

AP Seminar Summer Assignment: The Outliers

Your summer reading assignment has five components:

1. Reading/annotating the text
2. Application of Diction
3. Argumentative Essay
4. Socratic Discussion
5. Test

You will be reading the nonfiction text, *The Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell

(Available at local booksellers (i.e. Barnes and Noble, Amazon), as well as the public and school libraries.)

****What is an outlier?:**

Outlier is a scientific term to describe things or phenomena that lie outside normal experience. In the summer, in Paris, we expect most days to be somewhere between warm and very hot. But imagine if you had a day in the middle of August where the temperature fell below freezing. That day would be outlier. And while we have a very good understanding of why summer days in Paris are warm or hot, we know a good deal less about why a summer day in Paris might be freezing cold. In this book I'm interested in people who are outliers--in men and women who, for one reason or another, are so accomplished and so extraordinary and so outside of ordinary experience that they are as puzzling to the rest of us as a cold day in August.

-Malcolm Gladwell

****Here is a brief review found on Amazon.com:**

...Malcolm Gladwell poses a... provocative question in *Outliers*: why do some people succeed, living remarkably productive and impactful lives, while so many more never reach their potential? Challenging our cherished belief of the "self-made man," he makes the democratic assertion that superstars don't arise out of nowhere, propelled by genius and talent: "They are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot." Examining the lives of outliers from Mozart to Bill Gates, he builds a convincing case for how successful people rise on a tide of advantages, "some deserved, some not, some earned, some just plain lucky."

-Mari Malcolm

The assignment:

Do a close reading of the text. A close reading means to keep a pencil or pen in your hand as you read and make notes in the margins, underline confusing and/or favorite passages, highlight interesting information, and comment on significant language. You will receive a grade for annotating every chapter. Use Post-It notes if you'd prefer not to write in the book (especially if it's a library book!) Thorough annotations are expected, and they will be checked the second day of class!! Annotations can be written in the book, on Post-It Notes stuck on pages, or on separate paper labeled with page numbers that correspond to the book.

- 1. As you read, concentrate on Gladwell's unique definition of success. Notice how he uniquely defines and presents this abstract concept through his creative chapter titles, research, personal stories, and observations. You'll be surprised about how much you will learn from this original perspective on success.**
- 2. Use the attached questions to guide you through the entire novel, and be prepared to discuss each question in a Socratic forum before being tested on the text. You will need to come to the seminar on the second day of class with your answers typed out for the questions for discussion.**

Your responses must be original, meaning in your own words. They will be scanned into turnitin.com, a plagiarism checker.

3. Top 20 Vocabulary Words (This will be due the second day of class.)--Select twenty examples of interesting diction from the text. For each word:
 - a. Write the sentence, complete with page number citation.
 - b. Define the word. Some words have multiple definitions. Be sure to write down the definition that applies to the sentence that you have selected.
 - c. Analyze the use of this word in the context of the text. Why was that specific word chosen over its near synonyms? What effect does that word choice have?
 - d. Use this word in your own sentence.
4. **Write an argumentative essay (5-paragraph structure with introduction, body and conclusion; roughly 2-2 ½ pages, 12 pt, Times New Roman, double spaced). Your essay will be used to assess your writing and ability to synthesize reading material. This will be due the second day of class.**
 - a. **Write an essay that defends or challenges or qualifies Gladwell's assertion that "if you work hard enough and assert yourself, and use your mind and imagination, you can shape the world to your desires" (Gladwell 151).**
 - i. Present your ideas clearly and with organization following APA format. (See purdueowl.com for APA guidelines)
 - ii. Use facts, examples, personal experience, and connections from your reading to support your claim (do you or don't you agree with Gladwell's assertion?). I am challenging you to think deeply about your readings and apply them to a bigger and personal idea.
 - iii. Be sure to make specific connections to Gladwell and any other sources you may include in your argument.
5. **You will take a test over the text on the 3rd or 4th day of class, depending on the progress of the Socratic Seminar discussion. Details about the test will be posted on Mrs. Fusses' AP Seminar website on the first day of school.**

If you ever have any questions, concerns or ideas with the reading/assignment, please e-mail fussl@pcsb.org.

Have a good summer!
Lisa Fuss M.Ed.

****Ongoing reference and instruction will be tied to this text throughout the course.****

****Introduction "The Roseto Mystery":**

GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

1. What is the Roseto Mystery? What overarching idea is Gladwell establishing in his introduction?

****Chapter One "The Matthew Effect":**

2. Explain the author's viewpoint regarding "The Story of Success". Are personal qualities the sole reason one becomes an outlier?
3. What is the consequence of "prematurely writing people off as failures"?

****Chapter Two "The 10,000-Hour Rule":**

4. Explain the 10,000-Hour Rule.
5. Consider the following: "Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good." Explain how this philosophy was at work for Bill Joy, The Beatles, and Bill Gates.

****Chapter Three "The Trouble with Geniuses, Part 1":**

6. Describe the difference between 'divergence testing' and 'convergence testing'. Is one more significant than the other?

7. Gladwell states that communities and companies in American society "are convinced that those at the very top of the IQ scale have the greatest potential." After reading the chapter, explain why you either agree or disagree with this statement.

****Chapter Four "The Trouble with Geniuses, Part 2":**

8. Compare and contrast Langan and Oppenheimer.

9. What is the difference between "concerted cultivation" and "accomplishment of natural growth"?

****Chapter Five "The Three Lessons of Joe Flom":**

10. Explain Gladwell's statement as it relates to Joe Flom: "Buried in that setback was a golden opportunity."

11. Consider the following quote: "Hard work is a prison sentence only if it does not have meaning." Explain how this quote relates to the chapter.

****Chapter Six "Harlan, Kentucky":**

12. Describe the "culture of honor" that exists in the Appalachian Mountains.

13. What are the "cultural legacies" as described in this chapter? Why are they significant to understand when dealing with people?

****Chapter Seven "The Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes":**

13. Describe the significance of the "willingness to change" as it relates to Korean Air.

14. What is Gladwell explaining about the importance of communication?

****Chapter Eight "Rice Paddies and Math Tests":**

15. After reading this section of the book, have your opinions changed about math classes and math ability? Explain why or why not.

16. Describe the connection between the "10,000-Hour Rule" and the wet-rice farmers in Asia.

****Chapter Nine "Marita's Bargain":**

17. Describe the significance of summer vacation as it relates to different groups of students. Why is this significant?

18. Gladwell states "success follows a predictable course." How does this quote apply to Marita? How does this apply to you?

****Epilogue "A Jamaican Story":**

19. What does Gladwell mean when he states, "The outlier in the end is not an outlier at all."

20. Explain what Gladwell means when he states, "That is the story of my mother's path to success - and it isn't true."