

**AP Language and Composition**  
**Summer Reading Assignment**  
**School Year: 2023-2024**

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.

## Guided Reading Questions for *Outliers*

You can type or handwrite 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**

This summer’s assignment will also include listening to a podcast.

1. Choose a podcast from the list of options and listen to one season (minimum 10 episodes).
2. Keep a reading journal as you listen to the podcast, following the options and instructions for journaling.
3. Submit your journal and complete a project during the first week of class.
4. Keep listening! You can listen to as many of the podcasts as you’d like from the list below.

**Scoring:**

Your summer reading grade will be the first you receive for next school year, so do your best work! You will receive two grades for this podcast assignment: the journal notes and the project. **You will complete a project with your notes during the first week of class.**

	M (Missing/Incomplete)	B (Complete)	A (Excellent)	A+ (Mastery)
Journal	No journal notes were submitted --OR-- The submitted notes do not yet indicate thorough understanding of the entire podcast.	The submitted journal notes indicate complete understanding of the entire podcast, and may also consider some of the podcast discussion questions.	The submitted notes indicate thorough understanding of the entire podcast, and consideration of most of the podcast discussion questions.	The submitted notes indicate thorough understanding of the entire podcast, and complete engagement with all of the podcast discussion questions.

## **Step 1: Choose a Podcast**

Choose a podcast from the list below. Most are available free on Spotify, iTunes, or the podcast's website. Listen to **1 complete season or 10 episodes** if it isn't divided by season. *Tip: Google a few different podcasts to learn about them and to find one that you'd like.*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Podcast Title</b>
<b>History</b>	Revisionist History Stuff You Missed In History Class The History Chicks The History of Rome
<b>Crime/Law</b>	Breakdown Ear Hustle Serial The Grift True Crime Daily
<b>Economy</b>	50 Things That Made The Modern Economy Freakonomics How I Built This Planet Money
<b>Identity</b>	CodeSwitch Other: Mixed Race in America What Would a Feminist Do?
<b>Arts</b>	Dissect Fresh Air Pop Culture Happy Hour Song Exploder
<b>Politics</b>	Intelligence Squared Pod Save America The Run Up
<b>Science</b>	Flash Forward Sawbones The Hidden Brain The Sustainable Futures Report
<b>Education</b>	Getting In Talks With Teachers
<b>Philosophy</b>	History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps Philosophize This!

Food	Gastropod The Dinner Party Download
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## **Step 2: Podcast Discussion Questions**

You will need to select ten of the questions from the list below. Respond to one of these ten questions for each of the 10 episodes (you can only use a question one time). Your response for each question/podcast should be written in paragraph form, consisting of 6-8 sentences, citing specific evidence from the episode to fully answer the question.

1. What about this episode caught your attention? What about the summary, reviews, cover, or background made you want to listen to it? Did the episode live up to the expectations created by these?
2. What is the narrator trying to accomplish with this episode? How well does the narrator do this?
3. How is the episode structured? Flashbacks? Linear? Does it jump around? How does that support what the narrators are trying to accomplish? Does it distract you from the episode or does it make the episode more interesting? Why?
4. What's a significant scene/moment in the episode that emotionally moved you, shocked you, surprised you, amazed you, or had some significant effect upon you? What happened? What was the effect?
5. If you could speak to the narrators and researchers, what changes would you suggest they make? What could be improved? How?
6. Was there a character or individual with which you felt a strong connection? Why? What about this character or individual caused this connection?
7. Was there a character or individual that disappointed you or angered you? What about this character or individual caused this reaction?
8. Would you encourage your high school peers to listen to this episode? Should this historical event/person be taught in high school classes? Why? Why not?
9. What line, scene, event, or person in this episode could be seen as inspirational for people? Why and how?
10. What did you learn from this episode? How does that knowledge potentially shape how you see yourself, your community, your world, etc.?
11. Would this event or person make a good movie or television series (some of these topics already are)? Why or why not?
12. How would you convince people to listen to this particular episode? What would you say or reveal to promote their listening to this episode?
13. What from the narrators' styles of writing or rhetorical choices could you use in your own writing? How?
14. What lines from the episode had beautiful language and/or imagery that stood out to you? Why were these lines so powerful?
15. Was there something in the narrator's style that annoyed you? A phrase that was overused? A way of talking about others that bothered you? The way they structured the argument? The examples used? The attitude or tone? Provide and discuss examples. Also, explain why it bothered you.
16. What ideas, personalities, events, issues are juxtaposed with each other? To what effect?
17. What role does irony or satire play in this episode? How? To what effect? 18. Did the narrator or topic change your mind? How so? Why not?
18. How did the narrator get you to sympathize with someone?
19. To what extent is the narrator biased on the issue being addressed? What evidence is there to support your opinion?

Episode 1: (title)	Question #: __ (type response here...)
Episode 2:	Question #: __
Episode 3:	Question #: __
Episode 4:	Question #: __
Episode 5:	Question #: __
Episode 6:	Question #: __
Episode 7:	Question #: __
Episode 8:	Question #: __
Episode 9:	Question #: __
Episode 10:	Question #: __

**Required materials due the first day of class:**

- Your completed reading guide responses for *Outliers*.
- Your rich responses to the podcast discussion questions.

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.

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

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[lauren\\_lewis@hempfieldsd.org](mailto:lauren_lewis@hempfieldsd.org)