end, did he redeem himself?

8. When Louie, Phil and Mac were on the raft, a key factor in their survival was optimism. All three men were young and able-bodied, veterans of the same training, experiencing the same hardships and traumas, yet Louie and Phil remained optimistic while Mac was hopeless, seemingly doomed by his pessimism. Why are some people hopeful, and others not? How important is attitude and mindset in determining one's ability to overcome hardship?