

Senior Writing – Summer Reading Guide

Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell

In *Outliers* Malcolm Gladwell asks his readers to reconsider why certain people or groups of people succeed. He questions the general assumption that talent plus hard work equals success. Using far-ranging examples - such as junior hockey players, the Beatles, Bill Gates and Korean airline pilots – Gladwell makes a compelling argument for the importance of opportunity and cultural heritage as determining factors in one's success.

As you read, consider the following questions. You may want to note answers either in the text or on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What does Gladwell mean by “outlier”?
2. What is “the Matthew effect”? According to Gladwell, what impact does it have on who succeeds in junior hockey?
3. According to Gladwell, what factors contributed to the success of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs?
4. Why was it important that Joe Flom was Jewish?
5. What conditions are typically present for a blood feud?
6. It's the 1980's. Would you rather fly British Airways or Korean Air? Why?
7. Explain how KIPP schools take cultural legacies seriously.
8. Do you agree with Gladwell's arguments? Which of his theories are strongest? Which are weakest?