

AP Language and Composition
Summer Reading Assignment
School Year: 2024-2025

Students enrolled in AP Language and Composition must read Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* and complete the Podcast assignment explained below. Students may purchase their own copy of this text or sign out a copy from the English department (see your English teacher or Mrs. Lewis).

Part I: Summer Reading

About the book... 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 an 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

Your Task:

1. Do a close reading of the text. A close reading means to keep a pen or pencil 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. Use sticky notes if you are borrowing a text.
2. As you read, concentrate on Gladwell's 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 interpretation or "take" on success.

3. Use the attached questions to guide you through the entire work, and be prepared to discuss each question in a Socratic forum in the first week of class.
4. You will be uploading these notes to an assignment box in Schoology on the first day of class. You will also complete an in-class essay during the first week of class.

Guided Reading Questions for *Outliers*

You can type or handwrite your responses. Feel free to make a copy of the [Guided Reading Questions](#) document and then type your responses. You will submit your completed reading guide (the digital copy or pictures of your handwritten notes) on the first day of class.

Introduction: “The Roseto Mystery”

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

Chapter One: “The Matthew Effect”

- Explain the author’s viewpoint regarding “The Story of Success.” Are personal qualities the sole reason one becomes an outlier?
- What is the consequence of “prematurely writing people off as failures”?

Chapter Two: “The 10,000-Hour Rule”

- Explain the 10,000-Hour Rule
- 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”

- Describe the difference between ‘divergence testing’ and ‘convergence testing.’ Is one more significant than the other?
- 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”

- Compare and contrast Langan and Oppenheimer.
- What is the difference between “concerted cultivation” and “accomplishment of natural growth”?

Chapter Five: “The Three Lessons of Joe Flom”

- Explain Gladwell’s statement as it relates to Joe Flom: “Buried in that setback was a golden opportunity.”
- 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”

- Describe the “culture of honor” that exists in the Appalachian Mountains.

- 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”

- Describe the significance of the “willingness to change” as it relates to Korean Air.
- What is Gladwell explaining about the importance of communication?

Chapter Eight: “Rice Paddies and Math Tests”

- After reading this section of the book, have your opinions changed about math classes and math ability? Explain why or why not.
- Describe the connection between the “10,000-Hour Rule” and the wet-rice farmers in Asia.

Chapter Nine: “Marita’s Bargain”

- Describe the significance of summer vacation as it relates to different groups of students. Why is this significant?
- Gladwell states “success follows a predictable course.” How does this quote apply to Marita? How does this apply to you?

Epilogue: “A Jamaican Story”

- What does Gladwell mean when he states “The outlier in the end is not an outlier at all.”
- Explain what Gladwell means when he states, “That is the story of my mother’s path to success--and it isn’t true.”

Part II: Podcast Assignment

STEP 1: Choose one of the podcasts from this list of [Interesting Podcasts to Expand Your Knowledge](#), and listen to at least 6-10 episodes over the course of the summer. (You MAY listen to more than one podcast this summer, but your written responses should all be for the same one.) *Tip: Google a few different podcasts from the list to learn about them and to find one that you’d like.* Yes, we realize you might already be enjoying a podcast or can ‘find’ others of merit, but stick to the plethora of choices we have provided, please.

OPTIONAL: Reading Notes are not required, (RESPONSES are...keep reading) but you will have to recall details from some episodes in your responses. Reading Notes may also help students who struggle to retain information while listening.

STEP 2: Choose **SIX episodes of a single podcast** on which to write a response. (You will write a total of SIX responses.) Please note that the episode title should be in quotation marks and the podcast title should be italicized if you are typing. Be sure to follow these guidelines in your responses. For example: Episode 267 of the podcast *Song Exploder* is “Green Day.”

STEP 3: Each response must be **at least 250 words** (about half a page of writing) and should include personal response, analysis, and questions that emerged from the episode. Do not merely summarize. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What do I know/understand now that I did not before?
- How did this episode change the way I think about something?
- What is a thought, idea, or perspective that I might not have considered if I had not encountered this episode?

STEP 4: Include an [MLA citation](#) for each podcast episode. Do NOT just copy and paste the URL.

You will have two graded assignments based on this podcast: the SIX written responses, due the first day of class, and a slides project, which will be done during the first week of class.

Required materials due the first day of class:

- Your completed Reading Guide responses for *Outliers*.
- Your SIX responses (250 words each) to the podcast episodes.

NOTE: These responses may be hand-written notes, printouts of what you have typed, or a Word or Google Doc to submit to the assignment box upon your return to school. Anything you type should be in 12-point Times New Roman black font, double-spaced.

If you have any questions, please email Mrs. Evans or Mrs. Lewis:

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