11th grade AP Summer Reading Assignment

*Outliers* by Malcom Gladwell

Welcome to Junior AP English! Please read all details of your assignment listed below. You will need to complete all parts of this assignment in order to receive credit.

**Purpose:** To complete an engaged and analytical reading of *Outliers* by Malcom Gladwell and prepare for Socratic discussion and further writings

**Audience:** Instructor and classmates

**Due:** Parts 1 and 2 due day-2, Part 3 due week-2

**Assignment Details:** See Parts 1, 2, and 3 below

**Resources:** *Outliers* by Malcom Gladwell and dictionary or limited internet research (possibly to look up term usage). This assignment is intended to reflect your personal engagement with the novel. The use of secondary sources is strongly discouraged. (Once school begins, we will all be up to our ears in sources!)

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

**Part-1: Read and Annotate**

*(Due: day 2 of class, format details below)*

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 during the first few days of class! Annotations can be written in the book, on Post-It Notes stuck on pages, or (last resort option) on separate paper labeled with page numbers that correspond to the book.
About Annotation: Students can easily improve the depth of their reading and extend their understanding over long periods of time by developing a systematic form of annotating. Such a system is not necessarily difficult and can be completely personal and exceptionally useful.

First, what is the difference between annotating and "taking notes"? For some people, the difference is nonexistent or negligible, but in this instance I am referring to a way of making notes directly onto a text such as a book, a handout, or another type of publication. The advantage of having one annotated text instead of a set of note papers plus a text should be clear enough: all the information is together and inseparable, with notes very close to the text for easier understanding, and with fewer pieces to keep organized.

Think of annotations as "showing your work" while you read just as you sometimes show your work in a math problem. You are showing what you are thinking while you read and analyze— and thinking is a word-based activity, not just a nebulous puff of energy. If you can’t articulate your thoughts, then you must question if you know what you’re thinking. Thinking is how you connect to the text. This, of course, requires ACTIVE participation with the text, engaging your mind while you read, not skimming the page. Listening to your iPod or the TV can split your focus so that you don’t have as much of a connection with the text. Marking important sections can also be helpful in locating them quickly in discussions.

What the reader gets from annotating is a deeper initial reading and an understanding of the text that lasts. You can deliberately engage the author in conversation and questions, maybe stopping to argue, pay a compliment, or clarify an important issue—much like having a teacher or storyteller with you in the room. When days, weeks, or months later you come back to the book, that initial interchange is recorded for you, making an excellent and entirely personal study tool.

Details: You may use any format of annotation you like. I tend to use underlining and margin-writing (post-it notes with borrowed books). A quick online search will lead you to several guides, descriptions, opinions, and systems of annotating texts. Take a few minutes to look around at the various options and pick one to try. Do not be overwhelmed by the options. The method of annotation you use is not as important as the substance of those annotations.

Assessment: I will be looking at your annotations during the first few days of class. I will be checking to see that your annotations show active engagement with the text through thoughtful comments and questions. In addition to highlighting/underlining portions of the text, your annotations must include thoughtful and relevant hand-written comments (margins or post-its). I do not expect every page to be filled with highlights and comments, but I do expect each chapter to be substantially annotated.

Part-2: 20 Vocabulary Words

(Due: day 2 of class, typed or handwritten neatly)

Select twenty examples of interesting diction from the text. I highly recommend you do this as you read! For each word:

a. Write the sentence, complete with page number citation.
Part-3 Discussion Questions

(Due: Week-2 of class)

Below is a list of discussion questions by chapter. Please select one question per chapter to answer. (Note the length and content requirement for each response and plan your time accordingly.)

Instructions for answering essay questions

▪ MLA formatting
▪ Responses must include textual support (quotes) and demonstrate critical reading of the text.
▪ 100-200 words, each response, one piece of textual support per response.
▪ This is not a summary of your reading; it is an analysis

Introduction "The Roseto Mystery"

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"

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

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

Chapter Eight "Rice Paddies and Math Tests"

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

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

Chapter Nine "Marita's Bargain"

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

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

Epilogue "A Jamaican Story"

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

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