

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Department

School: OLMS

Book Title: *Outliers: a story of success*

Genre: Non-fiction

Author: Malcolm Gladwell

Pages: 321

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Copyright: November 18<sup>th</sup> 2008

*In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.*

**Book Summary and Summary Citation:** (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"--the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different?

His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band.

Brilliant and entertaining, *Outliers* is a landmark work that will simultaneously delight and illuminate.

**Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.**

This non-fiction book fulfills the standards:

**Include two professional review of this title:** (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form). Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

### Review #1

Publisher's Weekly

Gladwell (*The Tipping Point*) once again proves masterful in a genre he essentially pioneered—the book that illuminates secret patterns behind everyday phenomena. His gift for spotting an intriguing mystery, luring the reader in, then gradually revealing his lessons in lucid prose, is on vivid display. *Outliers* begins with a provocative look at why certain five-year-old boys enjoy an advantage in ice hockey, and how these advantages accumulate over time. We learn what Bill Gates, the Beatles and Mozart had in common: along with talent and ambition, each enjoyed an unusual opportunity to

intensively cultivate a skill that allowed them to rise above their peers. A detailed investigation of the unique culture and skills of Eastern European Jewish immigrants persuasively explains their rise in 20th-century New York, first in the garment trade and then in the legal profession. Through case studies ranging from Canadian junior hockey champions to the robber barons of the Gilded Age, from Asian math whizzes to software entrepreneurs to the rise of his own family in Jamaica, Gladwell tears down the myth of individual merit to explore how culture, circumstance, timing, birth and luck account for success—and how historical legacies can hold others back despite ample individual gifts. Even as we know how many of these stories end, Gladwell restores the suspense and serendipity to these narratives that make them fresh and surprising. One hazard of this genre is glibness. In seeking to understand why Asian children score higher on math tests, Gladwell explores the persistence and painstaking labor required to cultivate rice as it has been done in East Asia for thousands of years; though fascinating in its details, the study does not prove that a rice-growing heritage explains math prowess, as Gladwell asserts. Another pitfall is the urge to state the obvious: No one, Gladwell concludes in a chapter comparing a high-IQ failure named Chris Langan with the brilliantly successful J. Robert Oppenheimer, not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone. But who in this day and age believes that a high intelligence quotient in itself promises success? In structuring his book against that assumption, Gladwell has set up a decidedly flimsy straw man. In the end it is the seemingly airtight nature of Gladwell's arguments that works against him. His conclusions are built almost exclusively on the findings of others—sociologists, psychologists, economists, historians—yet he rarely delves into the methodology behind those studies. And he is free to cherry-pick those cases that best illustrate his points; one is always left wondering about the data he evaluated and rejected because it did not support his argument, or perhaps contradicted it altogether. Real life is seldom as neat as it appears in a Malcolm Gladwell book. (Nov.) *Leslie T. Chang is the author of Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China (Spiegel & Grau).*

## Review #2

### *Booklist Review*

Gladwell, author and journalist, sets out to provide an understanding of success using outliers, men and women with skills, talent, and drive who do things out of the ordinary. He contends that we must look beyond the merits of a successful individual to understand his culture, where he comes from, his friends and family, and the community values he inherits and shares. We learn that society's rules play a large role in who makes it and who does not. Success is a gift, and when opportunities are presented, some people have the strength and presence of mind to seize them, exhibiting qualities such as persistence and doggedness. Successful people are the products of history and community, of opportunity and legacy, and success ultimately is not exceptional or unattainable, nor does it depend upon innate ability. It is an attitude of willingness to try without regard for the sacrifice required. This is an excellent book for a wide range of library patrons. --Mary Whaley

### **What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?**

Title: Three Cups of Tea

Author: Mortenson & Relin

Title: Hidden Figures

Author: Margot Lee Shetterly

Title:

Author:

### **Document any potentially controversial content:**

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated                       Regular                       At Risk

**GRADE LEVEL(S):** 6  7  8  9  10  11  12

**Reading Level of this Title (if applicable):**

**Suggested Professional Literacy Review Sources:**

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults

**Signatures:**

**Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Head:**           Mary Klein          

**Date:**           3/22/19          

**Building Administrator:**           [Signature]          

**Date:**           3/22/19          

**Curriculum Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_