

PSP Preparation Essentials Book Report  
Outliers: The Story of Success by Malcolm Gladwell  
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Outliers: The Story of Success, written by Malcolm Gladwell, challenges its reader to pay less attention to what outliers, or highly successful people, are like, and focus their attention on other factors that lead outliers to their success levels such as culture, language, socioeconomic status, family, etc.

This psychology book thoroughly explains its main concept that while ambition, steadfast devotion, and talent are necessary for one to become successful, early advantages, privilege, social and economic status, and other factors are the true reason that outliers emerge amongst others. This concept is outlined in its nine chapters. Recurring themes throughout the book are success vs failure, talent vs opportunity, and culture and upbringing.

Success and failure are the first themes discussed in Outliers because Gladwell uses this debunking of what success is and how to achieve it, to make the rest of the book comprehensible for the reader. Gladwell defines success as a mixture of luck, opportunity, talent, and 10,000+ hours of practice.

The theme of talent vs opportunity can be found throughout the entirety of the book. Often, we forget that talent can be the outcome of opportunity and/or luck. In chapter one, Gladwell discusses hockey players, among other sports, and how their date of birth may affect their chances of becoming professional athletes. Gladwell is not discrediting the talent of the players who have become professional athletes but being born before or after the cut-off for their youth hockey teams impacts their careers because some players will have an entire year of experience before others will be able to play. This puts those players at an advantage in their skills, and at an advantage for playing amongst other players.

Culture and upbringing can determine a great deal in terms of success. This theme is introduced in chapter four and is discussed further in chapter seven. Gladwell analyzes how upbringing can affect a child's success through a study where psychologists followed families of different economic statuses: lower, middle, and upper class. It was found that the economic status of the families is a factor in the behaviors, thought processes, and communication of the children. The higher in class one's family is, the more advantages they experience in comparison to those of lower classes. Children raised in middle to upper-class families are raised with a sense of entitlement that deems their success as they grow old and assimilate to the modern world. In chapter seven, Gladwell analyzes a Korean plane crash, showing the negative effects of culture concerning communication. Due to Korean culture, the co-pilots could not effectively communicate with the pilot because it would be considered disrespectful if they were blunt. The structure of the Korean language is what ultimately resulted in the crash and their death.

My final thoughts on Outliers: The Story of Success are that it is a captivating book. Gladwell structured the book in a way that each chapter began with a story or anecdote, and then analysis and explanation of what each main topic meant. This structure, along with the information itself, made this book an interesting read. I love that this book challenged me to look at success differently and led me to analyze situations in the way that Gladwell has done throughout the book. Since reading, I have recommended this book to others, and to my surprise, they had already read it. I have loved engaging in conversation with others about Outliers thus far and hope to continue. Ultimately, I enjoyed Outliers and appreciate how it has changed my thinking of how success is brought forth and how that also affects me.