



# Outliers: The Story of Success

By Malcolm Gladwell

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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.

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## Outliers: The Story of Success By Malcolm Gladwell Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best of the Month, November 2008:** Now that he's gotten us talking about the viral life of ideas and the power of gut reactions, Malcolm Gladwell poses a more provocative question in *Outliers*: why do some people succeed, living remarkably productive and impactful lives, while so many more never reach their potential? Challenging our cherished belief of the "self-made man," he makes the democratic assertion that superstars don't arise out of nowhere, propelled by genius and talent: "they are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot." Examining the lives of outliers from Mozart to Bill Gates, he builds a convincing case for how successful people rise on a tide of advantages, "some deserved, some not, some earned, some just plain lucky."

*Outliers* can be enjoyed for its bits of trivia, like why most pro hockey players were born in January, how many hours of practice it takes to master a skill, why the descendents of Jewish immigrant garment workers became the most powerful lawyers in New York, how a pilots' culture impacts their crash record, how a centuries-old culture of rice farming helps Asian kids master math. But there's more to it than that. Throughout all of these examples--and in more that delve into the social benefits of lighter skin color, and the reasons for school achievement gaps--Gladwell invites conversations about the complex ways privilege manifests in our culture. He leaves us pondering the gifts of our own history, and how the world could benefit if more of our kids were granted the opportunities to fulfill their remarkable potential. --*Mari Malcolm*

### From Publishers Weekly

SignatureReviewed by Leslie ChangIn *Outliers*, 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).*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

What explains whether or not *Outliers* succeeded with a given reviewer? Sometimes, Gladwell's trademark style and wit were sufficient. Many critics noted some anecdotes that did not quite seem coherent, but they commended the book anyway because Gladwell is so entertaining and enthusiastic. Yet Gladwell's talent alone was insufficient to earn reviewers' highest marks. (Indeed, several who focused on this aspect of the book were annoyed that the author seemed to be merely offering common sense with a *New Yorker* sheen.) The reviewers with whom Gladwell truly succeeded were those who noticed the moral message of his book: if the factors that determine greatness are so much more complicated than individual efforts, our society should provide a nurturing environment where serendipitous coincidences abound and every person has a real chance to succeed.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Helen Kingsbury:**

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#### **Roberta Bourland:**

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**Richard Stratton:**

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