

HIGH SCHOOL | BLUE VALLEY DISTRICT NOVEL RATIONALE

## ***Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand**

### **English Language Arts, 11th Grade**

#### WHAT'S THE STORY?

On a May afternoon in 1943, an Army Air Forces bomber crashed into the Pacific Ocean and disappeared, leaving only a spray of debris and a slick of oil, gasoline, and blood. Then, on the ocean surface, a face appeared. It was that of a young lieutenant, the plane's bombardier, who was struggling to a life raft and pulling himself aboard. So began one of the most extraordinary odysseys of the Second World War.

The lieutenant's name was Louis Zamperini.

In boyhood, he'd been a cunning and incorrigible delinquent, breaking into houses, brawling, and fleeing his home to ride the rails. As a teenager, he had channeled his defiance into running, discovering a prodigious talent that had carried him to the Berlin Olympics and within sight of the four-minute mile. But when war had come, the athlete had become an airman, embarking on a journey that led to his doomed flight, a tiny raft, and a drift into the unknown.

Ahead of Zamperini lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and 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.

In her long-awaited new book, Laura Hillenbrand writes with the same rich and vivid narrative voice she displayed in *Seabiscuit*. Telling an unforgettable story of a man's journey into extremity, *Unbroken* is a testament to the resilience of the human mind, body, and spirit.

#### CONNECTIONS TO CURRICULUM\*

*The following are some, but not all, of the connections to curriculum for this novel.*

- **Unit 1: Language and Perspective**
  - Essential Questions: “How do texts reflect society both historically and linguistically?” and “How can crafting your story reflect personal identity?”
- **Unit 2: Complex Issues**
  - Essential Questions: “How does written language challenge and change an individual’s mind? What role does the writer play in challenging and changing an individual’s mind?”
- **Unit 3: Universal Human Experience**
  - Essential Questions: “How does sustained inquiry of the past inform and motivate change?” and “How do we prepare for an

uncertain future?”

- **Unit 4: Personal Responsibility**

- Essential Questions: “How can we challenge and develop our perspective on a real world issue?” and “How can I use my voice to create an impactful contribution?”

## KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. RL.11.1
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.11.2
- Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama. RL.11.3
- Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. RL.11.5
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading. RL.11.10
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. RL.11.11
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. RI.11.12
- Read and comprehend grade-level appropriate nonfiction literature. RI.11.13
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. RL.11.4
- Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text. RI.11.2
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading. RI.11.10