

# **Summer Reading Assignment**

## **Diversity in Literature**

### **(Junior/Senior English Elective)**

- **Book Selection:** *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell ISBN-13: 978-0316017930

\*The LHS Bookroom has copies of this text available. You may check out a copy over the summer with a valid school ID to save on cost, but it must be returned at the start of the school year to be removed from your school fees. You may also be able to find a digital copy (PDF format) of the book online by using Google or another search engine.

- **Assignment Directions:**

1. **Before You Read:** Before you begin reading *Outliers*, take a few minutes to answer the “Pre-Reading Questions” on the attached document.
2. **While You Read:** As you read *Outliers*, provide a brief objective summary (a paragraph) of each chapter and then provide another paragraph that expresses your thoughts on what you have just read. *An example has been provided below to show you what this should look like.*
3. **After You Read:** When you have finished reading *Outliers*, take a few minutes to answer the “Post-Reading Questions.”
4. Type up your responses for #s 1-3 above and have them ready to turn in on the first day of school. For this assignment, late work will not be accepted.

#### **Pre-Reading Questions:**

1. How do you define “the American Dream”?
2. Do you believe that the American Dream is open to everyone? Explain.

#### **Post-Reading Questions:**

1. How do you believe Malcolm Gladwell would define “The American Dream”?
2. Do you feel as though Gladwell believes the American Dream is open to everyone? Explain.

## Example:

### Ch. 1: *The Matthew Effect*

- Summary: This chapter examines the effects that birth month can have on the overall success of an individual. To help prove his argument, Gladwell primarily uses the policies of athletics (namely hockey and baseball) to show that the “best” athletes of a given sport are often those born closest to the cutoff date for eligibility. The reason being, Gladwell argues, is that they have an advantage over their peers born later in the year due to the natural physical and mental maturation that typically accompanies age. His argument asserts that although we may at first believe our best athletes are those with the most talent, in truth, many of those “superstars” are talented because of the additional opportunities they’ve been afforded from their resulting maturity (i.e. access to better coaches, extra practice, and encouragement from decision makers that they are in fact better than their peers).
- My Response: I found this chapter to be very interesting in the way that it examines something that I’ve never really factored into success – birth date. The statistical data and examples that Gladwell provides when it comes to examining athletic success seem to make quite a bit of sense. In fact, I find it hard to argue with them. I am disappointed, however, with the lack of evidence presented to demonstrate how similar policies and procedures affect the educational system and students’ academic performance. Despite this lack of data, however, I definitely find myself able to see that such a correlation can, and, in some cases, does exist. I currently teach high school English/Language Arts to primarily 9<sup>th</sup> graders, and over the course of this year I have noticed varying levels of academic success among my students. Upon closer examination, however, I cannot say that this success seems directly correlated to birth date. One of my brightest students, for example, just turned fourteen when many of her peers turned fifteen this school year. Technically, she has been exposed to nearly less than a year’s worth of academic content and yet outshines many of her peers academically. At the same time, however, she is very mature for her age, and that got me to thinking about how statistically girls mature before boys do. Ultimately, I’m on the fence with this chapter. Although I cannot argue against Gladwell’s argument when it comes to measuring athletic success by birth date, I find myself a little apprehensive in agreeing wholeheartedly with his implications that birth date has such a profound effect on academic success. I’m looking forward to future chapters.